

# POSTMASTER

## AND THE MERTON RECORD



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# FROM THE WARDEN

It is a great pleasure to reflect back on my first year as Warden of the College, following my installation on 30 September 2023. It has been another busy year for the College which has exemplified the two features that make Merton so special: its commitment to excellence and its sense of community.

In terms of excellence, this includes, of course, academic achievement and it is a testament to the hard work, dedication and excellence of our students, and their tutors, that we came top of the Norrington Table yet again this year. But the ambition and reach of our students ranges far more broadly than this, and once again Merton students have proved that they both work hard and play hard.

This has been another year of sporting success in the College. Our rowers had an extremely successful Summer Eights with both the women's crews getting their blades. The men's crews also rowed brilliantly, with no crews getting bumped during the week and Merton finishing the week as the college with most bumps overall. There was much to celebrate at the Boat Club Dinner and it was a fitting end to a victorious Eights Week. In rugby, the Merton/Mansfield team won the Mixed Touch Rugby Cup; and won the Rugby 7s Plate Cuppers final. In football, the women's Merton/Mansfield/

Wadham team, Wertonfield, were unbeaten all season and were promoted to Division I. In tennis, Merton reached the semi-finals of Cuppers. This year also saw the launch of a new sports team: the Merton Marshmallows, the College's Ultimate Frisbee team.

In drama too, we saw a fantastic Merton Floats production of *All's Well That Ends Well* for this year's garden play, following on from successful performances of *Julius Caesar* in the TS Eliot Theatre in Hilary term, and *The Tempest* in the Chapel in Trinity term. Music at Merton continues to go from strength to strength. Our Choir and Girl Choristers have been in spectacular voice again this year, as those able to attend the Chapel services in person or via the livestream will have heard. In December at the Merton Society Christmas Concert, the Choir gave a premiere of Gabriel Jackson's *The Christmas Story*, and they were invited to sing at the Japanese Embassy in honour of the birthday of the Emperor of Japan. The Choir's recording of Bob Chilcott's *Christmas Oratorio* was rated as one of the best classical Christmas albums of 2023 by the *Guardian*. This year also saw the celebration of the tenth anniversary of the Dobson Organ in the College Chapel, and the launch of a new concert series, supported by the generosity of Vijay Joshi (Emeritus Fellow), this year featuring eminent pianist Imogen Cooper. A fuller

Former Wardens welcome the new Warden. From left: Professor Dame Jessica Rawson, Professor Jennifer Payne, Sir Martin Taylor and Professor Irene Tracey



discussion of music at Merton can be found on page 93 in an interview with our Director of Music, Benjamin Nicholas.

The sense of Merton as a community is apparent not only in our staff, Fellows and students, but also in our wonderful alumni body. In my first year as Warden I have been delighted to have had the opportunity to meet alumni both in Oxford (at numerous alumni events, dinners and gaudies) and elsewhere in the world. In December I travelled to the United States with our Development Director, Mark Coote, to meet members of MC3 and in January we visited Hong Kong and Singapore, cities I know well and with which it was a real pleasure to reconnect. We could not have wished for warmer welcomes. I have also enjoyed attending alumni events in London, Cambridge, Exeter and Munich. To pick out just one, in April Dr James Kempton (2011) gave the Merton Society Annual Lecture, detailing his adventures in the rainforest-covered mountains of New Guinea, on a quest to find Attenborough's long-beaked echidna, a species which had been lost to science for over 60 years. James spoke movingly and compellingly about the expedition, showing some spectacular photographs of the team's time in the mountains. It was notable that he talked of the inspiration for this trip that he had taken from the expeditions undertaken by Mertonian Sandy Irvine (1921). This year we also took the opportunity to recognise and celebrate the centenary of the 1924 attempt on Everest undertaken by George Mallory and Mertonian Sandy Irvine (see the report

Merton in Hong Kong: The Warden (centre left) with Mertonians on the roof terrace of Pacific Place.



on page 102). Sandy's pioneering spirit was extraordinary, as the exhibition demonstrates, and it is wonderful to know that it continues to inspire to this day.

I have been impressed by the warmth and friendliness of the Merton alumni community and by the desire of Mertonians to give back to current students and future generations. The mentoring scheme which is the brainchild of Sam Whipple (1983) and Dame Philippa Whipple (1984) is one example of this. Managed by the Development Office, the programme is aimed at recent undergraduate leavers and is now underway, following a successful pilot. Over 100 mentors have signed up, covering a broad range of fields including business, the law and the arts. This is a wonderful programme that will provide support and assistance for our graduates in the transition from university to the workplace. A second example is the willingness of alumni to get involved in the College's sustainability programme, participating in the College's sustainability working group and setting up a net zero discussion group which works with and supports the College in achieving its published sustainability goals. This year saw the launch of the net zero group's in-person lecture series. It began in February with a thought-provoking lecture entitled 'Is the UK on track for Net Zero by 2050?' given by Chris Stark, who was then Chief Executive of the Climate Change Committee and has since been appointed Head of Mission Control for Clean Power 2030.



The Women's First Eight bump Trinity on the final day of Summer Vills

This year we were privileged to be visited by Emperor Naruhito (1983) who, together with Empress Masako, made a state visit to the UK in June. Their UK visit concluded with a one-day visit to Oxford. This was an opportunity for Their Majesties to revisit the colleges at which they were both students. His Majesty is an alumnus of Merton as well as an Honorary Fellow; Her Majesty was a student at Balliol. During their time at Oxford, Empress Masako also received an honorary degree from the University during a special ceremony at which the Merton Choir sang. During the visit to Merton, I was privileged to give Their Majesties a tour of the College, including a visit to the Chapel, the gardens, and to His Majesty's former room. Their Majesties also took part in a cherry tree planting ceremony and the beautiful tree will be a permanent reminder of this very special visit. I will treasure my memories of the time I spent with Their Majesties that day.

The sense of community that is at the heart of Merton's success is shaped by the people who we meet during our time in College. It is always with great sadness at the end of each academic year that we have to say farewell to those leaving the College, whether that is our undergraduate and graduate leavers or our colleagues in the staff and fellowship. This year, two of our Fellows retired after long periods of service to the College. Professor Richard McCabe retired after 31 years as Professor and Tutor in English, and Professor Tim Guilford retired after 28 years as Professor and Tutor in Biology. They have been outstanding tutors and colleagues. We thank them both for their long and valuable service and wish them well in

The Emperor and Empress of Japan during their visit to Merton

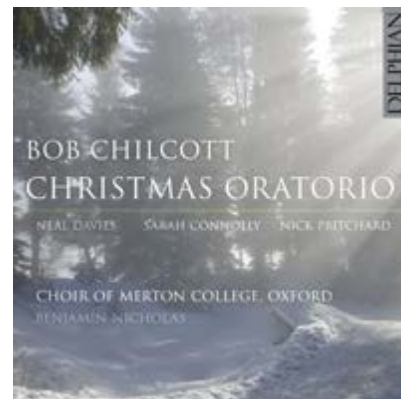


their retirements. As Emeritus Fellows we hope to see plenty of them in College in the coming years. I'm particularly grateful that Professor McCabe, who has been the driving force behind the very successful Visiting Research Fellows in the Creative Arts programme since its inception, has agreed to continue in this role. We have been privileged to host Bevis Bowden as our Visiting Researcher in the Creative Arts this year, a filmmaker who spent the year making a project called 'Remote Water', using documentary and natural history film techniques to explore the complex habitats of the River Isis and its meadows as it runs through Oxford. This year we also bid farewell to several early career researchers: Dr Nicholas Irwin, Dr Vatsal Khandelwal, Dr Helen Craske, Dr Chloe Deambrogio and Dr Hadleigh Frost. We wish them well in their future careers.

Our wonderful Chaplain, the Revd Canon Dr Simon Jones, is also moving on to pastures new. After his stint as Acting Dean of Lincoln he was this year confirmed in the permanent role. Simon has been transformational in terms of the Chapel and the Choral Foundation within College, as well as his work developing the welfare role within College in his 22 years here. I am pleased that so many alumni were able to join us in June for a farewell reception for him. He has been an integral part of the fabric of Merton for many years and he will be much missed by us all. Simon's installation as Dean of Lincoln took place on 14 September 2024; the Merton Choir sang at the service, and many Mertonians came to wish Simon well on this next stage of his career. It was my privilege to attend and to participate in the ceremony.



Members of the Choir at the Japanese Embassy in London



There have been honours and prizes for alumni, Fellows and students this year, again exemplifying the excellence at the heart of College life. Professor Sir Andrew Wiles has received a Lifetime Award from the International Congress of Basic Science. These awards recognise extraordinary scientists whose work in basic science has been both outstanding and innovative and has brought about fundamental change in their discipline. Professor Artur Ekert was awarded the Milner Award and Lecture 2024 for his pioneering contributions to quantum communication and computation. Professor James Newton received the Clay Research Award in recognition of his mathematical proof of the existence of the symmetric power functorial lift for Hilbert modular forms. Professor Mindy Chen-Wishart received a Lifetime Achievement Award at the 2024 International Conference on Contracts. Professor Irene Lemos was elected as a Corresponding Member of the Archaeological Institute of America. Professor Julian Knight was elected a Fellow of the Academy of Medical Sciences and Professor Sir Peter Horby was elected to the Fellowship of the Royal Society. Dr Toby Adkins (2014) was awarded the European Physical Society Plasma Physics Division PhD Research Award 2024 for his thesis, 'Electromagnetic instabilities and plasma turbulence driven by the electron-temperature gradient'. Harris Leung (2021, Maths and Computer Science) was part of the Oxford team that won gold at the World Finals of the 2024 International Collegiate Programming Contest. Professor Jason Allen-Paisant (2011) won both the T. S. Eliot Prize and the Forward Prize for Best Collection for his *Self-Portrait as Othello* (see 'A view from here' on page 82). In the

New Year Honours List Michael Jary (1982) was appointed a CBE for public service, Professor Andrew Pettegree FBA (1976) was appointed a CBE for services to literature, Oliver Ford Davies (1958) was appointed an OBE for services to drama and Carl Anglim (2004) was appointed an MBE for services to young people.

Sadly, there are alumni, Fellows and staff who have passed away during the course of the year. Their names are included in the *In Memoriam* pages. I would like to mark in particular the loss of Honorary Fellow Francis Finlay, CMG OBE (1962), who read Chemistry, and who was a long-standing friend and supporter of the College; the Finlay Building, and the Finlay family crest in Hall are testament to his long and generous support. This year also saw the loss of Professor Dominic Welsh who was a student and then Fellow of the College for many years. He was an outstanding mathematician as well as a much-loved tutor and colleague, as the overflowing Chapel at his memorial service attested. We mourn their loss. Our thoughts are with their families.

It has been an honour and a privilege to take on the role of Warden and I have thoroughly enjoyed my first year in post. The calendar for 2024–25 is already filling up and there is much to look forward to in the year ahead. Another busy year beckons for Merton and its students, staff, Fellows and alumni.

**Professor Jennifer Payne**  
Warden



# JCR NEWS

What a year it has been. Going beyond the cliché that this phrase initially evokes, I have been amazed at what we, as a JCR, have achieved together over the past year. I'd like to take this opportunity to thank each and every member of the Executive Committee for their hard work and dedication this year. From the tireless work of the Welfare Officers Eustacia Feng (2022) and Lars Hofflin (2022) in organising welfare teas, peer support drop-in sessions, welfare weeks and bop angels to the undying determination of the Entz Reps Sacha Fairweather (2022) and Hope Clarke (2022) to prove that Merton CAN be fun through bops, bar nights and black-tie dinners. From the incredible work of the Access Rep Emily Mardon (2022) on Instagram giving snippets of life here at Merton, to the passion of the Academic Affairs Rep Sophie Jackson (2022) for keeping all things academic running smoothly. Last but by no means least: Róisín Jennings (2022) and Peter Aitken (2022), the Vice-President and Treasurer, whose dedication to keeping the JCR thrive, through Róisín's organisation of the room ballot and Time Ceremony and Peter's countless reimbursements and dad jokes did not go unnoticed.

It has also been amazing to see the brilliant things that the wider committee have got up to, from the Charities Reps Jemima Freeman (2022) and Lucy Chen (2023) organising a huge array of fundraising events – for instance the Charities

Fair and the Pool Night that were great successes. The introduction of chopsticks in Hall, an addition appreciated by staff and students alike, was all thanks to our Ethnic Minorities' Rep Luke Liang (2023) who worked hard with the Head Steward to make this happen. While I can't mention all the achievements made by the wonderful members of our JCR, I believe these give a snapshot of just how busy and productive a year it has been.

A word that I have returned to again and again throughout my role as JCR President this year is community. There have been many difficult periods this year, in which the JCR's sense of community, togetherness and kinship has been challenged and threatened. In spite of this, members of the JCR have readily had difficult conversations in a respectful, courteous manner and made progress towards common goals as a collective, a community.

As my time as JCR President comes to a close, I look forward to a bit of time away through my year abroad next year; but can't wait to see all the exciting changes and developments that will happen over the coming year, including the kitchen and TV room which will be renovated over the long vac.

After their arrival in October the new cohort of freshers



Merton matriculates 2023. This photograph has been reproduced by kind permission of Gillman & Soame photographers and can be ordered online at [gimagebank.co.uk/merton/t/zea5pr2024](https://gimagebank.co.uk/merton/t/zea5pr2024)

have all quickly and enthusiastically embraced life at Merton, something that was shown most clearly in Trinity term when the JCR Exec elections rolled around. Many roles were highly sought after, and voter turnout was the highest it has been for many years. I can't wait to see what they have planned for next year and I would like to wish Lucy Chen, the incoming president, the best of luck for what has been simultaneously one of the most difficult and one of the most rewarding roles I have ever taken up.

**Oliver Hobson (2022)**

JCR President 2023–24



# MCR NEWS

This academic year saw a great number of MCR projects being completed and new ones started. As ever, enriched by our diverse postgraduate community at Merton, we worked hard this year to create welcoming events for everyone and to flourish from the academic and social connections in our special community.

Several larger-scale MCR projects came to fruition this year. We succeeded in renovating the 'MacKeith'/Games Room near the bar with the JCR into a vibrant social space for MCR and JCR members, after much careful planning and joint funding. It was wonderful to see the completion of this work after several years of planning. Equally importantly, this year saw the refurbishment of Merton's graduate accommodation in our Holywell Annexe site, with new beds, showers and other amenities being installed over the summer (with immediate results of joy). We are deeply grateful to Head of Accommodation Sally Hague, Domestic Bursar Tim Lightfoot, and all who helped with this. We also worked closely with the College on various matters, including holding more effective Warden/Dean of Graduates meetings with postgraduates, and the upgrading of the website. We are, as ever, grateful to the College for all its support and dedication to our vision and welfare, and will foster this valuable relationship for the benefit of all MCR members.

Refreshed with a truly energetic new MCR committee, we went above and beyond in our term-time MCR events this year, engaging with the wider collegiate University. The MCR Social Secretaries Taisiia Sazonova, Marcell Szakály and Yiyuan Yang brought back MCR board games nights, punting, and fun 'duels' and joint events with the JCR, while also introducing new MCR events like ice-skating, new themed bops ('Tube Station', 'Mid-life Crisis') and poker nights. The Oxbridge exchange which they organised with our sister college, Peterhouse, in June pulled out all the stops and has set a valuable tradition and kinship link for many years to come (certainly reasserting Merton's skill in hospitality).

Alongside organising the housing ballot and general meetings flawlessly, our Vice-President Julia Lorenz introduced the popular inter-college MCR academic colloquia, pioneering these mini-conferences with Brasenose and Hertford colleges. This created valuable new academic collaborations for our postgraduates. Our Welfare Officers Monica Hu and Billie Mitsikakos continued to provide formal and informal welfare and mentorship to our graduates at events and outside; especially appreciated was their vamping up of the beloved pizza and massage nights.

The current MCR general committee has equally contributed



MCR Garden Party

to the success of our events. With our near-full committee, a first in almost a decade, socialising afternoon teas and welfare events were organised by the BAME, LGBTQ and Gender Officers, as well as the Part-time and Mature Students Officer, Charities Officer, and more. It is firm attestation of our MCR's dedication to including everyone in our conversations and events.

The termly black-tie dinners have continued to break expectations each time, largely thanks to the generous cooperation of our new chef Simon Crawshaw as well as our Head Steward Margo Skalik and her team.

This yearly report marks my last as MCR President. It has been an honour and a pleasure to serve as Merton's MCR President for these past two years, to continue the wonderful work of the previous presidents Francesca Lovell-Read and Lucas Didrik Haugeberg (and hand over to the very competent Taisiia), and to guide the MCR through the uncertain days of Covid to the new status quo. I am proud to see how resilient our MCR community has been, and how supportive of each other we always are. These conversations, from small hellos and catch-ups in Front Quad before going to lunch to stimulating MCR academic colloquia, is what makes our diverse Mertonian MCR so special, and creates



the atmosphere of intellectual curiosity, solidarity and fun which enables us to keep on delivering events that refute the long-held claim that Merton is where 'fun goes to die'.

**James Hua**  
MCR President 2023–24

# Merton Sport



Merton Netball team in action



## Men's Football

This season has been a great one for Merton-Mansfield football club. The first team topped their division, losing only one game all season and obliterating all who stood in their way: battering St John's 5–1 in their own backyard on the first day of the season, then going one better away at Queen's, thrashing them 5–0. Given these teams finished second and third in the league, it would be cruel to comment on the horrors suffered by those lower down the table. Such titans of the game as elder statesmen Flo Schroeder (2021) and Josh Soanes (Mansfield, 2021), or our heroic captain Joe Bangbala (Mansfield, 2022), were truly forces to be reckoned with.

Both the first and second teams were stacked this year, not only with fresh talent like the silky Ivan Solomakhin (2023), but also with veterans of the club who rolled back the years: Ky Johal (Mansfield, 2021), Kieran Wetherick and Cass McDonald (both 2020) — names that will echo down the ages in the annals of this mighty club. Casey 'Phil Jones' Parnes and Dan Arkell (both Mansfield, 2022), and Nathaniel Davey (2023), the latter two co-captains of the seconds, shone for the seconds in an impressive season, supported by well-rounded individuals like John Whittingdale, Ade Bakare (both Mansfield, 2023) and Jamie 'Bagsman' Boachie (Mansfield, 2022) — who performed just as well at socials as they did on the pitch. Although the seconds were outstanding, securing an impressive mid-table finish, they were robbed of a fairytale season by a cruel twist of fate when they dismantled the formidable Keble second team 4–1 in Cuppers but a replay was required due to a technicality. Unfortunately, it was one that Keble won 1–0, before going on to win the whole tournament. But it was only Merton-Mansfield who could stand against the Manchester City of college football, and that is an achievement in itself.

And now to the firsts' Cuppers run. Has there ever been a greater tragedy of history repeating itself than the story of the Cuppers draw for Merton-Mansfield Football Club? The announcement that we would meet St Hugh's for the third year running was greeted with scenes of jubilation: with confidence we celebrated the chance to avenge the humiliation of two consecutive knockouts by the boys in yellow and blue. Our defeat came with almost cosmic inevitability after we lost key players to injury in the week before the match — fresher of the season Lysander Kahane (2023), ex-Blue Nick Lai (Mansfield, 2018) and goalkeeper and co-captain Ben Verdin (2022). The dramatic irony would make Shakespeare blush.

We finished an impressive season with a high, though. An exciting 3–3 draw in normal time in the alumni game was settled on penalties as this current crop of Ms ballers showed that youth can triumph over experience, a sign (I hope!) of a bright future for this team.

If insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results, then I am proud to be insane because there is only one team I want to encounter in next year's Cuppers draw: Keble.

'Ms badge on the shirt, Cuppers trophy gleaming; three whole years of hurt, never stopped me dreaming.'

**Benedict Verdin (2022)**  
Men's Co-Captain 2023–24



The winning Wertonfield football team

## Women's Football: Wertonfield

This season has been one for the history books. Following the incorporation of Wadham into the Merton/Mansfield team, the glorious (albeit uniquely named) Wertonfield was born.

Building on the successes of last year, this season we proved that Wertonfield is a force to be reckoned with. From 16–1 wins to defeating our rival Cambridge sister college, Peterhouse, this season gave us a chance to really prove ourselves – and boy we did. Our season-long unbeaten streak led us to be crowned league champions, securing promotion to Division I. Our weekly training sessions and games brought us together, and this sense of unity was very much reflected on pitch: week in, week out, our players showed immense commitment, spirit and skill.

