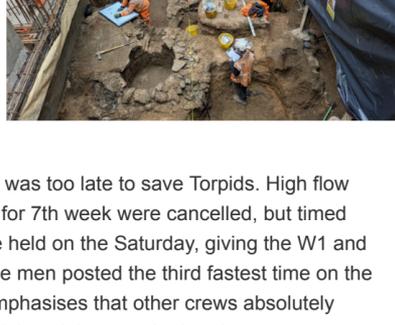
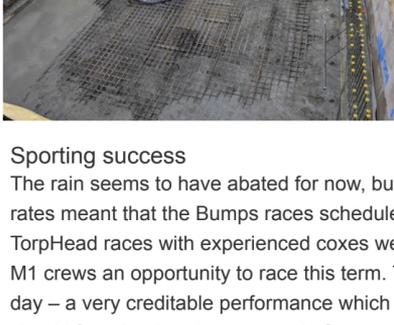


Dear Hertford Community,

Hilary term has at times felt quite grim, with relentless grey skies and more rainfall than seemed necessary. However, the mood within Hertford is upbeat, with many reasons to celebrate, not least the completion of our most successful Giving Day to date, of which more later. A huge thank you to everyone who supported this.

Library development

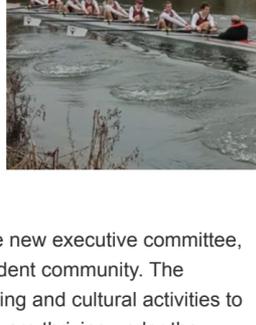
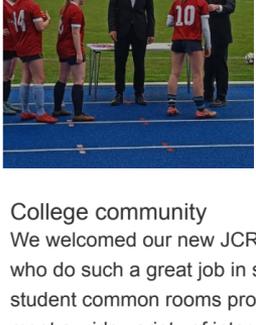
Given the amount of rain, it is perhaps surprising that the large hole in OB Quad did not turn into a swimming pool. This suggests that the water table is some way below the excavation level, boding well for the rare book and archive stores that will fill this part of the basement next year. The medieval wells uncovered by the excavations have been recorded and covered over, and concrete now lines the basement. We are finally entering the build phase as digging is completed, and look forward to completion next summer.



Sporting success

The rain seems to have abated for now, but it was too late to save Torpids. High flow rates meant that the Bumps races scheduled for 7th week were cancelled, but timed TorpHead races with experienced coxes were held on the Saturday, giving the W1 and M1 crews an opportunity to race this term. The men posted the third fastest time on the day – a very creditable performance which emphasises that other crews absolutely should fear the deer in next term's Summer Eights. Join us at the boathouse on Saturday 30 May and cheer our crews on.

There are many other reasons to celebrate. In a repeat of last year's final, the combined Hertford and Keble women's football team Hertble won Cuppers after a tense penalty shootout. This is their third victory in a row and fully justifies the enthusiastic celebrations that followed the game. In rugby, great performances by Hertford players ensured victory for Oxford in both the men's and women's Varsity Matches, with Lucy McBride and Lilla Berry contributing to a tremendous 52–8 win by the dark blues.



College community

We welcomed our new JCR President David Percival and the new executive committee, who do such a great job in supporting our undergraduate student community. The student common rooms provide a huge range of social, sporting and cultural activities to meet a wide variety of interests. The Hertford music societies are thriving under the direction of Lucy Joy Morris and the choir does full justice to the exquisite acoustics of the chapel. A weekend programme of workshops and masterclasses focused on both orchestral and choral conducting was held in February, providing opportunities to develop skills and musical leadership. It is hoped that this may become a regular feature. Meanwhile, the SCR research talks convened by our Fellow for Research attract significant interest from members of the MCR and in turn there is attendance by SCR representatives at the MCR academic soirées.

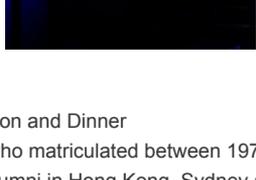
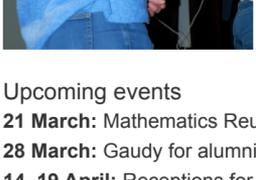


Recent events

Acclaimed film maker and Visiting Fellow Anthony Geffen provided two fascinating events this term. In January a team from Atlantic Studios demonstrated the power of immersive virtual reality and some of its potential in education and training, including practising surgical techniques and visualising complex molecules and drug receptor sites. The possibilities here are of keen interest to several of our fellows. Anthony returned a fortnight later to present a preview screening of his forthcoming film, *Chasing Utopia*, a beautifully crafted and thought-provoking study of the potential negative consequences of Artificial Intelligence at a time when it is developing rapidly and outstripping regulation. Professor Mike Wooldridge chaired the panel discussion that followed, drawing on his deep knowledge of AI and tremendous ability to convey issues arising from its development.

Mike's contributions were recognised by the award of the Faraday Medal and a very well-delivered Prize Lecture at the Royal Society the following week. As I type this, another of our panellists, Professor Carissa Véliz, has been announced as a 2026 TED Fellow – a timely appointment with the upcoming publication of her book *Prophecy*, and a tribute to the importance of her work in ethics in fast-changing technological fields.

In March, the latest event in the Oxford Ministry for the Future series curated by Professor Anette Mikes was held at the Saïd Business School on the theme of 'A Moral Reimagining of Big Tech and AI'. It featured Hertford fellows Professors Mike Wooldridge, Carissa Véliz and Vladyslav Vyazovskiy, with author Joanna Kavenna and artist Maija Tammi, using their expertise to identify developments and applications of AI that can benefit society. In April, Anette's vision of storytelling to shape and influence policies will be exported to Uppsala with the first event in the Ministry for the Future series held outside Oxford.