After a particularly unlucky early exit from Cuppers (we put up a hard fight, only losing 2–1 to the eventual winners), we didn't let that dampen our spirits, and set our sights on the Plate with newfound determination. We progressed through each round with unwavering resolve, and after a resounding 8–2 victory in the semi-finals, we made it to the final. After an extremely even game that ended 2–2, we fell just short on penalties, securing the second-place prize. And though the result was gutting, the team showed unparalleled

perseverance and courage, particularly in the face of some unruly chants from opposition fans. We should be nothing but proud of our performance.

But the end of the football season didn't bring about the end of our success. Headed by our Wadham captain Emma, our futsal team stormed to Cuppers victory, securing the trophy and ending the season on the high we deserved. A thoroughly deserved double for Wertonfield.

To our players, thank you. Your drive and tenacity cannot be understated. To our fellow co-captains, Wadham and Mansfield's very own Emma Butcher and Isabel Luetchford, thank you for your endless talent and enthusiasm. It's been a pleasure to co-captain this team with you (and big up Wertonfield bears).

The future of Wertonfield looks bright. We eagerly welcome our next season and wish the future captains the best of luck (though we're sure they won't need it).

**Estelle Byrne and Hermione Chamings (both 2022)**  
Women's Football Co-Presidents 2023–24

# Rugby

Inspired by Eddie Jones' mantra, the M&M rugby team took it upon itself to consider the last four years of disappointment to be its own World Cup cycle of building solely for this academic year. Past results did not weigh heavy on the team and, being well aware that it would be the last year that many of its stalwarts would wear the maroon jersey, it really was the 'last chance saloon'.

Player numbers again in Michaelmas looked bare but, thankfully, the team was bolstered by a number of new fresher signings of inter alia Luke Newland, Victor Angelov and Alex Higson (all 2023). These new players, along with a highly desirable merger with no less than three other colleges, meant that the M&Ms were more than equipped to field a competitive team. The M&Ms were raring and ready for whatever challenges the league or Cuppers would bring.

However, much like South Africa's World Cup campaign, things did not start smoothly for the M&Ms. Faced with the combined St Hilda's/Magdalen team in the opening round of Cuppers, early unfamiliarity among the newly combined team meant that the M&Ms were unable to execute their pre-planned moves or dominate the gain line successfully. Going down to the St Hilda's/Magdalen team therefore meant that the M&Ms were pushed into the Plate division. Nevertheless, spirits remained high and the potential in the team was clear as reflected by the drop goal penalty from David Craig (2019).

Seeking to bounce back from the early Cuppers disappointment, the M&Ms poured their anguish into training. Numbers remained high throughout Michaelmas, Hilary and Trinity which ensured a well-rotated team could be played week in, week out, for our league fixtures. Over the course of these terms, the M&Ms were able to obtain comprehensive league victories over the likes of Exeter/Univ/Trinity, Queen's and Jesus as well as sweet revenge over St Hilda's/Magdalen. Completing a clean sweep of victories also, crucially, ensured that the M&Ms were victors of the league and returned home with some much-deserved silverware.

The successes of the M&Ms did not stop there, though.

Rather, the team continued with its upwards trajectory by obtaining further Cuppers victories over both Keble and Oriel, in turn ensuring that the team earned its place in the Plate Cuppers final against Exeter/Univ/Trinity. Having not won a game for the past four years and then suddenly having the chance to achieve a historic double, the team (perhaps to its detriment) felt as if anything was possible.

The final, played at Iffley Road, was a gripping watch. Throughout the game, spectators were treated to the M&Ms' full array of skills including a pick-and-go try, chip-and-chase try, a miss-pass try as well as a confident calling of the mark. However, it must be admitted that it did appear that the team was almost trying its best to make it an even contest, seemingly conceding a penalty at every opportunity. This theme continued throughout the match, meaning that the team was unable to generate any real continuity or momentum, but nevertheless the M&Ms stuck at it and managed to ensure that the team led 15–10 going into the final five minutes. However, following an unfortunate botched exit from the M&Ms and sustained pressure from the opposition, Exeter/Univ/Trinity were able to power over in the dying minutes of the game with a converted score. With that, the final whistle blew leaving the final score as Exeter/Univ/Trinity 17 – M&Ms 15.

Heartbreak could be one word to describe the cruel ending to the M&Ms season, but pride is a better one. Throughout the season, the team went from strength to strength, and the heights of what the M&Ms could achieve became obvious. Outside the regular 15s season, it must be noted that the team was no less impressive, also achieving silverware in both the mixed touch rugby and men 7s. I have no doubt that the club will continue to flourish and offer a special thanks to outgoing M&Ms David Craig and Lachie Scarsbrook (2021), as well as incoming captain Ben Hayes (2023) who only took up the sport this academic year.

Forever standing.

**Myles Kelly (2020)**

M&Ms Rugby Captain 2023–24



## Men's Rowing

This year for the men's side of Merton College Boat Club has certainly been one to remember, filled with tough competition, tough conditions, and great commitment from the entire squad. My vice-captains, Denys Bystrov and Victor Chu (both 2022), and I are immensely proud of the squad's development and achievements.

Michaelmas term started strongly, with a successful drive for recruitment of new members. Unfortunately, the weather conditions were quick to put a spanner in the works and red flags (no rowing) on both the Isis and at Godstow meant focus quickly shifted to the erg room. With a great training programme organised by our novice captains, Daniel Smith and Josi Jebens (both 2022), and the great number of social events organised by our social secretaries, Louis Macro (2022) and Imogen Walsh (2020), our numbers kept strong and the novices certainly had an active first term.

The Rowing Mens squad at the Summer Eights dinner

Meanwhile, the seniors were hard at work, training and progressing under our new head coach for the year, Jess Foster. The strength and potential of the crew was quick to see, posting the third fastest time in Isis Winter League (IWL) A and entering the fastest 4+ in IWL B towards the end of the term.

A wet winter meant we returned in Hilary term to a flooded Isis and Godstow stretch. Water training was hard to come by, with the first opportunity to get some water time coming in the form of Quintin Head. Despite no consistent water time since October 2023, the boat felt good in the warm-up and it was great to be back out on the water. However, the optimism was short-lived as the rudder of the boat snapped off 500m into the 4.4km race. A stop-and-start tactic had to be adopted. Like redirecting a missile, the crew had to row in a straight line until a bend in the river, upon which they had to spin almost statically. Despite this, the crew were not



The men's team at the Bedford Regatta

overtaken on the course itself and were not even the slowest Oxford college crew on the day. They showed great character and determination to finish and put their all into the race, and the potential going into Torpids was clear to see.

Nevertheless, weather conditions would once again come to haunt the club, with Torpids 2024 being cancelled. But we would not let this stop the club from putting their hard work to a good cause, completing a 24-hour ergathon sponsoring Homelessness Oxfordshire, rowing more than 600,000 metres and raising over £2,000. A great achievement by the club and a great way to end Hilary term.

Before attention turned to Summer Vllls, the men's side took part in the Head of the River Race. The crew on the day punched in a great time of 19:22.7 and came 17th of 41 crews in the 'medium academic crew' category, making it the fastest time of any Merton crew to race at the Head of the River Race.

And then, Summer Vllls training began. Crews were set, and with the more forgiving weather conditions the squad churned out the water outings like there was no tomorrow. With two weeks to go until Vllls, we sent a crew to Bedford Regatta. While disappointed to make it only to the semi-finals

of our category, the squad was determined to build upon the result going into Bumps, and that certainly happened. Our M1 crew went +3 over the four days of Vllls, narrowly missing out on an over-bump on Jesus College to propel the crew into Division 1, but in a great position to push for the top division next year. Our M2 crew also did incredibly well, going +2 and putting next year's M2 at the top of Division 5 and in a prime position to bump up into Division 4 and enter the set divisions (not requiring rowing-on to qualify). All in all, a splendid campaign to wrap up the year.

Denys, Victor and I end our tenure as captains incredibly proud of what the squad has accomplished and are honoured to have led the men's side this year. In the face of an exceptionally tough year, the squad really pulled together and showed off the very best that MCBC has to offer. We would like to thank everyone who made this year possible and supported the squad's efforts. It is with great pleasure that I hand over to Josh Maisuria-Hull (2023) as captain for next year and I look forward to him taking the squad to even greater heights.

**Chris Houseley (2022)**  
Men's Rowing Captain 2023–24



## Women's Rowing

The women's crews at the drinks reception of the Summer Vllls dinner

Having seen some ups and downs in the past few years, MCBC's women's squad saw a steady rise this academic year. We experienced quite a difficult first term, complete with torrential rain, terrible weather, high stream and more, which meant a lack of rowing that was especially saddening for our novices. This generated many different types of land training, including the brand-new women's side circuits, as well as many themed ergs, including the fan favourites: Merg (musical erg) and Ergtic Monkeys.

A positive aspect of our first term was the arrival of our new head coach for the year, Rachel Grainger, who taught us about the menstrual cycle in sports, nutrition, RED-S (relative energy deficiency in sport), recovery, and just generally being a female athlete in a sport that is often catered towards men. Meanwhile, Tímea Csahók, our coach for the novice and lower women's boats, gave our novices a passion for the erg that I have rarely come across (shown by the many Mergs they took part in).

One of my goals as captain this year was to enable my squad to race outside Oxford as much as our budget would allow. Alas, the season did not start quite the way we intended it, with Wallingford Head being cancelled ten days before the event due to the ground in the trailer park being completely saturated. However, we managed to get the senior squad to Quintin Head in January, which was a huge success for the

women's side. We finished second in our category, despite the 6-seat backstay that broke in the middle of our two hours of very chilly marshalling, and which was held together by electrical insulation tape during the race.

Hilary also saw the end of the Isis Winter League, in which Merton finished third overall. We entered every one of the races, despite two of the five being cancelled due to the high river levels. Among the races cancelled were Autumn IVs and Nephthys in Michaelmas and, more importantly, Torpids 2024. Indeed, we experienced our first black flag in many years and had to save the boathouse from flooding.

The women's side decided instead to focus their training towards Women's Eights Head of the River Race (WEHoRR), which Merton women rowers haven't participated in since before the pandemic. Since our home stretches of river kept hovering between red and black flag, we decided to turn our efforts towards new rowable waters in Gloucester. This proved to be wet, cold, and invaluable training. Unfortunately, WEHoRR 2024 was not meant to be. Because of the river levels on the Tideway, the organisers had to cut half of the crews from the race, including almost every Oxford college crew. After a sobering night of disappointment with the crew, we turned our prospects towards Summer Vllls. Our biggest achievement of the term was probably the sheer amount of boats we rigged.



Sunrise at Port Meadow during the women's early morning training session in Hilary term

In the run-up to the end of Hilary, MCBC took on a 24-hour ergathon, raising more than £2,000 for Homeless Oxfordshire. Thank you to everyone who donated. Aside from the charitable success of the ergathon, it was a beautiful event for the whole squad to bond over, having spent little to no time on the river together that term. There is nothing quite like meeting up with your teammates at 3am for a two-hour shift on the erg and sitting down on a seat that is already too warm for comfort!

Our Easter training camp was at Wimbleball Lake on Exmoor. On theme with the year, Wimbleball was wet, but even wetter due to the many capsize MCBC went through. Our head coaches, Rachel and Jess, made sure our novices finally got to experience the joys of rowing by immediately putting them in singles. Sounds terrifying, but the novices I am referring to are the new captains for the next academic year, so clearly it wasn't terrifying enough.

In Trinity, we finally saw something that we thought we might never see again, an OURC's green flag. I have never been as impressed with anyone's hard work as I was with our ex-novices this term. Most of them had only ever been in a boat a handful of times, but with the help of our brilliant W2 coach, Timea, and five training sessions a week, W2 made waves. In the meantime, our women's 4+ made it to Bedford Regatta in St Edmund Hall's new Filippi 4+ and won their category, taking home a beautiful tankard.



W1 crew huddle post-race on Saturday of Summer Vllls

Last but very far from least in our 'successful despite itself' season came Summer Vllls. This last week of the season brought double blades for the women's side – an accumulation of ten bumps across our two crews, with both crews going up a division. And this was despite W1 having only five members able to participate in all the training and having to find subs a couple days before the first day of Vllls, and W2 learning to row that very term. Eights Week exhibited a fierce unity in the crews and throughout the women's side and MCBC. Our coxes, Daniel Orton (2023) and Victor Chu (2022), had not yet had the chance to navigate the beautiful chaos of Bumps, Daniel coming to the Isis from the Tideway, and Victor usually sitting in one of the opposite-facing seats of the boat. They adjusted to it remarkably well and their commitment to the perfect racing line and transformative racing calls was unmatched. It was a shame for Daniel's hyper-detailed race plan (which he spent many hours on) that W1 bumped before the Gut every day.

The most remarkable thing about the 2023–24 women's side has been their complete inability to settle for anything less than their dreams and goals. Merton women have been absolutely restless and stubborn, their minds tunnel-visioned on success. It has certainly paid off.

**Becka Pickard (2022)**

Women's Rowing Captain 2023–24



## Tennis

Merton tennis this year proved itself to be a brilliant way to mix undergraduate and postgraduate freshers. Weekly social sessions were run on Sundays with Mansfield which always had the courts filled to the brim with people learning the game and enjoying Leila and Flav's carefully crafted playlist. In Trinity Merton defied the odds, defeating the strong teams of Exeter and Christ Church on our way to the semi-finals of Cuppers. A brilliant performance which saw us overcoming several Blues players.

With our own personal courts and racquets provided by the MCR (found at the Holywell Porters' Lodge), Merton offers the opportunity to start or continue to play tennis, a gift that was taken up by JCR, MCR and Fellows alike, particularly in the summer. I hope to get more and more people out to the courts to make use of this and to help them realise that tennis is, in fact, the best sport.

**Marc Giroux de Foiard Brown (2022)**  
Merton Tennis Captain 2023–24



## Netball

After climbing three divisions last year, the Merton netball team has held its position in Division 2 this year against some very tough competition. One of our strongest elements has been the enthusiasm and commitment of the players, which meant that we played almost every match in Michaelmas and Hilary as well as running weekly training. In Trinity, there were no league matches but we enjoyed friendly games with other colleges.

Although we lost in the Cuppers tournament, the team should still be commended for their excellent playing and, more importantly, the positive energy they brought in the face of setbacks. We will miss those who are leaving this year, but we look forward to welcoming new players next year and hopefully continuing to improve our position within the league.

**Jemima Freeman (2022) and Eleanor Bogie (2021)**  
Netball Co-Captains 2023–24



## Cricket

2024 was a season of both dominance and disappointment for the Mansfield & Merton cricket team (the Ms). We turned in a series of strong performances throughout the season, winning all but one of our competitive games including comprehensive victories over the 2023 respective league and Cuppers winners, New and Balliol. However, our one loss of the season came at a time when it mattered most as we were defeated by a strong Pembroke team in the Cuppers quarter-finals. Frustratingly, despite winning every game in our group of the league, an ill-considered bonus points system led to us falling short of the threshold required to advance to the quarter-finals of the league.

On the pitch, the Ms showcased their brilliance in all facets of the game. We opened strongly at the top of the batting order, rarely conceding early wickets and regularly reaching scores of 120 and above, with our highest score of 144 being made against Balliol, thanks to an imposing 74 from Cuppers veteran Tom Corner (2019). Our destructive bowling attack seldom allowed batting teams to score triple figures, proving especially unstoppable against New College, who were bowled out for just 51 in our first league fixture. Opening the bowling, Nathaniel Davey's fast out-swingers consistently sent skilled opening batters back to the pavilion to give us an early lead and, later on in the innings, the off breaks by Christopher Sneddon (2023) frequently spun the game on

its head to restrict the opposition's total. Further successes could be found in our fielding, as superb catching and ground fielding were exhibited by all. Particular commendations must go to Cass McDonald (2020), who took a number of catches in the deep, Nathaniel Davey (2022) who took an unexpected and brilliant one-handed grab against Jesus College, and Christopher Sneddon (2023), who, in the last game of the season against St Catherine's, took two diving one-handed screamers off my own bowling in the space of a few balls to make it seem like he was just doing it for fun!

Able led by our captain Ahmed Ittihad Hasib (Mansfield, 2020) in his final year playing for the Ms, the spirit that we showed as a team was admirable, with each and every player displaying a competitive attitude while, above all, having fun. Even when things did not seem to be going our way, every player supported their teammates, allowing for great recoveries such as the game-winning lower order partnership between Alex Higson (2023) and Kieran Wetherick (2020) against Jesus College in what was to be the final league fixture of the season. Overall, every single player should be proud of what they have achieved this year, and we have built a great platform for future success.

**Ben Harper (Mansfield, 2024)**  
Cricket Vice-Captain 2023-24

# Hockey

This year the Merton-Mansfield hockey team had big shoes to fill following the Cuppers win last year, but once again the team has been quite successful. Highlights of the year include getting to the semi-finals of the Trinity Cuppers tournament, and a very fun alumni game followed by a brilliant pub trip, and lots of great memories made. The consistent turnout of our players shows that the team is not just successful on the pitch but has also become a lovely group of friends. Last year saw lots of our seasoned players graduate and so many of the team were new to both the sport and the University this year, but this did not deter us and the Ms were ready to take on the challenge of a new season.

As usual, the season consists of two different tournaments: the college Cuppers tournament played knock-out style in Trinity, and the college league competition played across Michaelmas and Hilary terms. Thanks to our success last year, we were once again in the first division of the college league, leading to great matches with strong competition.

The year was off to a good start, with a number of sign-ups from both Merton and Mansfield during their respective college freshers' fairs for our taster session at Iffley. We saw new freshers attending and also a number of older years wanting to try hockey for the first time, which was brilliant to see. Following this, the next week was our first match of the season. Unfortunately, the scoreline didn't reflect the effort and grit of the team, but luckily it did not deter them from turning up for the rest of term, and finally getting our first win a few weeks into term against St Anne's/Brasenose.

After a rocky start in Michaelmas, frozen pitches and opposition unable to field teams, we finally had our first match of Hilary at the end of January – and we were off to a great start, beating Wadham/Queens/Trinity 6–4! Unfortunately, this term saw a lot of rearranged OUHC matches on Sundays and so we could not play as much as we wanted to. It should be noted that many Merton-Mansfield players have also risen to University level, with some students from college even playing at Blues level.



The beginning of Trinity saw the start of the much-anticipated Cuppers tournament. Our first match was well fought against Balliol/Univ, who had to concede on a technicality but still offered a great friendly. This meant the Ms were into the quarter-finals, where we played Catz/Somerville and won 2–1, seeing us through to the semi-finals. In this match we braved the heat and took on New College, resulting in a well-matched game with lots of effort from all players, a brilliant goal, and some excellent saves. However, a lucky counterattack from New saw the final score at a 2–1 loss for the Ms. The great takeaway from this tournament should be the immense effort and dedication from the players this year, with one match even seeing a turnout of 17 people!

Overall, it has been an honour to captain the team this year. Seeing everyone turn up throughout the whole season and put in their all was brilliant and I cannot thank them all enough. To those leaving, I wish you all well and hope that people will come back to play in the annual alumni game. I truly think that after having this season to bond, next year the team will be stronger than ever. To everyone playing, I wish you all the best and good luck!

**Imy Halliwell (2021)**  
M&M Hockey Captain 2023–24

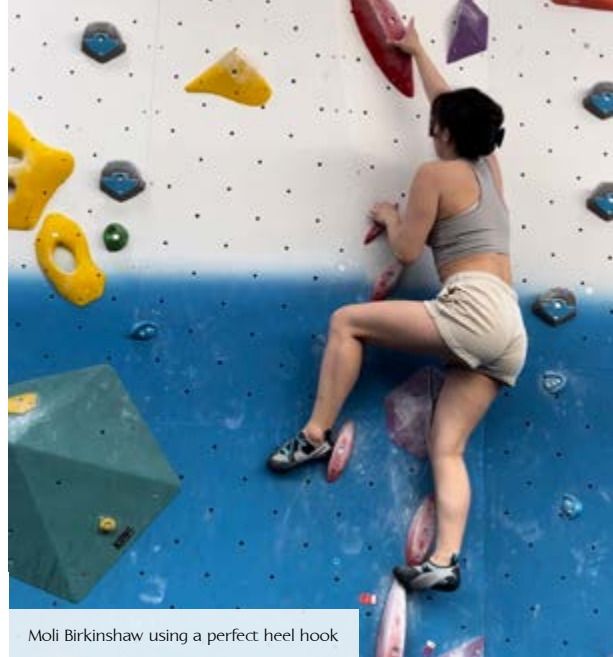


The social aspect of climbing: Matthew Campbell posing

## Climbing

The future of climbing at Merton is bright. Rock climbing, but particularly bouldering, has become increasingly popular across the world in recent years, and Oxford is by no means an exception: a new dedicated climbing centre opened this term, the third such facility around Oxford. So too in Merton has climbing proliferated. The 2023 cohort have proved to be particularly avid climbers, with experience gained in climbing gyms from across the UK and beyond. Ivan Pulich has emerged as a critical member of the younger climbing community. He has done Merton proud in competitions in both London and Oxford, as well as helping other climbers by setting climbs and lending his weight belt to the Merton gym.

However, no mention of the avid younger climbers in Merton would be complete without praising Matthew Campbell, Moli Birkinshaw, Eloise Partridge (all 2023) and Eddie Day (2020). The social aspect of climbing is often unappreciated but is a definite part of the sport. Nothing helps you top out like a friendly cheer from below; nothing helps improve your technique and keeps you pushing like the challenge of a friend; and nothing makes previously unassailable walls assailable like the beta spraying\* of your friend. These younger climbers have proved their dedication to the sport, getting the most out of each other by their joint ventures on



Moli Birkinshaw using a perfect heel hook

the climbing walls. It has been fantastic to see them grow to be better friends and better climbers.

The older generations of Merton climbers are just as keen to improve and extend their climbing ability. More Mertonians in higher years have been climbing this year. French exchange student Héloïse Bertrand joined the ranks of climbers this year, and special mention must go to Ivo Elgueta and Marc Giroux de Foyard Brown (both 2022) for showing particular enthusiasm, participating in early morning and late evening climbing sessions, even after exams. Ivo has spent more time on the wall every session, showing remarkable progress in both his technique and grip strength.

Over the summer we aim to improve our technique and strength in gyms across the world. I very much look forward to seeing all the tricky climbs our lovely Mertonians have tackled when we are back for Michaelmas.

\*Beta spraying: when one climber tells another how to climb something when they weren't asked to

**Lars Hofflin (2022)**

Rock Climbing/Bouldering Captain 2023–24



Marshmallows team photo after competing in the Frisbee Cuppers in May

## Ultimate Frisbee

The Merton Marshmallows have enjoyed their inaugural year as Merton's first-ever ultimate frisbee team, and it's been a great joy co-captaining them alongside Jake Anderson and Kevin Miner. Many of us started Michaelmas never having played the sport before, and it has been fantastic to see how we have all grown as a team and honed our frisbee-playing abilities. Our progress has been evident in the way we went from a record ratio of 0-to-6 wins to losses in Michaelmas to a 4-to-2 record in Hilary.

We also had a great performance at the Trinity Cuppers tournament. We may not have made it to the finals, but we showcased the exponential progress that we made over only two short terms, and had a wonderful, sunny Sunday full of frisbee. During Cuppers, there were many moments where our passing and movement on the field was completely in sync, and it was great to see how all our hard work over Michaelmas and Hilary had paid off. In addition to weekend games and the Cuppers tournament, we enjoyed weekly practices and many

informal scrimmages, where people had the opportunity to learn and play the sport in a more relaxed environment. After Sunday games, win or lose, the Marshmallows could always be found in Hall, enjoying each other's company and celebrating a fun morning of frisbee over brunch.

In my opinion, ultimate frisbee has always been one of the most welcoming sports, which brings people together from all walks of life and across all levels of skill. Ultimate has no referees, a fact which requires everyone who plays to adhere to a code of mutual respect and sportsmanship. I truly believe that the Merton Marshmallows have exhibited this spirit of the game in their first season, and it has been an honour serving as their captain. I leave them in good hands for next year, and I can't wait to see how they continue to grow. I'll sign off with a final 'Let's goooooooooo Marshmallows!'

**Zoe Neirink (2023)**

Marshmallows Co-Captain 2023–24



## Badminton

The Merton and Mansfield badminton team has had a very successful year, reaching the quarter-finals of Cuppers and winning the league outright. The combination of veteran experience with dynamic new talent proved a potent combination throughout the year. Michaelmas and Hilary terms saw the team participate in Division 1 of the men's badminton league. We played five matches, winning four including a 5-1 victory against Pembroke, and 6-0 sweeps against Keble and Oriel. With the fifth match against second-placed Trinity ending in a draw, Merton and Mansfield comfortably ended up top of the table.

Trinity term was focused on Cuppers. We similarly started with a flying start, sweeping Magdalen 6-0. Unfortunately,

our next match against a quality Wadham side saw us go out 5-1. However, our players should be very proud of how they've played throughout the year, as our performance was a substantial improvement on previous years. Aside from our performance competitively, the club remains strong with much higher attendance rates at our Sunday sessions, even after a late night at a bop. The future looks bright, and we can't wait to see what the next year brings for the club.

**Jamie Ngo (2022)**

Badminton Co-Captain 2023-24



MI on day Four of Summer Eights

# Sports Overview

This year saw an impressive number of Blues and Half Blues particularly from freshers, including Eddie Bolland, who earned himself a Blue in rugby, Ivan Solomakhin, whose Blue was in football, Isabella Dowling, who earned a Blue in hockey, and Christopher Sneddon, whose Half Blue was in rackets. Joining their ranks was Dara Thaker (2021), whose Half Blue was in Dancesport: Ballroom and Latin and Éilish Farrelly (2021), whose Blue was in boxing. Alongside them were returning champions (all 2021) Euan Dyer, Blue in hockey, James McCulloch, Half Blue in athletics, and Tosia Lecka, Blue in golf; and Jack Pickering (2020), Blue in lawn tennis. Adding to her repeat Blue in squash, Grace Beglan (2022) competed at Lord's for her Blue in real tennis. For those unaware, Merton has one of only 45 real tennis courts in the world and it's just opposite the Porters' Lodge. Be sure to give it a go!

As you will have read in the preceding pages, Merton has had a particularly successful year of sport. Special mention must go to the women's football team who were truly dominant in their league and in Cuppers. It is with College sports particularly in mind that I would like to thank and shine light on the individuals who work so hard out of view to help make all this possible. The AMALGAS committee (Merton and Mansfield's joint sporting body) headed by the chair Jonathan Prag and the Domestic Bursar Tim Lightfoot were pivotal in enabling us to enjoy the sports we love. Thanks must also go to James Lisle, our groundskeeper, who is a true master of the craft and who genuinely wishes to do the best possible job which, as anyone who has seen our grounds can attest to, he succeeds at doing.

**Marc Giroux de Foiard Brown (2022)**

JCR Sports Representative 2023–24

## Blues and Half Blues

### *New Full Blues and Half Blues awarded in 2023–24*

|                            |                                 |
|----------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Grace Beglan (2022)        | Squash and Real Tennis          |
| Eddie Bolland (2023)       | Rugby                           |
| Euan Dyer (2021)           | Hockey                          |
| Isabella Dowling (2023)    | Hockey                          |
| Éilish Farrelly (2021)     | Boxing                          |
| Antonina Lecka (2021)      | Golf                            |
| James McCulloch (2021)     | Athletics                       |
| Jack Pickering (2020)      | Tennis                          |
| Christopher Sneddon (2023) | Rackets                         |
| Ivan Solomakhin (2023)     | Football                        |
| Dara Thaker                | Dancesport (Ballroom and Latin) |
| Matthew Tweddell (2022)    | Golf in 2022–2023               |

## Haigh Ties

Rosie Chen (2022)  
Victor Chu (2022)  
Nathaniel Davey (2022)  
Alexander Fagan (2020)  
Christopher Houseley (2022)  
Jess Lonnen (2022)  
Cassian McDonald (2020)  
Rebecca Pickard (2022)  
Ty Rallens (2012)  
Ada Settineri (2023)  
Christopher Sneddon (2023)  
Benedict Verdin (2022)

# Clubs & Societies



A Merton Floats performance of *All's Well That Ends Well*



## Merton Floats

Continuing the annual tradition of the Merton Garden Play, we staged *All's Well That Ends Well* in 6th Week of Trinity – a lesser-known Shakespeare play full of romance, trickery and humour, which we wanted to bring back into the spotlight.

We began recruiting cast and crew in the Easter vac, of whom about half were Mertonians. In our initial crew meetings, we figured out the aesthetic of the show, inspired by 1930s fashion and the Mediterranean (the play is set in France and Italy). The main set piece was a garden arch draped with purple curtains, flowers and fairy lights, which formed a beautiful backdrop for our stage in Fellows' Garden – and inspired our amazing poster, designed by Caroline Longley (2020).

Rehearsals began in Week 1 and working with the actors was very rewarding; they brought so much talent and enthusiasm, often adding to our discussions about their characters, and learning hundreds of lines in less than six weeks.

As show week approached, we were prepared for our dress and tech rehearsals, but the weather had other ideas. Therefore, our opening night was also the first night we actually performed the show with the full tech, dress and stage set-up. Despite this, the show went brilliantly – even



The opening of a performance of *All's Well That Ends Well*

when, 20 minutes from the end, an unexpected downpour drove us into the TS Eliot Theatre. The next day, we moved everything over to the Sports Pavilion because of wet weather, but everyone adapted impressively to performing in three venues across two nights.

Fortunately, for the remaining shows, we were back in the garden, with clear weather and sold-out audiences. The play was a hit and all was indeed well that ended well, with a fabulous final night accompanied by the sounds of kazoos and laughter.

Garden plays are a unique experience, often requiring more work than a traditional theatre. We could not have done ours without the dedication of our wonderful cast and crew, who not only excelled in their official roles but also pitched in with setting up the tech, building the set, carting chairs across town, and much more.

We are so pleased to have added *All's Well That Ends Well* to the garden play tradition and look forward to whatever comes next year.

**Jemima Freeman (2022)**

Incoming Merton Floats Co-President 2024–25



Above and right: The garden play, 2024



A performance of *Julius Caesar* in the TS Eliot Theatre

## Other plays, other places

As the co-director of last year's garden play *Twelfth Night* (alongside Lukas Ruediger and Rowena Sears, both 2021), I wanted to explore other opportunities available for drama at Merton.

After performing in the Univ Chapel Play in Michaelmas this year, I worked with the director to put on *Julius Caesar* in the TS Eliot Theatre in Hilary, and *The Tempest* in the Chapel in Trinity. In doing so, we revived two traditions: collaboration between the Merton Floats and the Univ Players, and the Merton Chapel Play.

It was exciting to explore spaces that are not typically used for theatre. The TS Eliot Theatre proved to be an intimate venue with exciting opportunities for lighting, and the Chapel was incredibly atmospheric.

**Kate Harkness (2021)**

Merton Floats Co-President 2023–24

I am really proud of our community, and I can only see it growing and flourishing in the future. As a fourth-year student I found sharing my knowledge with the younger years very fulfilling, as well as discussing career and academic plans with my fellow older chemists. I wish everyone the best and thank them for these amazing four years.

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## Cupcakes at the 2024 Garden Party

# Halsbury Society

The Halsbury Society has enjoyed a fantastic year, hosting and offering a variety of events, speakers and opportunities for Merton students.

In Michaelmas term, the society hosted its first subject tea of the year as a friendly welcome for the incoming freshers. This acted as the first of a series of termly subject teas across the academic year, giving members of Merton's law community the chance to catch up and socialise in an informal setting. These teas were also where the society welcomed a number of special guests: Professor Rebecca Williams, Karl Laird and Dr Rory Gregson. Later in the term, members of the law community at Merton were lucky enough to go to Slaughter and May's London office for the annual meeting of the Merton Lawyers' Association. This event was attended widely by Mertonian legal practitioners and featured a conversation with Lord Pannick KC and Nick Allard (1974) facilitated by Katie Ratcliffe (2014). Another notable event of the term was the opportunity for a number of law students and those students interested in law to attend a sponsored dinner with leading law firm Sullivan & Cromwell at The Ivy Restaurant.

In Hilary term, the society welcomed a number of alumni to come and speak to the students. At the beginning of the term, the second and third years were treated to a seminar run by Rebecca Davies (2011), Ben Parry-Smith (2002) and Scott Goldstein. We were also lucky enough to welcome Imran Afzal (2003) to give a talk to students about his time at Merton and provide advice on how to make the most of your short but enriching time at Merton. It was also in Hilary term that the society hosted its annual Halsbury Society Lecture, this year featuring Sir Ernest Ryder. Sir Ernest gave an engaging talk entitled 'Privilege, Boris Johnson and the High Court of Parliament'. Sir Ernest gave students a highly informative and insightful talk about the Boris Johnson inquiry, offering a unique perspective.

In Trinity term, we welcomed Sir Paul Mahoney (1964) as guest of honour at the annual Halsbury Subject Dinner. It was interesting to hear about and learn from his rich experience in the law and to hear the advice he offered our



current students. His speech offered helpful guidance for our own future career paths, and his particular emphasis on taking every opportunity and not having to have your career path completely mapped out from the beginning was well received and comforting to hear.

Trinity term also included several farewells and new beginnings for members of the Merton law community. I would like to take this opportunity to thank our current head tutor, Dr Natalie Mrockova, who has been the wonderful and welcoming face of law at Merton for the past year and is stepping down from the role. We wish her all the best in her future pursuits. At the final subject tea of the academic year, we were lucky to meet our new head law tutor for the next academic year, Dr Rory Gregson, and we thoroughly look forward to seeing him in his new role. For the departing finalists, the annual Halsbury Society Garden Party was a great chance for the rest of us to say goodbye and wish them all the best in their future endeavours.

It has been an honour to serve as president of the Halsbury Society this year, and I am grateful to the rest of the committee for all their help and support in making it possible. It is with great pleasure that I hand over to Millie Sandom (2023) as president for next year and look forward to her taking the society to even greater heights.

**Chris Houseley (2022)**

Halsbury Society President 2023–24



## Roger Bacon Society

This year was a fantastic one for the Roger Bacon Society, the physics community at Merton.

As always, the first event of the year was the Physics Tea, during which older physicists imposed their wisdom on the incoming freshers, such as warning them about the infamous HT5 problem sheet. College parents united with their children for the first time, starting a friendship which will support them during their time at Merton.

The second event of the year, the long-awaited Physics Dinner, was held in Hilary term, bringing the entire Merton physics community together. As always, the food was fantastic and the beverages plentiful. The Physics Dinner also marked the end of the week-long campaign, for the Roger Bacon Society president. Despite being the first candidate without a traditional campaign video, Camilo Mosquera (2020) was elected as the new president, winning the election with a record 1 to 0 votes against RON. The evening concluded with a social gathering in the JCR, which featured inspiring discussions between the students, as well as Professor Alan Barr's amazing performance at ping-pong.

Trinity term featured the final event of the year, the Physics Garden Party. Despite the rain turning the 'garden party' into a 'JCR party', the physicists' happy spirits were not extinguished. Taking place at the start of Week 7, the party was attended by almost the entire physics community, providing a much-needed break from intense exam preparations.

The Merton physics community also enjoyed the termly Occam lectures, which were followed by Formal Hall and an evening in the MCR or JCR. As always, the wine at the Formal was provided courtesy of the physics tutors.

Overall, this has been an excellent year for the Roger Bacon Society. I look forward to seeing how the society will continue to grow and flourish under Camilo's reign.

**Agnieszka Wierchucka (2020)**

Roger Bacon Society President 2023–24



The Mathematics Subject Dinner

## Mathematics Society

The Merton Mathematics Society had a fantastic year, with many exciting events and the society's first sponsored Subject Dinner.

Michaelmas began with the annual Mathematics Subject Tea, which was a fantastic chance to meet the first-year students and for everyone to catch up and hear about one another's summer vacation. The society enjoyed welcoming the new members over tea and snacks, and it was exciting to see all the returners after the long vacation.

The second years continued the tradition of holding weekly maths help sessions throughout the year. The help sessions provide a forum for students to ask each other questions and the opportunity for valuable mentoring, as well as fostering the undergraduate mathematics community at Merton. Many thanks to Ip Tsz Oi (2022) for leading these events.

The tutors in Mathematics also organised many great Mathematics events throughout the year. Distinguished speakers are invited termly for the Merton Mathematics Lecture, followed by drinks and Formal Hall. This year, the lectures were given by Professor Alison Etheridge FRS, Professor Marc Lackenby and Professor Martin Bridson FRS. Additionally, Merton graduate students and fourth-year undergraduate students gave talks to share their interests with the society in Hilary term in a graduate seminar and two undergraduate seminars.

One of the highlights of the academic year was the annual Subject Dinner in Hilary term. This year, the dinner was free for attendees thanks to the generous sponsorship of the maths and technology company Hudson River Trading. The society gathered for drinks in the New Common Room before packing into two tables for dinner in the Savile Room. With 50 attendees, a delicious three-course menu and carefully selected wine, the dinner proved a night to remember. Professor Yang-Hui He followed dinner with a hilarious yet moving speech. The only hiccup of the night was a shortage of wine late in the evening, which was quickly remedied by a generous donation from Professor James Newton and a dash to the nearest Sainsbury's.

In Trinity term, the Mathematics Garden Party was a laid-back break from exam preparations. Although the weather unfortunately sent the garden party inside, the MCR was a cosy setting for an afternoon of chatting, toy gun sharpshooting and poker.

We are excited to pass the torch next year to the new pair of presidents for 2024–25, Beatrice Bannister (2022) and Rosanna Chen (2022), who will almost surely (i.e. with probability one) do a superb job.

**Kieran DeWalt (2021) and Ivan Vasenov (2021)**  
Mathematics Society Co-Presidents 2023–24



Shilpi Nanda Conducts the Fidelio Orchestra playing Elgar's *Chanson de Matin*



Antonia McClintock conducts Fidelio's wind and brass players playing a *La La Land* medley



## Music Society

Merton College Music Society has had a busy year! Michaelmas term saw the annual Freshers' Concert, which had both strong participation and attendance from those new to Merton this year. The society also organised a successful Composer Showcase Concert in November, giving student composers the chance to have their works performed for the first time by student ensembles.

The Fidelio Orchestra, which we run jointly with University College, gave concerts in Hilary and Trinity terms in Merton Chapel. Highlights from this year's repertoire included Mozart's *Sinfonia Concertante* – a double concerto for violin and viola, with Mertonian Ella McLoughlin (2022) playing the violin solo – as well as a selection of film music from *Pirates of the Caribbean*, *La La Land* and *Cinema Paradiso*. At both concerts the orchestra was conducted by student conductors, with Gabriel Dass (2023), Cecilia Loughney

(2023) and Antonia McClintock (2022) all making their conducting debuts this year.

This year has also seen the return of the Kodály Choir, led by masters' students Olivia Earl (2022) and Henry Le Faber Robertson. The choir gave a short recital at the start of Trinity term and is looking forward to continued activity next year. We have hosted numerous solo recitals given by both Mertonians and non-Mertonians, including Ella McLoughlin, François Cloete and Olivia Earl (all 2022), Cecilia Loughney (2023), Wilkie Robson (Univ, 2021), Amy Higgins (New, 2021) and Diana Chang (St Peter's, visiting student). Overall, it has been a fun and rewarding year, and we look forward to next year's events.

**Antonia McClintock (2022)**

Merton College Music Society President 2023–24

# Tinbergen Society

In my final year as a biology student at Merton, it has been a pleasure to lead the Tinbergen Society as president.

The year has featured many moments of excitement. The first speaker event, organised by previous president Henry Grub (2016), received coverage on local and national news outlets due to it attracting protest from the Oxfordshire Badger Group. Fortunately, heightened security of the College allowed the talk — delivered by Professor Rosie Woodroffe and explaining the scientific evidence *against* the badger cull, contrary to what might be assumed from the protest — to proceed successfully. Not only did the talk explain the many reasons why it is hard for badger culling to be efficacious in the fight against bovine tuberculosis, but it also emphasised the importance of scrutinising the empirical evidence behind governmental policy.

This tumultuous start to the year did not dissuade us from hosting another talk in Michaelmas, in conjunction with the Oxford University Biological Society. Professor Peter Holland's talk was sans controversy but with many inspiring words; his talk, entitled 'The animal kingdom: a personal journey from amphioxus to gerbils', recounted the twists and turns of his 35-year career. This gave the audience of primarily undergraduates an invaluable insight into life in academia and much entertainment, given Peter's talent for public speaking.