Upcoming events

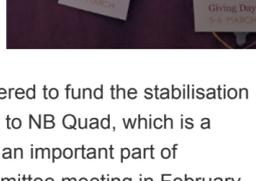
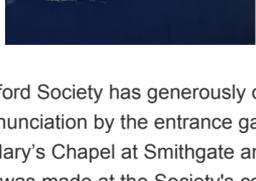
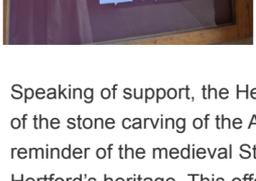
- 21 March:** Mathematics Reunion and Dinner
- 28 March:** Gaudy for alumni who matriculated between 1977 and 1979
- 14–19 April:** Receptions for alumni in Hong Kong, Sydney and Melbourne
- 2 May:** Warnock Society Lunch
- 30 May:** Summer Eights Celebration
- 27 June:** Hertford Society Dinner

Buildings update

Renovation of student rooms in NB Quad has continued as part of our maintenance and upgrade programme. We have also initiated a complete refurbishment of a house in Western Road with the aim of radically reducing its carbon footprint and gaining experience in the use of insulation, solar cells and heat pumps. It is an expensive project but will be invaluable in informing our future decarbonisation plans. The planned development of graduate accommodation at Winchester Road should start in the summer pending final approvals from the planning authorities. This will be built on Passivhaus principles to deliver a high-quality, energy-efficient mix of study bedrooms and flats that will include accessible units to cater for those with impaired mobility.

Giving Day 2026

The Giving Day held in the first week of March brought our community together to raise donations for the library development, which remains a key focus for the college. Our Development and Communications teams worked closely with other departments, students and alumni to deliver an innovative – if possibly slightly cheesy in parts – programme of events to amuse, entertain and capture attention. Thanks to the generosity of our alumni, the outcome is spectacular, with over £600k raised – quite possibly the highest amount raised by any Oxford college Giving Day. Many donors also shared warm words and touching reminiscences of their time at Hertford. We will provide a fuller report in due course and look forward to welcoming everyone who has supported the project back next year to see the wonderful facility that their generosity has enabled. Thank you for your amazing support! In the meantime, a reminder of the event can be found in the mural brightening the hoardings in OB Quad, created over the course of the two days by alumna and artist Anya Glazer.



Speaking of support, the Hertford Society has generously offered to fund the stabilisation of the stone carving of the Annunciation by the entrance gate to NB Quad, which is a reminder of the medieval St Mary's Chapel at Smithgate and an important part of Hertford's heritage. This offer was made at the Society's committee meeting in February, where we discussed the college's future plans and ambitions and ways to enhance the relationship between the college, the Society and other alumni groups.

Our people

Ewa Gluza has been recognised with a High Sheriff Award for the brilliant work she does in leadership of the Oxford Polish Association and in support of our local community. Congratulations too to Ilahni Holmes and Amy Russell on successfully completing their Level 3 apprenticeship in Hospitality Supervision, with thanks for their cheerful support within the Catering team. As ever, our Events and Catering teams have laid on delicious meals and some spectacular themed events, including Burns Night, Valentine's Dinners, Book and Giving Day themes as well as sporting and subject celebrations. Their enthusiasm and creativity is second to none and we are truly fortunate to have them. Over the last few weeks, I have met with our undergraduate finalists to hear about their experiences at Hertford. Whether they ended up at our college by choice or through allocation, they are very happy to be here and really appreciate the support provided by our staff, including our lodge porters, housekeepers and caterers as well as tutors and lecturers. Of course there are niggles, but the overwhelming sense is of a happy community.

One of the things that had a real impact on me when I started as Interim Principal 16 months ago is the tremendous loyalty of our staff; a substantial number of people have worked at Hertford for 15, 20 or 25 years, caring for our students and supporting our activities. But inevitably there are departures and arrivals, and this term we bid farewell to David Fleming, who has kept the college welcoming and secure for 13 years, and to Rimutis and Zita Alisauskiene, who have moved on from housekeeping in the Catte Street site. Danish Raza has ventured a mile to the east to support IT at the Oxford Centre of Islamic Studies; we wish him well in his new role. Luke Parker took up his post as IT Officer and Melinda Horanyi joined the Housekeeping team in February. It was with great sadness that Melinda Horanyi joined the Housekeeping team in February. It was with great sadness that Chris Powell, who led the Maintenance team for over three years, overseeing a responsive service that is widely appreciated by staff and students. We also remembered Jane Preedy, who was a cheerful and helpful presence in the Bursary and Academic Office for over 30 years and passed away at the end of 2025.

Closing thoughts

My term as Principal is rapidly coming to an end, with Alex Freeman taking over on St Patrick's Day. She is joining a wonderful community in a college with an unusually interesting history, extraordinary and dedicated people, and a great future. I know that you will extend a warm and supportive welcome to Alex. We are more than halfway through the library project, so she will see the renewal and restoration of OB Quad, a fitting symbol for Hertford moving forward, confident in its place as a leading force within the University. My final day sees our Community Dinner, when staff will host members of the local community who support them in their roles at Hertford. It is a way of recognising that no college is an island, but that we all depend on the kindness and support of others, reflecting our Hertford values. Thank you to everyone who makes this college the special place that it is.


Professor Pat Roche, Interim Principal



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