The Tinbergen Society's programme of talks was punctuated by our annual trip to RSPB Otmoor to watch the starling murmuration. A fleet of taxis delivered us to the reserve car park, from which we began the journey to the viewpoint. There was never a boring moment, as we were entertained by marsh harriers, innumerable species of wildfowl, and clouds of golden plovers and lapwings overhead. And soon enough these wading birds were replaced with clouds of starlings instead, the flocks undulating and contorting into myriad forms. The display was prolonged, but once the starlings had swooped down into their roost site for the night, we continued our journey on to the Abingdon Arms for a warming dinner.

Hilary term saw the pinnacle of the Tinbergen Society's events calendar with the annual Tinbergen Lecture and dinner.

Starlings treat Tinbergen Society members to an aerobatics display



To deliver this year's lecture I invited Dr Adam Rutherford, UCL lecturer, BBC broadcaster (of *Inside Science* notoriety, alongside other projects), and author of books including *Control: The Dark History and Troubling Present of Eugenics*. Adam's talk was titled 'Eugenics and the misuse of Mendel' and argued for a change in how we teach genetics in order to avoid perpetuating potentially very harmful beliefs and ideas surrounding race and other traits. The thought-provoking discussion was continued at the annual dinner, and through till late at the very enjoyable second desserts in the MCR.

The year drew to a close with the final talk in Trinity. This was another joint event with OUBS, featuring Lucy Cooke, alumna of New College and another well-known face in the BBC broadcasting world. She is also a prolific author, with one of her books being *Bitch: On the Female of the Species*, providing the basis for her talk, 'Has evolutionary biology been hijacked by sexist bias?' Evolutionary biology has a history of males being assumed to be the more active and 'interesting' sex, but Lucy's fascinating talk proved that this is certainly not the case.

The successful organisation of these events would have been much more difficult without the help of many people, principal among them being Éilish Farrelly (2021), the society's vice-president this year. I'm looking forward to watching the society develop over the next year under the incoming president, Sara McHugh (2023).

**James McCulloch (2021)**  
Tinbergen Society President 2023–24

# 1980 Society

This year, the 1980 Society has gone from strength to strength, expanding throughout College and beyond by strengthening links with other colleges and alumni.

We have continued to hold staple events such as the bi-weekly 'Wine and Whine' with topics ranging from serious and personal, in discussing abortion and feminist literature, to more light-hearted and entertaining, on JoJo Siwa and last summer's double blockbuster 'Barbenheimer'. The friendly and relaxed environment encouraged students across all years to interact and form stronger bonds, with every conversation provoking thoughtful comments and providing us with insights into a multitude of opinions and analyses on topical events. This was further developed by our intercollegiate events with Balliol and Queen's College, allowing us to foster relations with other feminist societies and exchange our views and experiences.

In addition to 'Wine and Whine', we continued hosting a termly 'Cake and Compliments' in collaboration with the JCR Welfare Reps. The evening acts as a reminder of the heartwarming Mertonian community, who write notes to be pigged to their friends across the College and also provides an excuse to indulge in delicious cake.

After the huge success of last year's alumni dinner, commemorating 40 years of women at Merton, this Michaelmas term's landmark event was the panel conversation 'Breaking new ground – pioneering women at Merton', hosted in 7th Week. Isabelle Bland (2022) and I were lucky enough to interview the panellists: Usha Goswami (Merton's first female JRF and neuroscience professor at King's College, Cambridge), Gwen Burnyeat (JRF in Anthropology with a special focus on the Colombian peace process) and Alison Blake (first female Governor of the Falkland Islands and Commissioner for South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands). They spoke about their time at Merton and their journeys since, imparting valuable lessons and telling humorous anecdotes. It was especially inspiring to hear from such successful women about their experience of gender in their careers, and how they have built networks of support to help them progress.



At the International Women's Day drinks reception. From left: Isabelle Bland, Helen Craske, Chloé Deambrogio, Lucy Brookes, Patricia Thornton, Mathilde Persidat

The event helped cement links between the women of Merton across the decades, and in the future we hope that the 1980 Society will continue to be a valuable connection between alumni and current students. This coming Michaelmas, we are excited to be hosting another panel and reconnect event and look forward to inviting alumni to join.

Another highlight of the year was the International Women's Day Formal and drinks reception where the students were able to come together and celebrate with the women\* Fellows. It was lovely to see Helen Craske (JRF) deliver a truly inspiring speech about her experience at Merton to a room of supportive and strong women\*. We expect that this event will set a precedent and the 1980 Society can look forward to further participation from the members of the SCR with the help of our new senior member, Lorna Hutson (Professor of English Literature), whose support and enthusiasm we value highly.

Finally, none of this year's events and achievements would have been possible without the help of the society's committee, so I would like to thank Jessica Lonnen (2022), Isabelle Bland (2022) and Georgia Hall (2022) for their dedication and support. It has been an honour to take on an active role in the 1980 Society and I hope that the events this year have been as enriching and fulfilling for the members of the Merton community as I have found them.

**Mathilde Persidat (2022)**  
1980 Society President 2023–24

\*women is to represent the broader definition of 'women' to include non-binary and other gender-marginalised groups

# Poetry Society

The Merton College Poetry Society (MCPS) has had a productive year, holding weekly, themed meetings involving readings, structured workshops and writing activities. Each term concluded with the issue of a new wonderful edition of the society's pamphlet *Pekes and Pollicles*, edited by Hannah Radley (2022) and designed by Florence Wolter (2022). The submissions this year from students both in College and abroad have been fantastic, and we cannot be more grateful and proud of what we as a society have produced.

In our first year co-running the society, myself, Flo and Hannah hoped to cultivate a warm environment for everyone to share their poetry. Some of the stand-out meetings this year included a blackout poetry workshop, blind artistic reproductions of ekphrastic poems, deep-diving into poetry in translation, and *Frankenstein*-ing new poems from old scraps with cut-and-paste poems. Other highlights included our termly Welfare crossover, which involved some poetry-related crafts activities, and the Merton Chapel crossover, a candlelit organ recital by François Cloete (2022) accompanied by readings by members of the society.

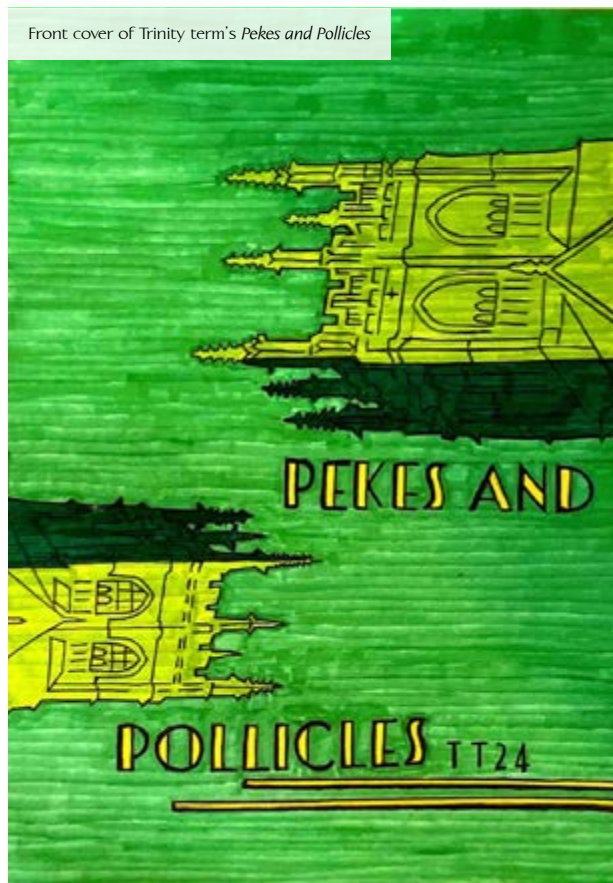
Co-running MCPS has been an absolute pleasure this year. The attendance and creativity we have seen from everyone in the society has been amazing to see, and we hope to see this flourish further next year. As it is our Finals, myself, Hannah and Florence will be passing the torch on to Ishbel Hallam, Freddy Chelsom and Eryn Greenaway (all 2023). We're looking forward to seeing what they come up with next year!

A huge thank you to Florence and Hannah for being the absolute dream team, and best of luck to Ishbel, Freddy and Eryn, whom I have no doubt will be fantastic.

**Joshua Carn (2020)**

Poetry Society Co-President 2023–24

Front cover of Trinity term's *Pekes and Pollicles*





Sir Brian Leveson speaking to the Bodley Club in Hilary term

## Bodley Club

Since being founded as a literary discussion group in 1894, the Bodley Club has evolved into Merton's speaker society, with this year's talks drawing a broad audience from across the University.

A wonderfully informative first talk came from a titan in the Law, Sir Brian Leveson, former President of the Queen's Bench Division and Head of Criminal Justice. Sir Brian gave a fascinating talk about his impressive life and career ranging from his first days at Merton to the inquiry for which he is perhaps most well known. His talk blended the many threads of his life into such a perfectly pitched mix of humour, wisdom and advice that it set a very high bar for our future speakers.

This bar was, however, met by our second speaker, Merton's own Dr James Kempton (2011), who recently received publicity for his team's rediscovery of Attenborough's lost echidna in the Cyclops Mountains of Indonesian New Guinea. James provided us with a gripping overview of the expedition itself (no gory details spared), alongside a thought-provoking reflection on the nature of scientific evidence and what it means to have rediscovered a species that locals have

seen much more recently than western scientists. He also provided background on the wider aims of the expedition and his hopes for the future, which were compelling to listen to.

Our third speaker was arranged by our wonderful secretary Eleanor Clark (2023), who invited George Zachariah (1991), a Merton alumnus now working for the UN. George gave us a captivating overview of his role in peacekeeping processes in a variety of countries, highlighting the nuances and more general themes in each situation. The talk left us with many points to reflect on about the current global situation as well as a much better understanding of the breadth and variety of the work the UN does.

A particular highlight of this year was our annual Bodley Club Dinner, held in Hilary for members and guests in the SCR. As ever, we are indebted to our senior member, Fra' John Eidinow, without whom none of this would have been possible. We look forward to seeing what the next year holds.

**Bea Bannister (2022)**  
Co-President 2023–24



Guests assembled for the black-tie dinner

# Harvey Society

The Harvey Society is Merton’s medical society and this year we held a variety of events for our community of tutors, pre-clinical and clinical students. The year began with our welcome tea for the freshers in early Michaelmas. As always, this was a lovely opportunity for the new cohort to meet and ask questions of those in the years above.

Later in Michaelmas we hosted our ever-exciting annual black-tie dinner. The event started with a prosecco reception in the SCR. Here, we welcomed Professor Mariam Knight MBE, who gave an engaging talk about her research in perinatal epidemiology. This included details of the impact she has had with the use of population-based approaches through programmes such as the UK Obstetric Surveillance System (UKOSS) and the International Network of Obstetric Survey Systems (INOSS).

The date 8 June 2024 marked the centenary of the disappearance of Sandy Irvine (2021) and George Mallory during their 1924 expedition, which would have been the first ascent of Mount Everest. Irvine was honoured by the Harvey Society with a commemorative event.

The day commenced with an exhibition of Sandy’s life in the Upper Mob Library, kindly opened by Dr Julia Walworth to members of the Harvey Society. This exhibition showcased a rich collection of artifacts from Irvine’s life. Irvine was well liked at Merton and rowed in the Oxford–Cambridge boat race twice. Highlights of the exhibition included his college battels, a photograph of Irvine rowing with Merton’s 1st VIII, a replica of his mountaineering attire, and letters exchanged between Sandy and his family which revealed poignant insights into his character and aspirations.



Harvey Society garden party

The exhibition was followed by a wonderful lecture from Dr Sundeep Dhillon, MBE (St Edmund Hall, 1988), open to all members of the College. For four years Dr Dhillon was the youngest person in the world to have climbed the Seven Summits (the highest mountain on each continent), as well as practising as a military GP and being part of an Xtreme Everest research expedition. His lecture masterfully blended science, history and personal narrative. He delved into the physiology of high-altitude climbing, recounting his own Everest experiences, and shedding light on the details of Irvine's ill-fated expedition.

The day concluded with a garden party held in Fellows' Garden. Over snacks and refreshments, we were free to ask Dr Dhillon our many questions about his expeditions, reflecting on the day's insights and commemorating Irvine's adventurous spirit.

It has been a pleasure to serve as the Harvey Society president this year and I am grateful to Ella McLoughlin (2022) for her help. I am delighted to hand the presidency over to Lilli Ganzer (2022) for the next year and look forward to seeing the further development of the society.

**Romilly Gosling (2021)**

Harvey Society President 2023–24

# Interdisciplinary Groups





An original button from the Chernobyl control room

## Ockham Lectures

The termly Ockham (or Occam) lectures have been key events in the physics calendar for the past ten years. As always, the line-up of lecturers was fantastic, from galaxy formation to the secrets of the Chernobyl disaster — this year the Merton physicists have heard it all!

The year was kicked off by Professor Ilya Nemenman, visiting Merton from Emory College of Arts and Sciences, Atlanta. In his lecture he discussed the emergent laws of physics and biological simplicity, in relation to complex living systems. During Hilary term, the focus was shifted from microscopic to astrophysical scales, with a lecture by Professor Charlotte Mason (2013), an associate professor at the Niels Bohr Institute, University of Copenhagen. Professor Mason's lecture focused on the current picture of galaxy formation and how it is being tested by the James Webb Space Telescope. The Trinity term lecture was given by

another Merton alumnus, Malcom Crick (1977). Among his many roles throughout the years, Malcolm served as the director of the secretariat of UNSCEAR (the United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation). He presented an analysis of the effects of radiation, with the example of the Chernobyl disaster, in which he was one of the first international responders.

Naturally the celebrations did not end but rather began with each lecture. Following the conversation-stimulating presentations, students and professors enjoyed a lively formal dinner in Hall, and an evening in the JCR or MCR. Many fantastic conversations (and ping-pong games) were had by all.

**Agnieszka Wierchucka (2020)**  
Roger Bacon Society President



## History of the Book Group

The History of the Book Group met three times this year.

Some medieval manuscripts are so special that they acquire a name of their own, rather than the usual reference number. This is the case with the 'Bodley Alexander', a magnificent richly decorated 14th-century book containing the medieval tale of Alexander the Great. On 2 November 2023, Professor Sarah McNamer of Georgetown University gave a talk entitled 'A book for a boy? A new look at the Bodley Alexander'. As her title suggests, there has been much speculation about who the intended recipient of this book might have been. Examining the illuminated scenes of young men playing games and learning chivalric skills found at the foot of many pages, Professor McNamer made a case that the book was made for the young Prince Lionel of Antwerp (1338–68), son of Edward III and Philippa of Hainault. The manuscript itself is too valuable to lend, but the Bodleian did provide a copy of the facsimile of the manuscript for attendees to leaf through following the talk.

It has become an annual tradition for the Merton History of the Book Group and the Oxford Bibliographical Society to hold a joint meeting at Merton. On 23 November 2023, Dr Tamara Atkin (Queen Mary University of London) spoke about 'The Bodleian Library and the second-hand book trade in the early 17th century'. Through a careful study of account books kept by the Bodleian in the early decades of the 1600s, Dr Atkin has been able to identify some of the booksellers from whom the Bodleian purchased second-hand books to

build their collections. In many cases Dr Atkin could match the records of purchase with the books themselves, some of which contained bookseller codes and other markings. Dr Atkin's research encouraged attendees to think about the book-economy and the building of libraries in new ways.

The meeting in Trinity term stayed in the 17th century, but instead of a large academic library, focused on the large family library preserved at Lanhydrock, a country house in Cornwall, seat of the Robartes family. Sophie Aldred, lecturer in early modern history at Merton this year, spoke about her study of this library, accumulated for the most part by John Robartes (1606–85), a Parliamentarian and devout Puritan who negotiated the Restoration to hold high political offices. One of the fascinating features of the books at Lanhydrock is the evidence of use found in them, from children's doodles (Robartes had 13 children who survived infancy) to marginal annotations on the content. The broad range of subject matter found in the library was also impressive, from religious writings that were witness to the devotional life of the family to texts on medical subjects and even astronomy. Some volumes provide evidence that Robartes used them in preparing political speeches or to record his reactions: 'As for this History it is stuffed with many lies to my certain belief. JRobartes'. Sophie's talk was enjoyed by an enthusiastic audience, and the discussion continued afterwards during the traditional drinks.

**Julia Walworth**  
Fellow Librarian

## "Is the UK on track for Net Zero by 2050?"

### Merton College Net Zero Group talk featuring Chris Stark



## Net Zero Group

The Net Zero group continued its activities in 2024 and succeeded in attracting substantial interest from the alumni community.

The group's headline event of the year was a discussion hosted in the College with Chris Stark, then Chief Executive of the Climate Change Committee (CCC), in February 2024. 'Is the UK on track for Net Zero by 2050?' was the topic of the talk, which led to an informative and engaging hour of discussion covering scientific, legal and political aspects of the core question. Alumni, students and Fellows present at the event exchanged views over drinks prior to the talk. It is interesting to note that Chris Stark has since been appointed by Secretary of State Ed Miliband to lead 'Mission Control', tasked with delivering clean power to the UK by 2030.

Membership of the group has grown to 75, comprising old

Mertonians from various cohorts and disciplines who are interested in the topic. A six-member committee was formed in mid-2024 to frame the goals and plan future activities of the group. The group recognises the need to sharpen its focus along thematic lines, considering the breadth of the field it seeks to cover.

Founded by Matt Vickers (1990), Ria Miller (2008) and Nagadarsan Suresh (2021), Merton College Net Zero group (MCNZ) is open to all Mertonians. The group aims to connect alumni, students, staff and Fellows for discussions on decarbonisation and climate change from diverse perspectives. You can find and join the group via LinkedIn at [linkedin.com/groups/12777535](https://www.linkedin.com/groups/12777535)

**Nagadarsan Suresh (2021)**



## Biomedical and Life Sciences Network

The Merton College Biomedical and Life Sciences Network brings together past and present Mertonians who are involved in the biomedical and life sciences sector. One of the aims of the network is to provide an easy way for current students to find alumni to contact for advice or help, for example when looking for internships, jobs or academic posts. As an additional benefit, the network enables Mertonians engaged in research or work in similar fields to find out about and get in touch with each other. The network was created in March 2020 and is hosted on LinkedIn. It continues to grow and now comprises 200 members covering a range of occupations and geographical locations.

The organising committee for the network has also expanded and now consists of myself and Ethan Prince (2019) from alumni; and David Bernstein (2019), Salmana Nadeem (2020) and Aaron Syme (2022) from the current student body.

The highlight of the past year was the inaugural in-person alumni/student meeting held in College on Saturday 20 January 2024. The event was well attended by about 50 people, with roughly equal numbers of alumni and students. We were treated to three excellent presentations during the day. The first, by Chris Cooper (1994), was entitled 'What I want to do when I grow up: Tales of mid-career change in the



Coffee break at the Biomedical and Life Sciences day

biosciences'. Dr Cooper spoke entertainingly on his career path starting in academia and then switching to industry, first to a contract research organisation and more recently to a start-up biotech called Charm Therapeutics. The talk also contained much helpful advice for the students present. We were then privileged to hear Dr Andrew Allen (1984), who was visiting from the United States, tell us about his journey from being a medical student at Merton via clinical practice and management consultancy to the pharmaceutical industry and then finally to Gritstone Bio, of which he is CEO and co-founder. Lunch in Hall followed and, in the afternoon, a very enjoyable 'speed meeting' session gave attendees the chance to have short conversations with other delegates. The day ended with a fascinating lecture from Professor Hugh Watkins FRS on his research into 'Creating genetic therapies for inherited heart disease'.

Many thanks are due to Professor Matt Higgins of Merton for his support for and participation in the event and especially to Chelsea Chisholm and Danny Evans of the Development Office for their invaluable help in organising the day. I would also like to thank our three inspiring speakers and all who made the effort to attend and participate in such a successful

day, which I hope will be repeated.

In Michaelmas term, we held two online meetings. The first, organised by David Bernstein, focused on careers as a patent attorney. Our speakers were Khalil Davis (2014), Robert Stephen (1988) and a guest, Edd Cavanna, all of whom gave fascinating insights into their career progression and day-to-day working life. The other meeting took the broad theme of 'AI in the life sciences' and was organised by myself and Salmana Nadeem. Again, there were three speakers, two of whom were Mertonians: Jan Domański (2013), Keishi Kohara (2011), and a guest, Nikolas Thuesen. Those present benefited from highly engaging and informative presentations and the ensuing Q&A.

If you are interested in being part of this growing network or joining the organising committee, please either email me ([david.clark@merton.oxon.org](mailto:david.clark@merton.oxon.org)) or send me a connection invite on LinkedIn (you can find me by searching for 'David Clark Charles River'). I look forward to hearing from you.

**David Clark (1984)**

# Departments





## The Chapel

As I write my final report for *Postmaster*, I have much to be thankful for. It has been a privilege to lead the Chapel community over the past 22 years. The Chapel remains at the heart of the College. Its community continues to grow, and is more diverse than ever, attracting significant numbers of Mertonians and other members of the University, as well as local residents and visitors. That we now have five choral services a week during term would have been impossible to imagine back in 2002, as would the wide range of activities that are now a well-established part of our non-liturgical offering. All of the initiatives and achievements over the past two decades, not least the setting up of the Choral Foundation, have been the result of teamwork. I would therefore like to put on record my great gratitude to the lay and ordained colleagues, past and present (not least the four Wardens I have worked with), who have contributed in different ways to the Chapel's flourishing, as well as the student chapel officers, choir members and organ scholars, who have given so generously of their time and talents to enable all that we do, particularly those who are leaving Merton this academic year. As I have said on a number of occasions over the past few months, moving on from Merton is going to be hard, but I couldn't be more pleased to be doing so at a time when Chapel life is so vibrant.

This year the average attendance on Sunday evenings, excluding special services, has grown to 125. Once again, we have been pleased to welcome a range of visiting preachers, including: from among the College of Bishops, the Rt Revd Dr Nicholas

Chamberlain, Bishop of Grantham, and the Rt Revd Dr Steven Croft, Bishop of Oxford, who baptised and/or confirmed six candidates on the feast of Pentecost this year; Lydia Reese and Dr Michael Hahn, ordinand and tutor respectively, at Sarum College; the Revd Dr Mariama Ifode-Blease, Chaplain of St Edmund Hall; the Revd Canon Peter Moger, Sub Dean of Christ Church; the Revd Luke Larnier, Vicar of St Andrew's, Luton; Dr Eve Poole, OBE, writer and former Third Church Estates Commissioner; the Revd Sam Durley, Assistant Curate of St Mary's, Barton; the Very Revd Michael Tavinor, Dean Emeritus of Hereford; the Revd Dr Melanie Harrington-Haynes, Vicar of St Philip & All Saints and St Luke's, Kew; the Revd Canon Professor Mark Chapman, Vice-Principal of Ripon College, Cuddesdon; and the Revd Canon Leanne Roberts, Dean of Clergy Well-being in the Diocese of Southwark. The address at the Commemoration of Benefactors in Michaelmas term was given by our Tutor in Spanish, Dr Alice Brooke.

When the Revd Lyndon Webb arrived at Merton as Associate Chaplain in 2022, he was not anticipating that the Chaplain would disappear for nine months in 2023, and then leave for good the following year! I'm hugely grateful to him, not only for providing continuity and stability at a time of transition, but also for his creative and energetic input into the Chapel's programme. The College is extremely fortunate that he will be Acting Chaplain this Michaelmas.

**The Revd Canon Dr Simon Jones**  
Chaplain



## Associate Chaplain's report

As my second year as Associate Chaplain comes to an end, there is much to be grateful for. Thanks in no small part to our Acting Chaplain, the Revd Canon Dr Victoria Johnson, Michaelmas got off to a wonderful start. From the off, attendance at services has been consistently above average, and it has been a joy to see Fellows, staff and students engaging so warmly with the wider life of the Chaplaincy.

The Friday Book (and Cake) Group has continued to draw healthy numbers from across College; this year we read *Wolf Hall* by Hilary Mantel, *Babel* by RF Kuang, and *Victory City* by Salman Rushdie. The Gardening Group has also been well attended across all three terms; this year we have continued developing the beds which we cleared and/or created last year, and have added a grapevine to the apple trees and fruit bushes which form the perennial framework around which we are growing annuals. Next year we will add a cut-flower bed to the mix while continuing to grow the usual variety of fruit and veg.

At the end of Hilary term, it was a particular pleasure to lead a group of ten students, comprising undergraduates and graduates, on a pilgrimage to Granada. We spent one day at the Alhambra learning about Moorish history, and another visiting various Christian sites across the city, including the stunning Roman Catholic Cathedral and several monasteries; the trip ended with a night of traditional Flamenco music and a

glass or two of *vino tinto*. This was the first Chapel pilgrimage to take place after Covid, and we look forward to many more.

Closer to home, this year has seen the start of a wonderful discussion group, meeting each week around my dining table to discuss a wide range of faith questions. Over the summer we are reading *A History of the Bible* by John Barton (a light read!). It has also been a real joy to prepare five students, one chorister and one congregation member for baptism and/or confirmation at Pentecost, as well as continuing the Wednesday evening Catechesis & Pizza evenings for our choristers. This year we asked what it means to follow Jesus the protester, healer, teacher, saviour and feeder, wrapping up with a joyful trip to the top of Merton Tower to give thanks for the year and bless the city ahead of summer.

As ever, Chapel flourishes thanks to the work and energy of everyone who participates in its life. I am particularly grateful to Ben Nicholas, Jen Crompton and Lizzie Casey in the Chapel team, to our Acting Chaplain, Vicky Johnson, to the student choir members, Chapel Officers and Livestreamers, and of course to Simon, who will be so sorely missed. I look forward very much to keeping alive the culture of generosity, warmth and welcome which Simon has established here while I serve as Acting Chaplain in Michaelmas.

**The Revd Lyndon Webb**  
Associate Chaplain



## Welfare and Student Support

Thanks to Jenny Barrett, the College's Senior Welfare Advisor, and other colleagues, I returned to College in January to find the welfare team working as hard as ever to provide the high level of proactive and reactive student support for which the College has become known.

In the past year the conflict in the Middle East has impacted the lives of individual members of the College as well as the community as a whole. The welfare team is committed to the values of equality, diversity and inclusion, which are at the heart of the College. Alongside our own support of individuals, we have sought to resource the wider community as a place where people are encouraged to take care of one another as well as themselves. Such an approach is part of Merton's DNA. I'm very grateful to all those who, in different ways, have worked with us to foster and develop this supportive and inclusive environment.

Looking at our welfare provision more broadly, a wide range of regular and one-off welfare activities continues to provide an opportunity for students to take a break from work and connect with each other. The provision of delicious doughnuts to the whole community on a Thursday afternoon continues to be a highlight of the week, drawing together significant numbers of the community (students as well as academic and support staff). I took the idea on secondment with me last year, and 'Dean's Doughnuts' will return this autumn as a regular feature in the life of Lincoln Cathedral.

Seeing students one to one to talk in confidence about a range of issues is an important part of my role, and the aspect of my job that I will miss most. In the past year the College Nurse, the Senior Welfare Advisor and I have had individual meetings with significant numbers of students. Many of our meetings involve signposting students to external sources of support. In this, we're extremely

fortunate to work alongside a first class GP practice, Dr Leaver & Partners, as well as colleagues in the University's Counselling Service and Disability Advisory Service. What distinguishes Merton's approach to welfare from that elsewhere in the collegiate University is our commitment to offering students private ADHD and ASD assessments, as well as CBT and other forms of talking therapy. Again and again I have seen how support of this nature can have a transformative effect in the lives of our students, enabling them to fulfil their academic potential. This approach would not be possible without the generosity of alumni who contribute to Merton's Student Support Fund. Your donations make a significant difference to the lives of many people, for which I'm sincerely grateful.

As with the Chapel, welfare provision at Merton is a team effort. In thanking my colleagues, I'd like to highlight the contribution of Alex Brown, one of the Junior Deans for Welfare, who leaves us this summer after four years in post, and Jenny Barrett, who was Acting Head of Welfare during my absence last year, and will pick up that mantle again in Michaelmas. Merton's welfare provision couldn't be in better hands.

### And finally...

Whoever follows me as Chaplain will be greatly blessed to be joining a place that offers many opportunities to many people. As I move to Lincoln Cathedral, I'm keenly aware that I have learned far more from being Chaplain of Merton than I have been able to contribute. I leave with thanks for all that has been, and with a great sense of optimism for the future of Merton's Chapel and welfare team, and all that they will continue to do to support this wonderful community.

**The Revd Canon Dr Simon Jones**  
Chaplain



## The Revd Simon Jones' final sermon at Merton College

Preached at the Leavers' Service on 9 June 2024

Readings: Genesis 45.1-15; 1 Corinthians 13

'Now we see in a mirror dimly, but then we will see face to face.'

'How painful is this going to be?' That's the question I put to the doctor before he administered a steroid injection into my frozen shoulder. 'Well, it depends,' he replied. Already quite anxious about the procedure, that wasn't really the answer I was looking for. The nurse smiled sympathetically, before the needle was plunged into the joint. A few seconds later, I began to feel the pain, and then more pain, and then even more pain. As I verbalised my discomfort, the nurse made the helpful suggestion: 'Feel free to scream if you would like to.' Whether my wailing was as loud as Joseph's in our first reading, I'm not sure. But eventually the pain subsided and, having been put through a few exercises to check that the movement of my right arm had improved, I was dismissed.

When I had arrived for my appointment half an hour earlier, I was the only person waiting to be seen. Emerging from the treatment room after the procedure, I was somewhat surprised to see that this was no longer the case. But the look of surprise on my face was as nothing compared with the look of horror on the faces of the half-dozen patients now waiting to go in after me. 'It wasn't that bad, really,' I said, somewhat pathetically, ashamed to be lying while

wearing a dog collar. Recovering my composure, I wished them a good evening, and left.

'Now we see in a mirror dimly, but then we will see face to face.'

'It depends' is not an answer that inspires confidence. This evening, for those of us who are preparing to leave Oxford, a degree of anxiety related to uncertainty about the future is undoubtedly one of the ingredients in a complicated cocktail of emotions that are swirling around inside us.

That said, I believe that it is precisely our experience of being at Merton that will have prepared us to engage with whatever comes next. By that, I'm not thinking about what we may have learned or researched through hours spent in library or lab, the numerous problem sheets or essays, or the tutorials or supervisions. Rather, I'm thinking about how we have changed or, more accurately, how we will have been changed by our participation in this community. Our sharing in the common life of this place will have changed us, perhaps in ways that are currently imperceptible, just as we will have changed it. Merton will not be the same when we leave, and neither will we. And that's a very positive thing, and something to celebrate and give thanks for.

And yet, however much our having been changed by Merton suggests that the process of ongoing transformation might not end with 8th Week, worldly wisdom doesn't help us to be confident about an uncertain future. You don't need me to tell you that we belong to a society that longs for sound-bite simplicity, and rarely has time for complexity; it wants things to be straightforward not difficult; a binary yes or no is prized much more highly than a nuanced 'it depends'.

St Paul speaks into this situation as he addresses the divided Christian community in Corinth in the second reading. Trying to find its way and yet repeatedly falling short, Paul says: 'Now we see in a mirror dimly, but then we will see face to face.' One of the problems with this first-century Church was that some of its members thought they had all the answers or, to be more precise, believed that they possessed every God-given spiritual gift completely. Not so, says Paul. Prophecy, speaking in tongues, knowledge: yes, some of you have these gifts, but you possess them only partially, and

they will pass away. For in this life, seeing in a mirror dimly is the experience of all, without exception.

I love Paul's use of the image of the mirror. First, because it manages expectations. The perfect picture, the simple answer, the certain outcome, is not one we should be looking for. Uncertainty is an essential element of life just as doubt is an essential element of faith.

Second, seeing in a mirror dimly reminds us that when we look in the mirror, we don't see ourselves as clearly as God sees us, knowing us inside out in all our vulnerable complexity, and simultaneously looking on us with eyes of unconditional love. Instead, our vision is partially skewed, clouded, distorted in some way, as in a hall of mirrors in a fairground.

The mirror can be a wonderful device to burst the bubble of unrealisable idealism, but it needs to come with a spiritual health warning, because it can also be quite harmful. For, if uncertainty and doubt are always going to be part of the picture, and if what we see when we look into the mirror is never going to be our true selves, then hopelessness, despair and self-hatred can easily become real. It's all very well making a distinction between the present and future, looking in a mirror dimly in this life and seeing face to face in the next, but how are we meant to cope with now and tomorrow?

There are two things I take from this passage in relation to this. First, if we're honest with ourselves and each other, then peering at an indistinct image in a mirror may be what our lives feel like most of the time, but that's rarely the totality of our experience. I'm sure that many of us would be able to testify to occasional moments when, even for a short time, we are given glimpses of that clarity for which we long. Christians talk about these as moments of revelation, and they are often linked to a sense of vocation, times when our experience of God is more intense, times when we feel more certain about our true identity, who God is calling us to be.

Such clarity, such revelation may be how we describe the experience of falling in love, or discerning a vocation to baptism or ordination, when the key to unlocking a problem unexpectedly presents itself, or when our life taking a new path feels like the right thing to do even though it's not

the most obvious direction to take. When these moments come, and there may not be many of them in our lives, let me encourage you not to ignore them. And, although they will often involve risk and uncertainty, to treasure them and respond to them as God-given, grace-filled opportunities.

The second point to make about living hopefully in the present is, of course, what Paul says about love.

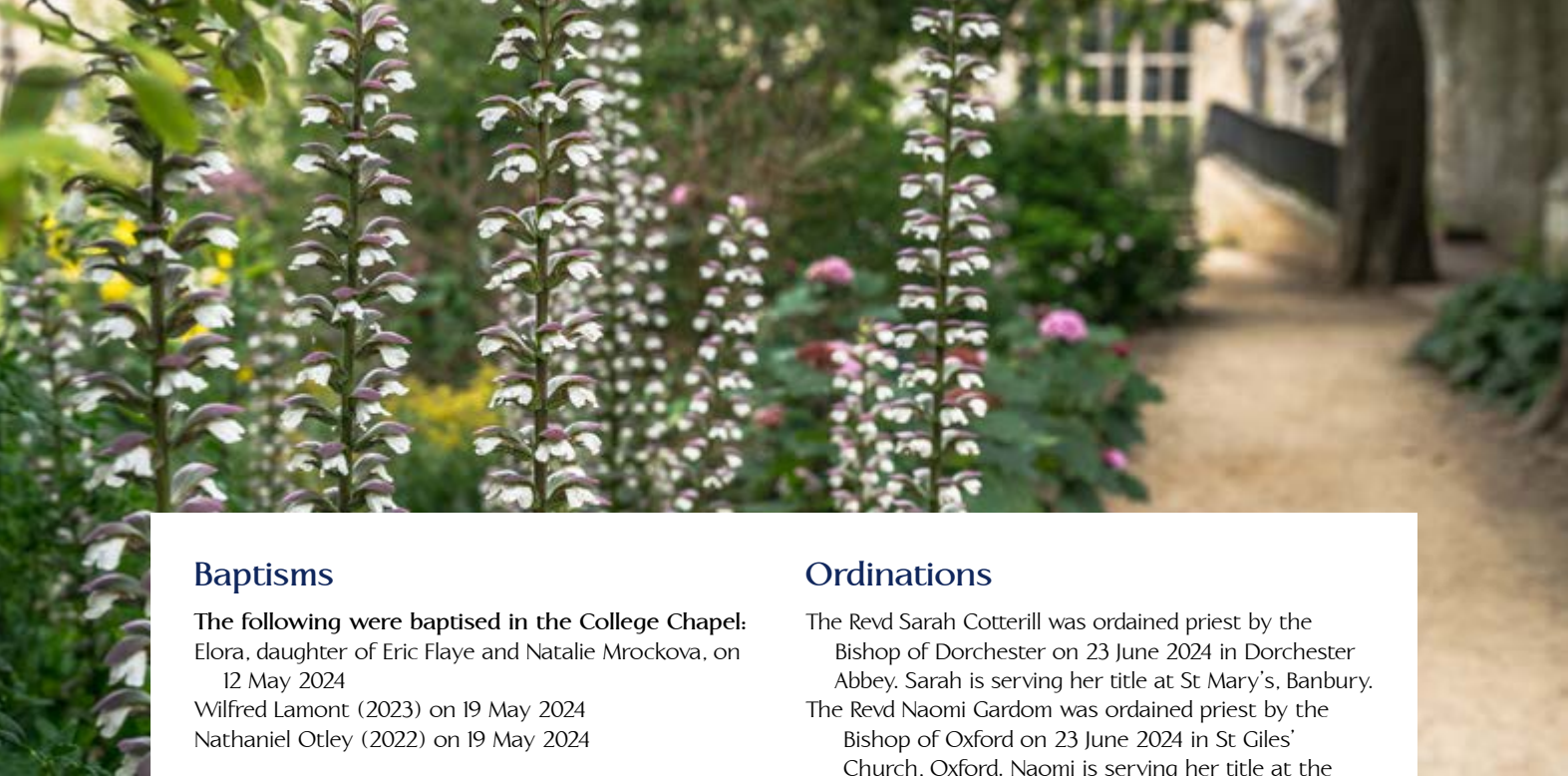
This love is not of human origin nor is it a virtue, but has its origin in the heart of God, poured generously and unceasingly into the deepest depths of the human being. It's a gift, pure gift, offered freely to each of us and to every person without exception. Unlike the spiritual gifts that the Corinthians claimed to possess but which were partial and belonged only to a few, this gift is universal and eternal. It comes from the very being of God, and it is by participating in this love that we can best know God. 'God is love,' says St John, 'and those who live in love live in God, and God lives in them.'

The primary locus of this love is not the individual, but the community. In Christian terms it's the Church, the Body of Christ. This chapter from Paul's letter may be most often read at weddings, but Paul isn't addressing a couple here, rather the whole community. 'Now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love' — God's love made flesh in Jesus Christ; God's love offered to all; God's love that surrounds us in this place and provides the inspiration and pattern for our own living and loving.

These past 22 years at Merton have enabled me to live and work and pray in such a community, and for that I will always be grateful. As I will for the times when I have experienced at first hand, and witnessed in the lives of others, those moments of revelation and clarity of vision which lead to transformation and new beginnings, even when they take us away from here.

'Now we see in a mirror dimly, but then we will see face to face.'

So, fellow leavers, how are we feeling? How painful is this going to be? Well, perhaps that depends. But of one thing I am certain: 'Now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love.'



### Baptisms

**The following were baptised in the College Chapel:**  
Elora, daughter of Eric Flaye and Natalie Mrockova, on  
12 May 2024  
Wilfred Lamont (2023) on 19 May 2024  
Nathaniel Otley (2022) on 19 May 2024

### Confirmations

**The following were confirmed by the Bishop of Oxford on 19 May 2024:**  
Emilia Armstead  
Rafaella Bowen  
Eleanor Hamilton Clark (2023)  
Wilfred Lamont (2023)  
Nathaniel Otley (2022)  
Michael Pounds (2001)

### Weddings

Daniel Evans to Chloe Harper-Ashton on 15 June 2024  
Anouska Wilkinson (2014) to Slobodan Radosavljevic on  
20 July 2024  
Josephine Western (2015) to Barnaby Hewitt on 17  
August 2024  
Timothy Foot (2011) and Philip Fiúza on 31 August 2024  
(Blessing, following Civil Marriage Ceremony in the  
Savile Room)

### Ordinations

The Revd Sarah Cotterill was ordained priest by the  
Bishop of Dorchester on 23 June 2024 in Dorchester  
Abbey. Sarah is serving her title at St Mary's, Banbury.  
The Revd Naomi Gardom was ordained priest by the  
Bishop of Oxford on 23 June 2024 in St Giles'  
Church, Oxford. Naomi is serving her title at the  
University Church of St Mary the Virgin, Oxford.

### Patronage

The Revd Carol Bates, Priest-in-Charge of Sanderstead  
(Diocese of Southwark), has been appointed Vicar of  
the Elham Valley Group (Diocese of Canterbury).  
The Revd Alison Way, Rector of Wincanton and Selwood  
(Diocese of Bath & Wells), has been appointed Team  
Vicar of Warlingham, Chelsham and Farleigh and  
Parish Development Officer in the Croydon Episcopal  
Area (Diocese of Southwark).



The Choir in Lund Cathedral

## The Choirs

The new Choir year began in August with the Choristers travelling to Paris to give two concerts. A performance at the American Cathedral was followed by a concert at the church of St Sulpice, which was attended by a large audience, including a group of Paris-based alumni and the Director of Development, Mark Coote. The trip was an amazing experience for our 24 Girl Choristers, many of whom had not travelled abroad before. I am very grateful to David Harvey for supporting the Choristers so generously.

Ten days later the College Choir toured in Denmark and Sweden, including a concert at the Trinitatis Church, Copenhagen, as part of the Copenhagen Baroque Festival, which was broadcast the following week on Danish Radio. A highlight of the trip was the journey over the famous Oresund Bridge so that we could give a concert in the striking cathedral at Lund. On Sunday 10 September, we returned to the Trinitatis

Church to sing Bach's *Cantata No. 17*, accompanied by the Copenhagen Baroque Orchestra, in its liturgical context as part of the Sunday morning service. My thanks to Michael Emery (1978), a former organ scholar at Merton, whose invitation to Copenhagen was the catalyst for the tour.

As usual, the choirs have also performed several concerts in the College Chapel. Thanks to the generosity of David Ure (1965), we were able to perform Monteverdi's masterpiece the *Vespers of 1610* in the Chapel on 10 November 2023 with an exceptional group of soloists, including Sophie Bevan, Zoe Brookshaw, Ruari Bowen, Simon Wall and Florian Stortz. The Choristers sang the *Sonata sopra Sancta Maria* and the College Choir enjoyed Monteverdi's wonderful choral writing in the psalm settings. The layout of the Chapel made it an ideal venue for this piece, with the soloists missing no opportunity to sing from different points in the Chapel.

In the Christmas vacation, both choirs had a prominent role in the first performances of Gabriel Jackson's *The Christmas Story*, commissioned by the College with funds from Reed Rubin (1957) and the Reed Foundation. Composed with the venue of the premiere in mind (St John's Smith Square, London), the College Choir and instruments performed from the main performance space at the east end of the concert hall, and the Choristers, accompanied by organ, sang from the west end. The libretto, compiled by Simon Jones, includes four poems, two written by Penny Boxhall (a former Visiting Fellow in the Creative Arts) and two by Mary Anne Clark (2014). A review described the piece as a 'significant work', and it certainly was a showcase for both choirs, and an eclectic ensemble of instruments which included three trombones, saxophone, flute, strings and a vast percussion department. The second performance took place in the College Chapel on 10 December, and then we spent two days recording the work for release in November 2024.

The Passiontide Festival (22-24 March) had a focus on early music with Bojan Cicic completing his survey of Biber's *Rosary Sonatas*, and Matthew Martin playing an organ recital of music by Bach. The College Choir joined The Cardinal's Musick and their director Andrew Carwood for two performances (at the opening and closing of the concert) of Tallis's 40-part motet *Spem in alium*. The closing concert was a rare performance of Arvo Part's iconic *Passio*, with the Evangelist 'quartet' sung by former choral scholars.

At the start of Trinity term we celebrated the tenth anniversary of the inaugural recital of the Dobson Organ with a concert by Olivier Latry, the organist of Notre-Dame Cathedral, Paris. Olivier's programme included popular works by Guilman, Gigout and Vierne, alongside Jean Guillou's highly rhythmic Toccata and an outstanding improvisation on three themes, chosen by the organ scholars. The audience's ecstatic reception was only satisfied by two encores! The College is enormously grateful to the Morris-Venables Charitable Foundation for their generous support of the concert.

The last weeks of Trinity term included our annual visit to All Souls' College to sing Matins, and an Evensong for the Merton Society weekend, at which we gave the first performance of Roxanna Panufnik's *Nocturn*. The Choir also played a small part in the visit of the Emperor and Empress of Japan to Oxford by

singing at the ceremony at which the Empress was given an Honorary Doctorate by the Chancellor of the University.

The choir began its summer vacation with recording sessions for two projects: the choral music of Edmund Rubbra, and the second volume of *Orchestral Anthems*, recorded at St Barnabas Church, Ealing, with the Britten Sinfonia. It was particularly thrilling to record established choral classics in their orchestral versions; in a few instances this was the first recording of the original version. The disc will be launched on 26 February 2025 at the BBC Radio 3 broadcast of Choral Evensong, at which the Britten Sinfonia will play.

Three recordings were released during the year on the Delphian label. The College Choir and Dame Sarah Connolly's recording of Bob Chilcott's *Christmas Oratorio* was released in time for Christmas, as was the Choir's first digital-only release *On Christmas Night*. The Choristers, Lower Voices and Merton Brass's recording of popular hymns was released in July to great acclaim in the music press, with *Gramophone* ending its review 'an eclectic mix performed with aplomb by Merton's Girl Choristers and lower voices in stunning sound'.

Our organ scholars, Owen Chan (2020) and François Cloete (2022), have been a huge support this year, burning the midnight oil to prepare all the accompaniments and voluntaries for the services. Owen Chan has now completed four years as Organ Scholar, and we wish him well as he begins his PhD at Manchester University. The activities of both choirs have been expertly masterminded by Elizabeth Casey, the Chapel Office & Choir Manager, and Jen Crompton has continued to run the Chapel with an impressive sense of calm. In Simon Jones's absence, it was a great pleasure to work with Victoria Johnson for Michaelmas term, and we congratulate her on her recent appointment as Dean of St John's College, Cambridge. Lyndon Webb has been a tremendous support throughout the year, and it was wonderful to have Simon Jones back from Lincoln for his final two terms at Merton. One cannot overestimate the impact that his 22-year ministry as Chaplain has had on the life of the Chapel, not least on the music. Simon's legacy is enormous and will live on for many generations.

**Benjamin Nicholas**

Reed Rubin Organist and Director of Music

# Academic Office

It has been another busy year for the Academic Office, supporting the admissions and teaching activities of the College, as well as individual student journeys. Over the course of 2023-24, we have continued to adapt our systems and provision in response to educational changes and the evolving needs of college members.

In 2023, Merton was joined by a new Admissions Manager, Katie Selwood, who had a rapid learning curve as she simultaneously got to grips with course information, subject-specific practices and new IT systems. We saw an increased number of candidates putting Merton as their college of preference and received 632 applications for a planned intake of 96. The complexity and speed of the exercise is such that other team members provide additional assistance and support as term progresses, including Jenny Shaw (Schools Liaison and Access Officer) and Rachel Wilkins (Academic Officer). As Disability Coordinator, Jemma Underdown (Academic Registrar) also liaises with applicants and Tutors to support candidates with disabilities – a responsibility that she continues to have for all of our on-course students.

Hilary Term brings with it the bulk of the graduate admissions process, which is managed by Julie Gerhardt (Graduate Officer) alongside her other duties supporting all aspects of our postgraduates' on-course administration. The Development Office's success in securing postgraduate funding adds some complexity as students and funding are matched, but it is wonderful to see the rising numbers of graduates who are studying here with the financial support of donor-funded awards.

During the Easter Vacation, Merton hosted its first event for undergraduate offer-holders and their parents. This followed a steady increase in our engagement with offer-holders prior to them taking up their places. The day-long programme provided students with opportunities to meet each other, our current undergraduates and tutors, and to begin conversations about preparing for higher education and the skills that underpin success. Parents and carers also enjoyed tours and the opportunity to meet College members.

Academic skills development has been a theme of work this year as we have evaluated and reviewed aspects of Merton's support, with the help of the University's Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL). This will be an area of ongoing activity as we also consider how we might bring together ideas about skills development that are relevant in both educational and career contexts. In this regard, we are excited to be working on a more careers-focused project that is evolving with the support of a number of our wonderful alumni.

Much of the Academic Office's work happens quietly behind the scenes, as it should, but we are not a team that stands still. Recent changes have included moving many of our administrative procedures into Sharepoint-based systems. Elizabeth Irving (Academic Officer) is one of the team who has been transforming processes into ones that we hope, over time, will be more user-friendly and efficient. She has, for example, created improved online application systems for our student funding schemes as well as supporting the launch of the new Merton Aruna and Arijit Chakraverty Bursary, targeted at recipients of Oxford Bursaries. Rachel, meanwhile, has mastered the University's online examination platform, as the College strives to be able to replicate the full range of exam formats in 0th Week Collections, including in-person and online papers.

2023-24 has also been a busy period for academic recruitment and we look forward to four new tutors joining us in the coming academic year: Professor Samuel Fletcher (Philosophy, replacing Professor Simon Saunders), Dr Rory Gregson (Law, replacing Professor Mindy Chen-Wishart), Dr Ted Tregear (English, replacing Professor Richard McCabe) and Professor Standa Zivny (Computer Science, replacing Professor Luke Ong). Looking ahead, arrangements are already being made to fill the roles vacated in Chemistry by Professor Veronique Gouverneur and in Law by Professor Jennifer Payne.

Reflecting back inevitably brings to mind questions about what lies ahead. Of one thing I am sure, that the College will continue to adapt in support of its ambition for academic excellence and a community in which its members thrive.

**Jane Gover**  
Senior Tutor



## The Library

Dr Laure Miolo teaching with the astrolabe

The conclusion of the academic year 2023-2024 brings to an end a succession of events and initiatives marking the centenary of the 1924 Everest Expedition and the death of Mertonian Andrew (Sandy) Irvine. It is fair to say that from January to June, Irvine and Everest were never far from the minds of those in the Library and Archive team. In addition to commemorative events this year, we also wanted to create an online illustrated timeline of Sandy's expedition that could be accessed in the future. With support from Mertonians, many of the key items in the Sandy Irvine Archive were digitised, including one of the most popular items, Sandy's Everest diary. These online and in-house exhibitions are treated in greater detail in the Archivist's Report. The symposium on 27 April 2024, 'Everest 1924: A Century in Review', brought together speakers who gave fresh perspectives on the Everest phenomenon in general and Irvine in particular. Remarkably, among the attendees were many family members of those who took part in the 1924 expedition. It is covered by Julie Summers on page 102.

On 8 June, the anniversary of the date of the deaths of Irvine and Mallory, a special talk, 'Sandy Irvine: 100 Years' by physician, high-altitude researcher and climber Dr Sundeep Dhillon, MBE, was organised by Professor David Paterson.

The Merton Everest 1924 exhibitions provided an opportunity to form ties with other institutions holding material relevant to Irvine. Merton lent several items to an exhibition at Shrewsbury School, and in turn borrowed artefacts from the Alpine Club and from the Mountain Heritage Trust. These included Irvine's ice axe, recovered from Everest in 1933, and a complete replica of the clothing worn by Mallory on that fateful day. Many people played a role in the success of the anniversary initiatives: it was an effort by an extended team, but especially by Project Officer Dr Anna Saroldi, historian Julie Summers, Web and Media Officer Rebecca Wilson, photographer Colin Dunn, and the conservators of the Oxford Conservation Consortium. We think the Merton Everest exhibitions were second to none in the 'Irvine and Mallory' year.

Instruments for understanding realms even higher than Everest were the focus of the 'Merton Astrolabe Day'. In autumn 2023, the large exhibition case displaying the astronomical instruments in the Upper Library had to be emptied and moved due to conservation work taking place on the large south-facing window at the top of the Upper Library stairs. The de-installation of all five instruments for a period of several months provided a rare opportunity for study and examination of the astrolabes and quadrants. The new studies included analysis by specialist Dr John Davis of the composition of the metals in the two quadrants using X-ray fluorescence (a non-invasive technique). The preliminary results of these investigations suggest that the disc-shaped Physician's Quadrant is probably a century older than was previously believed, while the large quadrant, long thought to be French, is more likely to have been made in England. Close examination by Dr Stephen Johnston (History of Science Museum, Oxford) of the engraved lettering and incised tabular markings on the large 14th-century astrolabe revealed several instances of alterations post-manufacture, enabling the instrument to continue to be used after the introduction of clocks standardised the length of each hour. Specialists gathered at Merton in October for an informal workshop in the presence of all the instruments to discuss these findings and observations.



Dr Johnston studying the 14th-century astrolabe with a digital microscope

Following this inspiring study day, we were able to arrange several classes for undergraduates and graduates to view the instruments up close. The most memorable of these sessions

was held at the Bodleian Library, bringing together on the same table medieval manuscripts (now in the Bodleian) compiled and used by 14th-century Mertonians and Merton instruments. Although we will never know for sure, it is very tempting (and plausible) to think that the same astrolabe was once used alongside some of those very manuscripts, both later bequeathed to the College.

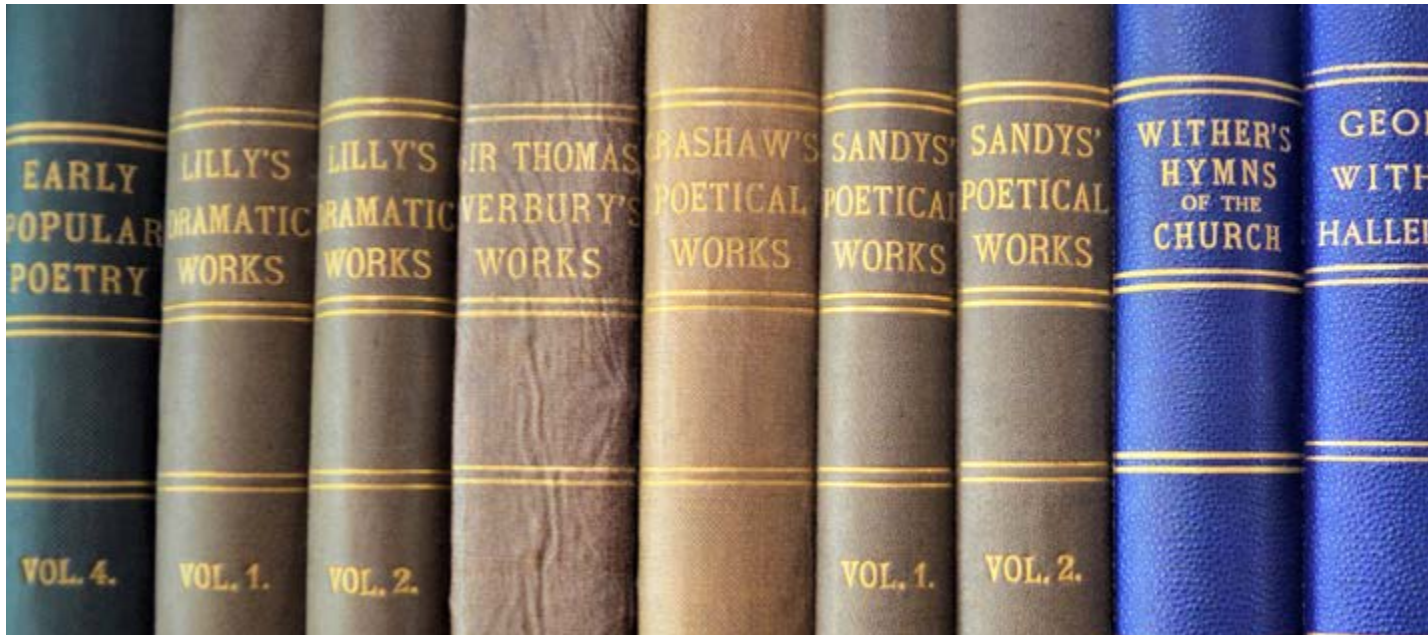


Bodleian Library, MS Ashmole 789 and the verso of Merton's Physician's Quadrant showing the circular scales for lunar and solar calculations

Another Merton treasure, a first edition of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* printed by William Caxton in 1475-6, spent several months on public display at the Weston Library this year as part of the exhibition 'Chaucer, Here and Now'. This is the only copy of this edition in Oxford and the only copy with illuminated borders, and although the exhibition closed in April, the book can still be viewed in digital form by anyone by going to Merton's section of the Digital Bodleian platform, thanks to the generosity of David Harvey (1957).

Two new additions to the College collections this year deserve a closer look, as they both have interesting back-histories and both of them, coincidentally, relate to the poet Edmund Blunden.

Dr Jerome Mellor visited Merton on 23 November 2023 to present to the College a bust of Edmund Blunden, along with a volume of Blunden's poetry containing an unpublished manuscript poem about Merton. Both items had special

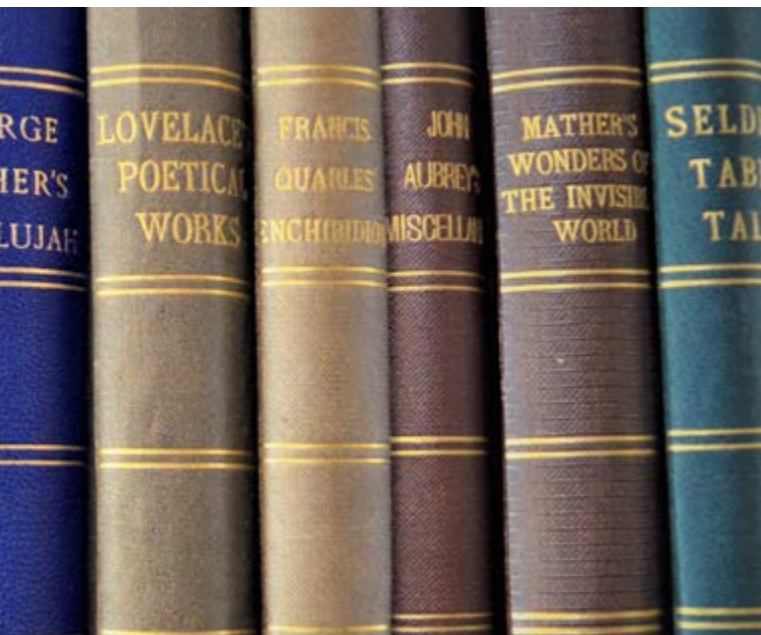


## Merton

Methought it was a frosty night  
And Bunny Mellor did invite  
Into some room, a study deem'd,  
Where several books and bottles gleam'd:  
Observing which, and soon beguiled,  
I saw how amiably he smiled,  
And though the icicles were forming  
Along the ceiling, that was warming;  
And still it is wherever he  
And his will give me company.

Edmund Blunden, 11 May 1963

personal significance. Dr Mellor was accompanied by members of his family and two of Blunden's daughters. The connection between the Mellors and the Blundens goes back decades. Blunden was Tutor in English at Merton from 1931 to 1944. During this time, he taught Bernard (Bunny) Mellor (1936), and a friendship was born. Some years later (1954) Mellor, who was then Registrar of the University of Hong Kong (HKU), invited his former tutor to become Professor of English. There the Blunden and Mellor families became closely linked. Mellor and Blunden co-edited several volumes of poetry, and Blunden was godfather to Mellor's son Jerome. When the Blunden family returned to England in 1964, a bust of the poet by an HKU art student KY Wong was gifted to the Mellor home. It later went with Jerome when his career took him to Australia. When the possibility of a permanent home for the bust at Merton was confirmed, the sculpture made the journey to England, carefully carried in Dr Mellor's hand luggage. Along with the bust, the Mellor family also donated a copy of Blunden's *A Hong Kong House: Poems 1951-1961* in which Blunden had inscribed a poem entitled 'Merton' that evokes memories of a winter evening at Merton where a chilly

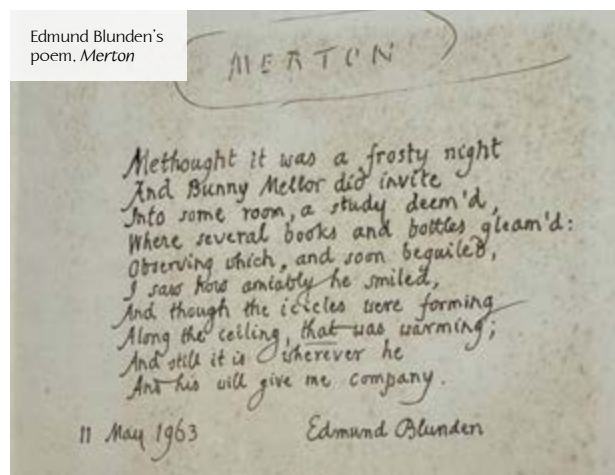


study is warmed by the company and conversation of Bunny Mellor. The bust is now displayed in the Upper Library—one hopes that both Mellor and Blunden would approve of this spiritual 'homecoming'. (A full account of the story of the bust can be found on the website dedicated to Edmund Blunden: [edmundblunden.org/a-gift-to-merton-college](http://edmundblunden.org/a-gift-to-merton-college)).

After Edmund Blunden vacated his college room in 1944, it was allocated to an undergraduate reading history, Leonard Allinson (1944). As is often the case, the previous occupant had left unwanted things behind. Amongst a pile of old Christ's Hospital magazines (Christ's Hospital had been Blunden's school), Allinson found a notebook-sized German phrase book *Hier spricht man Deutsch / German spoken here*. The somewhat dated phrase book was amusing, but what caught Allinson's eye was a short hand-written text on the back end-leaves of the slim volume. Headed 'Oct 21, 1938', the piece, written in Blunden's distinctive italic script, begins, 'It is the 22nd anniversary of an attack made by us on the Germans at Stuff Trench—Stauffen Graben—on the highland south of the River Ancre'. The peaceful rural landscape of the

Downs seen from his train carriage reminds Blunden that the sun was also shining on the horrors of the fighting in 1916. 'The anniversary of our attack, made in clear midday sun, and continued in every form of horror and exhaustion, is the chief reason why I cannot entirely be at peace this peaceful day.' He goes on to comment that war is once more looming, and men 'sowing the seeds of iron misery'. Allinson kept the little volume until his death, and this year his daughter Felicity Pethica brought it as a donation to the library from Allinson's family. Initial research suggests that the short essay 'Oct 21, 1938' remained unpublished, but specialists on Blunden's work will be able to shed more light on this in the future.

Edmund Blunden's poem, *Merton*



Other Library-related events included a workshop on 17 May 2024 on hybridity in manuscript material, organised by the team of medievalists involved in the Teaching the Codex Project: Tristan Franklins (2011), Mary Boyle (2011) and Seb Dows-Miller (2016). In addition, a new seminar series, the Oxford Medieval Manuscripts Group, was launched by current postgraduate Elena Lichmanova (2021).

These were high points of a busy year. The excellent Library and Archive staff ensured that the library continued to deliver a first-class service to our students and researchers.

**Julia Walworth**  
Fellow Librarian

# Donations to the Library and Archives 2023–24

It is a pleasure to record the following particularly noteworthy donations to library and archive collections:

**Julie Summers** – additional material for the Sandy Irvine Archive, including photographs, newspaper clippings, a black metal chest marked 'Andrew Comyn Irvine', sound recordings of interviews and notes made during the research for *Fearless on Everest*: copy of an album of press cuttings compiled by Geoffrey Milling (1920) covering 1922–24.

**Dr Jerome Mellor** – plaster bust of Edmund Blunden and copy of Blunden's *A Hong Kong House: Poems 1951–1961* with an autograph poem by Blunden, from the collection of Bernard Mellor (1936).

**The family of Sir Leonard Allinson** (1944) – autograph manuscript essay by Edmund Blunden written on the fly-leaves of a copy of *Hier spricht man Deutsch* (1929).

**Peter Hay** (1963) – additional memorabilia of student life at Merton for the album and collection donated in 2022–23.

**Serika Makino** (SCR staff 2022–24) – framed group photograph of Merton students, June 1923 (Sandy Irvine in centre of front row).

**The family of J N Patterson** (1941) – engraved prints and memorabilia relating to the University and to Merton.

**The family of Peter Bibby** (1968) – two historic engraved prints relating to the College.

**Robert and Paul Smith** – framed calligraphic text by artist and professional calligrapher Fiona Smith (1963–94), about Merton College, originally created for her uncle, the Revd Andrew CG Scott (1954).

**Paul Browning** – painting of Patey's Quad ('The Long Vacation at Merton') by Elias Mollineaux Bancroft (1846–1924), possibly originally acquired by Michael Reginald Newman (1935), father-in-law of the donor.

**The family of William Hamilton Fyfe** (Tutor 1904–19) – collection of letters from members of the family, 1915–52, to Kuruvila Zachariah (1912).

**The estate of Dr John Walsh, Jesus College** – records of the AC Irvine Travel Fund, 1925–80.

**The estate of Michael Rines** (1954) – student memorabilia of Merton clubs and societies, 1956–57.

**Grateful thanks for gifts and support are extended to:**

The Alpine Club, Rhiannon Ash (Fellow), Anita M. Ballin (widow of Robin Lenman (1963)), Will Beharrell (2006), Nicholas Bennett, the Bodleian Library, Chris Beetles Gallery, Corpus Christi College Library, Robert H. Edwards, the Revd Mark Everitt (Emeritus Fellow), Eileen Hogan, Ned Holt (1973), Martin Kauffmann (1980), Dmitry Khudoleev (2022), Henrike Lähnemann, Antonina Lecka (2021), Lex Lata B.V., Richard McCabe (Fellow), David Mitchell, the Mountain Heritage Trust, New York Public Library, Holly Ordway, Robert Peberdy (1975), Oxford University Press, Posts & Telecommunications Press (China) & Datawhale, The Queen's College Library, Jessica Rawson (Emeritus Fellow, Warden 1994–2010), Josemaría Revuelta Somalo,

Terence M. Russell, Dr Paul Saenger, Daniel Sawyer (FRF 2019–22), Julia Walworth (Fellow Librarian), Wessex Archaeology Ltd, Melanie Windridge, Yale University Press.

**We also thank Mertonians who have given the College copies of their publications:**

**Allen, RH** (1967). *The Disappearing Crows of Jurmala* ([no publisher information], 2023)

\_\_\_\_. *Murder of a Major General* ([no publisher information], 2024)

\_\_\_\_. *Borne on the Wind. 1: Kaarvin Zuwrán* ([no publisher information], 2024)

\_\_\_\_. *Borne on the Wind. 2: Rushilara* ([no publisher information], 2024)

**Bott, A** (1953; Bodley Fellow) (ed.). *Godalming Museum 1921–2021* ([no publisher information], 2023)

**Boxall, P** (VRF in the Creative Arts 2019). *The Curiosities* (Leicester and Nottingham: New Walk Editions, 2024)

**Brook, M** (2002), S Hundehege and C Jessen (eds). *"Verschwinden": Vom Umgang mit materialen und medialen Verlusten in Archiv und Bibliothek* (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2024)

**Buckley, RA** (1965). *Illegality and Public Policy*. 6th edn (London: Sweet & Maxwell, 2023)

**Cooke, J** (1955). *Safe Keeping: Voices from a Vanished World* ([no publisher information], 2018)

\_\_\_\_. *Sublime Lunacy: People, Places & Pleasures. An Anecdote*. 3rd edn, revised



([no publisher information], 2020)

\_\_\_\_\_. *Bali: An Early History*, 3rd edn ([no publisher information], 2023)

**Deambrogio, C (JRF 2023–24).** *Judging Insanity, Punishing Difference: A History of Mental Illness in the Criminal Court* (Stanford University Press, 2023)

English, C and G English (1963). *Holy Wells Cornwall: Odyssey & Memorial* (culture & democracy Press, 2024)

**Franklinos, TE (2011)** and J Ingleheart (eds). *Essays on Propertian and Ovidian Elegy: A Limping Lady for Stephen Heyworth* (Oxford University Press, 2024)

**Freeman, M (1992).** *The Vital Message: Continuing Education at the University of Cambridge 1945–2010* (St Albans: Regents Court Press, 2023)

**Gildea, R (1971; Emeritus Fellow).** *Backbone of the Nation: Mining Communities and the Great Strike of 1984–85* (Yale University Press, 2023)

Adams, B and DM Grimley (Fellow) (eds). *Vaughan Williams and His World* (University of Chicago Press, 2023)

**Gunn, K (VRF in the Creative Arts 2020).** *Pretty Ugly* (Rough Trade Books, 2024)

**Harvey, DR (1957; Bodley Fellow)** and M Rosebrock. *A Family History: David R. Harvey Born 1939 & Margarete Rosebrock Born 1940* ([Milwaukee]: David R. Harvey & Margarete Rosebrock, 2022)

**Hekster, O (Fellow 2002–04).** *Caesar Rules: The Emperor in the Changing Roman World* (c.50 BC – AD 565) (Cambridge University Press, 2023)

**Y-H He (ed.).** *Machine Learning in Pure Mathematics and Theoretical Physics* (New Jersey: World Scientific, 2023)

Ge, M-L and Y-H He (Fitzjames Research Fellow in Mathematics 2005–09; Lecturer in Mathematics) (eds). *Dialogues Between Physics and Mathematics: C.N. Yang at 100* (Cham: Springer, 2022)

†**Hurst, AW (1933).** *The Armadillo: or Horns and Halos* (London: Austin Macauley Publishers, 2022). Donated by the author's son, **M Hurst (1962)**

**Hutson, L (Fellow).** *England's Insular Imagining: The Elizabethan Erasure of Scotland* (Cambridge University Press, 2023)

**Latham, AJH (1959).** *Rice and Industrialisation in Asia* (London: Routledge, 2022)

**Mutambara, AGO (1991).** *Design and Analysis of Control Systems: Driving the Fourth Industrial Revolution*, 2nd edn (Boca Raton: CRC Press, 2024)

**Prince Naruhito, His Majesty the Emperor Naruhito of Japan (1983).** *The Thames and I: A Memoir of Two Years at Oxford*, translated by Sir Hugh Cortazzi, private edn (Global Books for the Japan Society, 2024)

**Norbrook, D (Emeritus Fellow)** (contributor). In *The Seventeenth Century*, Vol. 38(3–4), May–August 2023 (Taylor & Francis Group, 2023)

**Pettegree, A (1976).** *The Book at War: How Reading Shaped Conflict and Conflict Shaped Reading* (New York: Basic Books, 2023)

**Rawson, J (Warden 1994–2010; Emeritus Fellow).** *Life and Afterlife in Ancient China* (London: Allen Lane, 2023)

**Sawyer, D (FRF 2019–22).** *How to Read Middle English Poetry* (Oxford University Press, 2024)

**Scattergood, J (VRF 2008).** *Times and Places: Poems: 1992–2020* ([Sandymount, Dublin]: John Scattergood, 2023)

Bent, M and A Wathey (1981; JRF 1982–85) (eds). *Fragments of English Polyphonic Music c.1390–1475: A Facsimile Edition* (London: Published for the British Academy by Stainer and Bell, 2022)

We would also like to thank those who anonymously returned missing books to the library – we always welcome such returns!



## The Archives

The archival year started with a gift to the Archives. Mertonians who have delved into *Treasures of Merton College*, ed. Steven Gunn, (2013) will be aware of the letters of Kuruvila Zachariah, who arrived at Merton from India in 1912 to read History, and who maintained a regular correspondence with his family in Calicut. His gregarious disposition made him friends throughout the College, and one particularly long-standing friendship was with the family of William Fyfe, Tutor 1904–19. Ninety letters from two generations of the family addressed to Zachariah have survived, from the one written in July 1915 congratulating him on taking the top First in History, through to 1952. In late August 2023, three of Fyfe’s descendants visited the College and presented the letters to the Library; a generous gift, and a testament to a long-standing friendship engendered within the walls of the College.

Much of the attention of Hilary and Trinity terms was, as highlighted in the Fellow Librarian’s Report, focused on the centenary of the attempt by Sandy Irvine (1921) and George Mallory to reach the summit of Mount Everest. The resulting exhibitions (online and physical) were very much collaborative, made possible by the presence at Merton of Sandy Irvine’s extensive archive. Hilary term saw the preparation of the online exhibition in the form of a timeline. Significant events of the expedition, drawn from Sandy’s letters home and subsequently his diary, provided the basis. Late January and February witnessed a febrile period of writing, proofreading and selecting images, as 29 February 2024 was selected for the ‘go live’ date, being the centenary

of Sandy’s departure from Liverpool for India.

The period immediately after Easter was spent finalising exhibits and writing captions, selecting objects that would be visually interesting while telling a story. The Upper Library housed the core of the exhibition, focusing on the trek to Everest and on Everest itself. It featured Irvine’s Everest diary, alongside his ice axe recovered from the mountain in 1933, the leather name patch retrieved from his rucksack (itself burned on Everest along with the rest of his kit), and a copy of the final photo of Mallory and Irvine preparing to leave camp.

The exhibition cases in the Beerbohm Room complemented the Upper Library, looking back to Irvine’s Oxford career before Everest, and forward to the aftermath of his death. Irvine had packed a good deal into his time at Merton, rowing in the University Boat Race in 1923, and participating in the University Expedition to Spitsbergen that summer. A tailor’s bill for supplying and altering rowing shorts provided a counterpoint to his silver Putney medal, while an invoice from Burberry for supplying one of its all-purpose ‘Everywhere’ suits was brought to life by a set of Everest clothing recreated from fragments of the clothing retrieved with the body of George Mallory in 1999. A letter of condolence from Sandy’s College Scout, Owen Brown, addressed to Sandy’s father, and the order of service for Sandy’s memorial in Merton Chapel, preserved by his best friend and rowing crewmate Geoffrey Milling (1920), introduced a sober note of a young life cut short.

The physical exhibition will have been uninstalled by the time that *Postmaster* is published, but the online exhibition ('Sandy Irvine: Everest 1924–2024') can be viewed on the College website in the 'College Archives' section under 'Library & Archives'.

The academic year drew to a close with a visit by Year 12 (Lower Sixth) history students from the Robert Smyth Academy, Leicestershire, which has become a regular fixture in the Library calendar. Due to refurbishment, the Conservation Studio in Holywell was unable to host its customary visit, but the Conservation Department at the Bodleian kindly stepped in and provided a display and explanation of their current work conserving medieval documents and manuscripts.

Safely arrived at Merton, we gathered in Mob Lower Library to examine and discuss a variety of sources from the archives. Even when not armed with the Latin in which several of the documents are written, it is rewarding to observe the analysis and decoding processes in action. 'Document A [a title deed] is written as continuous text, while document B is written in columns, and contains names and numbers.' Discussion of document B ensues as to whether the numbers are dates or amounts. Someone suggests: 'Is it a census?' Another asks: 'Why are there horizontal lines between the columns?' Explanation here, for a generation unfamiliar with bank cheques, about filling gaps to obviate fraud. So, we establish these are sums of money, not dates. What of the names? They are mostly male, but there is one female name: Alice Lavender, i.e. the laundress. Ensuing conversation on the roles and status of women. Gradually we tease out that document B is a rental of the College's property in Kibworth Harcourt, listing the heads of household and the annual value of their holdings. After lunch and a tour of the College, our young guests returned home, hopefully with new insights into the historian as historical detective.

During the long vacation we engaged two Merton graduate students, Holly Lambe and Julia Martinez, to list a large collection of building plans for the Estates Bursary.

**Julian Reid**  
Archivist

## Cataloguing the Estates Bursary Plans

Over the course of two weeks in July we sifted through over 1,500 items from the Estates Bursary Archive, relating to the history of the College and its properties. Most were architectural plans, drawings or maps which dated from the early 19th century to the present.

To effectively rehome the materials from the bin bags in which we found them into archival-grade storage materials, we took advice from a member of the Oxford Conservation Consortium who trained us in handling fragile materials. Each item was catalogued with reference to the locations mentioned, architects involved and nature of the building works. Many of the locations were familiar, such as Holywell Street and the Merton main site. Other holdings in Oxford included commercial outlets, such as restaurants, tailors and a sports shop. Other properties were much further afield, including numerous rural farms across many counties and residential and business estates.

We also learned a lot about the work involved in sustaining and conserving the buildings of the College. Sites were erected, demolished, refurbished for new purposes, and some were simply never built. The project overall will help researchers who wish to know more about the holdings of the College and will also assist the College in ongoing conservation efforts.

**Holly Lambe (2024) and Julia Martinez (2024)**



## The Gardens

If you think a walk around the garden is as good as a cup of coffee in the morning, it may be because we are mulching under all our roses with spent coffee grounds. This wet summer, and last year's, meant an increase in Black Spot on roses. First, we hard pruned after flowering, back to a framework. Then we used Merton's coffee grounds to smother spores on the ground, rather than rake up fallen leaves. We have had fabulous regrowth with not a sign of disease, and underneath them will be growing *Salvias*, which have sulphur in their scent profile, a natural fungicide.

Scanning previous Head Gardeners' diaries to find when the herbaceous border was designed came up trumps. My predecessor Chris Ball first met with Pamela Schwerdt and Sibylle Kreutzberger in January 1995. Pam and Sibylle had been joint head gardeners at Sissinghurst from 1959 to 1990, and are deemed by many to be the greatest British gardeners of their generation.

People sometimes say lady head gardeners are pioneering. Having read Fiona Davison's *An Almost Impossible Thing*, they really were in the late 1800s. A shift of emphasis from brawn to brain meant Kew Gardens took on its first restricted number of female students in 1897. Armed with a determined air and cheerful self-confidence, we have never looked back!

A Japanese garden reproduces not only scenery, but poetical conception and symbolism, so our oriental garden area has a lot to live up to. Emperor Naruhito's visit this year was a dream to prepare for and we were thrilled to be able to send forget-me-not seeds to the Imperial Palace as a reminder of Merton in spring.

I am now familiar with propagating gardeners as much as propagating plants, and have had many promoted to head or deputy head gardener in Oxford colleges. The 'landscape laboratory' itself does most of the teaching; my generation had to 'learn by practice', a process that is on the way out.



Woven willow fox created by gardener Ciaran O'Connell

Nowadays there is so much information, but knowledge comes from understanding that information. I am convinced that the best results come from a loose exuberant approach to planting, highlighting aesthetic creativity, rather than just the technical aspects of cultivation.

Weeds are an ever-popular feature in show gardens and where you draw the line is up to you. Wildflowers such as *Persicaria maculosa* or *Centaurea nigra* people would happily walk past in an herbaceous border, but even people's tolerance to Ground Elder is changing — it is slug-proof and we can eat the young shiny leaves in salads. 'Go with what gives you joy' is my advice. We've only ever used a tiny amount of peat during seed sowing time. However, from now on we will be experimenting with our own seed mix, made using Beech Tree leafmould, and a little sieved loam. I will keep you updated on how we get on. People sometimes ask how moist to keep the compost, and really it should be similar in feel to the contents of a wrung-out teabag.

Predicting tree failure is paramount to keeping people safe in College, and there is a wealth of pathogenic fungi which have evolved to use tree heartwood (a source of cellulose and lignin). Their effects vary, depending on the wood structure of the host tree, and I am grateful for books such as *Fungi and Trees: Their Complex Relationships* by Lynne Boddy for taking away some of the dark art.

Research looking at tree rings shows a drought's 'legacy' effect: it takes as long as four years to return to normal after a drought. We water new trees twice a week to prevent their growth being checked and to encourage their roots to go down. Slower growth means the trees are absorbing and storing less carbon dioxide, after all. It takes 24 hours for seven or eight trees to make the oxygen required by one human in the same period.

**Lucille Savin**  
Head Gardener

# Development & Alumni Relations

Over the past year, the global Mertonian community has continued to provide both connectivity and commitment. We have been delighted to see so many alumni and friends at events and witness the expansion of the Merton Society's subject-based networks and mentoring programme. And, of course, we are enormously grateful to have received a strong level of philanthropic support for a variety of vital causes, helping preserve so many elements that make College special. We also had the joy of installing our new Warden, Professor Jennifer Payne, who has been a wonderful advocate for Development and Alumni Relations.

In the late summer of 2023, we gathered in Paris and Copenhagen, to join Mertonians at concerts by the Girls' Choir and College Choir respectively. This was followed by three autumn events on home turf – the Merton Lawyers' Association meeting, hosted by Dan Schaffer (1986) and Matthew Tobin (1991) at Slaughter and May, festive Michaelmas Drinks at The Antelope public house in London's West End, and the annual Merton Society Carol Concert at St John's Smith Square, featuring the Choir's performance of a world premiere of a new work by Gabriel Jackson.

December and January saw us back on the road with the new Warden, first to New York, with Amna Naseer (1997) hosting a glorious MC3 gathering in her elegant Greenwich home, and subsequently to Hong Kong and Singapore. We joined alumni and friends for special events generously sponsored by Charles Target (1975), Jamie Barr (1979), Tom Willett (1986) and Marcandrea Beatson. We were thrilled to visit Mertonians in Asia, following several years of pandemic-induced absence, and appreciated the warmth of the welcome back.

We were pleased to have presence at the MC3 Annual Board Meeting in Manhattan in the spring of 2024, now resumed in person after the pandemic. Kindly hosted by Neil Brown (2002), the meeting was followed by social activities and dinner in the Hudson Yards area. Nearer to home we returned to our Cambridge sister college, Peterhouse, for a drinks gathering and, for the third year in succession, were hosted by Patrick Long (1995) at Lazard's London offices for

the Merton Society Annual Lecture, presented by Dr James Kempton who provided an exceptional talk on Expedition Cyclops. In College, we maintained the yearly cycle of two Gaudies, two Jubilee reunion lunches (Golden and Diamond), the Returners' Dinner for recent leavers, the Founder's Society Lunch for legators and the Merton Summer Reunion.

Thank you to all our hosts, to MC3, to the Merton Society and to College staff for making this vibrant programme possible. Together with all the more organised events and gatherings, we continue to welcome a constant stream of Mertonians, many of whom return to College when they are in town. Please do come and see us whenever you are in the vicinity.

On the fundraising front, we are pleased to report that strong momentum continues, with remarkable and impactful support from so many of our alumni and friends. More than £3.8 million has been raised in new gifts and pledges between 1 August 2023 and 31 July 2024. We are particularly grateful to Jim Buckee (1968) for his significant gift endowing the Buckee Scholarship in Physics, and to Reed Rubin (1957) for his stalwart generosity in support of the Choir. We were also delighted to fully fund the College's third Reach Scholarship for undergraduates from low-income countries thanks to the significant support of Reg Hall (1954) as well as other Mertonians.

Indeed, a number of appeals were completed thanks to collective giving by syndicates of donors, demonstrating that whatever the size of the gift, there is always an impact. The campaign to preserve the Upper Library's medieval stained-glass windows was successfully concluded in the autumn of 2023, and this was followed in 2024 by the Sandy Irvine Centenary Exhibition and a tenth anniversary appeal in support of the Dobson Organ and organ performance. Graduate scholarships continued to attract considerable support, with the completion of a full DPhil scholarship for a Ukrainian refugee student and a new DPhil scholarship in Law.

Additionally, we are delighted to announce the launch of the Weston Earth Scholarships at Merton, enabled by



the exceptional generosity of The Hilary & Galen Weston Foundation. This initiative will provide transformational opportunities for students to undertake research on sustainability and the environment across a range of academic disciplines with the first two Weston Earth Scholars starting at Merton this Michaelmas term.

In March we held a two-week telethon which raised almost £200,000 of new gifts and pledges, a result consistent with previous years, and we had significant support from both MCR newcomers and JCR leavers who contributed – by the magnitude of 97% uptake – towards a Posterity Gift and Leavers' Gift respectively. We are grateful to Sven Kirkerup (2014) for once again matching the MCR gift and to Mustafa Abbas (1990) for matching the undergraduate Leavers' Gift for the fourth year running.

Amidst such a busy year we have launched the second phase of Merton College Mentoring (MCM) with considerable thanks to its architects Dame Philippa Whipple (1984) and Sam Whipple (1983). Their tireless energy and commitment towards this new initiative has been exceptional. More

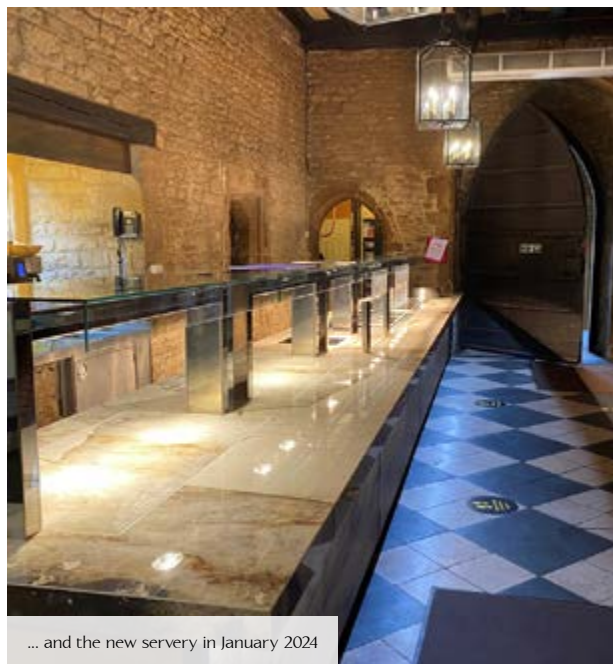
than 100 Mertonians have now signed up as mentors, enabling us to match them with younger alumni mentees. The subject-based discussion groups are also going from strength to strength. We were particularly encouraged to see the Biomedical and Life Sciences and Net Zero Discussion groups host in-person gatherings at the College, featuring Chris Cooper (1994), Andrew Allen (1984) and Chris Stark as speakers.

Maintaining connection and warmth with our alumni is a collective effort, a quality well recognised by our Warden and the Fellowship. The members of the Development team, I know, bring energetic commitment to their roles and go the extra mile – Milos, Chelsea, Mark, Julia, Chiara and Gloria. We wish Gloria well in her new permanent position at Selwyn College Cambridge and to Milos, whose contribution to the College over the last six years has been colossal. He moves on to lead the Development team at St Cross, and while we will miss him greatly, we know he'll deliver a first-rate effort.

**Mark Coote**  
Development Director & Fellow



The old servery...



... and the new servery in January 2024

## Domestic Bursary

It hardly seems possible that another year has passed and that we are again reflecting on the domestic activities of the staff team at Merton. Certainly, the past year has been no less busy and is memorable for many reasons. September 2023 started with the installation of Professor Jennifer Payne as the 52nd Warden of Merton. The ceremony involved many of the staff teams and commenced at midday when the two Senior Fellows escorted the Warden from Postmasters' Hall to the College Gate. The Warden knocked on the gate and was admitted to the College by the Head Porter, Huw James. The Sub-Warden greeted the Warden and presented her with the College key, before the assembled Fellows then introduced themselves. Following the declaration of election and installation of the Warden in Chapel, Fellows, staff and three former Wardens joined the Warden and her family for a very enjoyable lunch in Hall. (For a photo of the four Wardens, see 'From the Warden' on page 5.)

Readers of the last edition of *Postmaster* will remember the appointment of Simon Crawshaw as Head Chef. Along with Head Steward, Margo Skalik, he has been reviewing the service and presentation of food in both the SCR and Hall, the outcome of which is that a new food servery counter was commissioned and installed during the Christmas vacation. The old servery was over 20 years old and apparently second-hand when installed. Some of its parts were obsolete and the space it offered was limited. The new servery has a longer granite-topped counter that offers both hot and cold food sections, including an integral halogen hob that allows the chefs to cook in the front of house. The addition of freshly cooked pancakes and omelettes to the breakfast menu has proven very popular and resulted in a noticeable increase in breakfast trade! The new servery has also enabled changes to be made in food production and our team of talented chefs individually plate food for dinners which has improved

presentation. In general, the various changes have resulted in the popularity of college dining growing across all services, to such an extent that additional crockery and cutlery has been ordered.

Very much part of the catering operation is the ever-popular College Bar, which for the past seven years has been run by Bar Manager Neil Hall. Neil joined Merton in 2015 as assistant to David Hedges, from whom he learnt how to run a successful student bar. David was the College's Bar Manager for nearly 30 years and the staff community were very sad to learn that David had passed away on 11 December 2023. David started at Merton in 1987 as a Scout and his association with the bar started shortly afterwards when he became a 'Scout barman' in 1990. In 2001, he became Bar Manager, a role he excelled in. Much loved by the College community throughout his time here and beyond, David retired in 2017 and moved back to his hometown of Durham. Merton remained a truly special place for David and current and former staff members joined his family and friends at a small service to commit his ashes in Chapel Grove on Saturday 20 April.

Each year the staff at Merton are invited to nominate and elect a local charity for which funds are raised through various activities such as the Christmas raffle. For 2024, the chosen charity is the Oxford Food Hub, which was originally founded in 2009 as the Oxford Food Bank and is entirely supported by donors. At the March staff briefing, we were joined by Oxford Food Hub CEO, Emily Smith, who explained the invaluable work done by the team to collect surplus food from local wholesalers and retailers, which is sorted and distributed to over 200 charities and community groups across Oxfordshire, including traditional food banks, homeless shelters, children's centres, women's refuges and refugee charities. The brilliant staff at Merton were thanked for their fundraising efforts and a donation from the College of £1,968.

As always, the staff team have been super busy again this year, notably in HR, where Fiona Lawrence and Andi Forrai continue to support various recruitment activities, including academic appointments. Maintenance work has resumed across the Oxford estate, with Clerk of Works Jane Reid and her team leading the refurbishment of student accommodation in Rose Lane 4, a replacement roof above Mure, the refurbishment

of the Warden's Lodgings and various tutors' houses, stone repair works to the south elevation of Fellows' Quad and the much-awaited Boathouse extension. The summer conference programme has seen Rebecca Stewart, Kelly Calvert and Denisa Bistika welcome both the return of long-standing residential guests and a number of new events to Merton. As ever, our Accommodation and Housekeeping teams led by Sally Hague and Magda Clarke play an essential role in supporting conference activities as well as deep cleaning student rooms for the start of the new academic year. In particular, Sally is occupied with organising the logistics of numerous housing and teaching room moves over the summer for tutors and lecturers. Plans to develop a new Merton website and intranet are progressing well under the supervision of Web and Media Officer Rebecca Wilson, who in the middle of this also coordinated a major film production company using part of the College and most of Merton Street!

To finish, perhaps the standout moment of the past year has been the state visit in June by Their Majesties the Emperor and Empress of Japan. After many months of planning on the part of the Warden's Executive Assistant Lisa Lawrence and Head Porter Huw James, the College welcomed a private visit as part of a short trip to the UK. The staff team contribute in so many different ways to College life and making Merton so special!

**Tim Lightfoot**  
Domestic Bursar

# Schools Liaison and Outreach

Merton's outreach programme aims to help students from a variety of backgrounds to make informed decisions about higher education, and to equip them with the skills and confidence to make competitive applications. This year, our outreach goals have continued to evolve, with the introduction of new events, and the continuation of many others. As part of the University's regionalisation scheme for outreach, this work focuses on the south west of England (Dorset, Wiltshire, Bristol, Bath and north-east Somerset) as well as the London Borough of Merton. However, we work with students and schools from across the UK to empower prospective applicants to consider higher education as an achievable and exciting option for their futures.

As part of our regional work, Merton collaborates with Exeter College and Lady Margaret Hall to offer access events which reach across the region. This year the consortium organised and delivered a week-long trip to Bristol, during which we visited 12 schools and attended the Bristol Higher Education Fair. The South-West Consortium also collaborates with Cambridge, which has led to a number of activities over the year. We have worked with Trinity Hall and Robinson and Downing colleges in Cambridge on the Oxford and Cambridge Information Days. These were a series of virtual events, providing information about the application process and student life to prospective students and their parents, teachers and advisors. Merton also collaborated with Trinity Hall, Cambridge at the Bath and North East Somerset Oxbridge Conference in the spring, which gathered local schools together to hear talks from outreach officers and experience sample lectures from academics.

There have been many opportunities this year to work with colleagues from across the collegiate University, including departments. Merton was among the colleges representing the University at the Bournemouth Higher Education Fair and took part in a 'roadshow' with the Chemistry Department, supporting the Bournemouth and Dorchester legs of their south-west tour. This provided not only a brilliant opportunity to speak to prospective students from Years 7-12 about university life, but also to build new relationships with

teachers and careers advisers at a number of schools and colleges in the area.

In April, the College worked with the Physics Department and the educational charity Physics Partners to host the final of a physics video competition on the theme 'What Lights Up Your Love of Physics?'. The competition for Year 12 pupils from state schools was supported by funding from the John Templeton Foundation, secured by Professor Simon Saunders. Finalists spent two days at Merton, premiering their video entries and finding out more about the College, University and Physics Department. We were thoroughly impressed by the standard of the finalists' videos shown at the event, including an amazing Lego model of the grasshopper escapement build by the overall winner from Bishop Luffa School.

Inbound school visits to Merton continued to be extremely successful, as we welcomed groups from 25 state schools to spend a day with us. In addition, we hosted a number of tours, talks, academic sessions and half-day activities. We are incredibly grateful to the wonderful team of student ambassadors who support these visits, by offering insights into their experiences of applying to university and university life. They are brilliant representatives of Merton and our work with schools and colleges would not be possible without them.

Our partnership with the Social Mobility Foundation (SMF) has continued successfully, with another year of online and in-person events. The SMF is a UK-wide charity supporting high-achieving students to reach their potential by providing them with networks and opportunities that they may otherwise not have. In the autumn we ran an interview workshop, which aimed to provide useful and practical advice to students about approaching their admissions interviews with confidence.

In June, we hosted our third SMF residential at Merton. Alongside exploring the city and experiencing elements of university life, students attended workshops on personal statements, interviews and writing skills and took part in a confidence-building activity to create an 'elevator pitch'



The winner of the 'What Lights Up Your Love of Physics?' competition, with her physics teacher, the judges Simon Saunders, Alan Barr and Oliver Pooley and representatives of Physics Partners



The Physics Partners judges watching one of the video entries in the TS Eliot Theatre

speaking positively about themselves. We were also joined by colleagues from the University Fees & Funding team and Careers Service to provide insights into financial support and future career options. Students were also treated to some mini-lectures by Merton Fellows about their current research, which they engaged with very enthusiastically.

We have enjoyed being able to share Merton's diverse and inclusive community with prospective applicants over the course of the year and are immensely grateful to the student ambassadors, academic staff and wider teams for all they do to make our outreach work possible. We look forward to engaging with more students, parents and teachers over the coming year.

**Jenny Shaw (2020)**  
Schools Liaison and Access Officer

# Hail to New Fellows



**Dr Lindsay Baker**

**Associate Professor of Biochemistry and Tutor in Biochemistry**

I joined Merton in October 2022 as a Stipendiary Lecturer in Biochemistry, before my appointment as a Fellow and Tutor in Biochemistry in October 2023. It was a pleasure to be able to continue teaching the students I had met as a lecturer.

My research focuses on understanding the structures that make up cells, and how those structures change in response to the cell's environment. I am particularly interested in the cell's membranes, which consist of self-assembled fatty molecules that form a barrier from the otherwise water-based cellular environment. A current focus is on the cellular response of bacteria to antibiotics. Although research for many years has focused on how bacteria develop resistance to antibiotics, bacteria's small size has prevented us from understanding what happens to cell structure when bacteria die, and how their death affects their neighbours.

To overcome this technological hurdle, my main research methodology is electron cryomicroscopy, where we use electrons, instead of light, to image the native cell structures. As we preserve our samples by freezing in vitreous (non-crystalline) ice, there is no need for plastic embedding or staining and our signal comes directly from every molecule inside the cell. This method allows us to see any changes in cellular structure and organisation across spatial scales.

Settling in fully at Merton has been a wonderful experience. The students bring an energy and enthusiasm that is easily matched by the friendly and open fellowship.



## Professor Naomi Waltham-Smith

### Professor of Music and Douglas Algar Tutor in Music

I came to Merton and Oxford's Faculty of Music in September 2023 from the University of Warwick, where I was Professor in the Centre for Interdisciplinary Methodologies and Deputy Chair of the Faculty of Social Sciences. Before that, I taught in Music and Comparative Literature at the University of Pennsylvania. Back in 2000, I went up to read Music at Selwyn College, Cambridge, before an MMus and PhD at King's College London and postdoctoral fellowships at City University and Indiana University.

I am an interdisciplinary scholar, working at the intersection of continental philosophy with music and sound studies. My particular area of focus is the politics of listening. I have written four books that explore this question in different contexts from the Classical style to recent sound art, from protests in the Parisian *banlieue* to debates about free speech.

My current project excavates what I think of as a subterranean concept of 'listening' in the history of political philosophy, not only in Europe but also in decolonial and Black radical traditions, often appearing under the guise of other concepts such as 'voice,' 'silence,' or 'counsel.' Funded by the British Academy, the Leverhulme Trust, and a fellowship next year at the Hanse-Wissenschaftskolleg, the project speaks to issues facing our democracies today, including increasing distrust in politicians, disaffection with democratic institutions, polarisation of debate, and susceptibility to disinformation - all of which may be analysed as deficits in listening.

My work has a strongly outwards-facing dimension, involving deliberative-democratic projects in local communities as well

as gallery installations of my field recordings. This year I was granted an Oxford Policy Engagement Network Leaders Award to organise a series of workshops exploring the potential of research on music, sound and listening to inform policymaking.

Merton is proving to be a wonderful place for interdisciplinary conversations. It has been incredibly stimulating to exchange ideas over dinner or in the SCR with sharp and creative interlocutors, as well as with tremendously curious and insightful students. I am learning a lot!

# Features

Liverpool Docks  
136 miles

Port Said  
2207 miles

Hotel Mount Everest  
Darjeeling 4753 miles

THE MONASTERY OF  
SHEKAR 4623 MILES

Everest Basecamp  
4645 miles

# Viniculturalists and vintners

## Mertonians in the wine industry

Rupert Symington (1982) CEO of Symington Family Estates

*The Symington family have been at home in Portugal's Douro Valley for more than 140 years. They produce some of the world's most celebrated port wines, embracing the brands of Graham's, Dow's, Warre's, Cockburn's, and Prats & Symington. They are the leading vineyard owner in the Douro Valley, with 26 Quintas covering 2,255 hectares and possess a Royal Warrant. A forward-looking business, Symington has won prestigious awards for sustainability, and has pioneered organic port and recently became one of the few fortified wine producers in the world to earn B Corp certification, making it a leader in transparency, permaculture, and inclusivity.*

I grew up in Portugal in the 1960s and 70s, and it was very different to today. The economy was still very dependent on agriculture, and before Portugal joined the EU in 1986 the standard of living was well below the European average. Many of the leading companies in the port trade were still British-owned and managed. Symington Estates actively pursued export business so my father was often away; but we also entertained customers and press regularly at home, so I was aware from an early age of the importance of port and its after-dinner rituals.

My career in winemaking did not start immediately after Merton in 1985. First, I spent five years in the City, ending up as a breweries and leisure equity analyst at Nomura, and then doing an MBA at INSEAD. I joined the family business in 1992, in sales and finance, with many months spent on the road in the United States and Canada developing the sales of our wines to retail and restaurant customers. Back at the office in Porto I was responsible for diversification strategy and the financial planning of a huge group expansion over 30 years. In 1999 I was charged with the development of dry Douro wines alongside port, a key diversification which has come to represent over 10% of group sales. I became CEO in 2019.



Rupert Symington (right) with College Wine Steward (as well as Development Director) Mark Coote at Graham's 1890 Lodge in Porto.

An important element of Symington is our commitment to the region's land and people. As one of the largest buyers of grapes from the Douro demarcated region, we are well aware of our responsibilities in ensuring the long-term sustainability of the vineyard area of the region. We also work to support health, education and natural resources in the Douro through charitable donations. In 2019, Symington attained B Corp status, which provides official recognition of our commitment to sustainability in the widest sense, ensuring that we focus on the wellbeing of our staff, suppliers and customers as well as taking care of the land that we farm and the effect on the environment of the products that we sell.

The business has been under Symington family management for over 140 years and so I am keen to ensure the company's continuity as a private family business. The pace of change in our industry is enormous and we are doing our utmost to adapt, while recognising that our core business needs people to make it work and there is a limit to how far we can replace human skills with AI and other technology. We are therefore focusing on a more refined approach to recruitment and the employee experience. And we employ the new generation of the family: we have six members of the fifth generation



Rare vintage Graham's Port bottles in the vast cellars of the 1890 Lodge

working in different areas of the business, alongside three members of the fourth generation. We try to have regular contact with the younger generation in order to pass on core values, business experience and family anecdotes, which we believe can set us apart from our competition in the eyes of the consumer and underpin our continued success.

When I think back to Merton, when I was there in the 1980s, I remember how Oxford was still consuming a lot of port, especially at formal dinners, and I certainly tried to do my bit to promote the category among my student peers. Somewhat tellingly however, most colleges had come to realise that they were overstocked with fine wine in general, and many excellent bottles of Burgundy and Bordeaux as well as port were sold off to members of the MCR in various colleges and gratefully consumed in turn by undergraduates such as myself. It was definitely the end of an era for fine wine consumption at Oxford, and a time of great social change in the UK, and those were important lessons for me to learn. Nevertheless, a lasting part of life at Merton for me was the constant high level 'witty banter' between fellow students, which has shaped my sense of humour for a lifetime.

*For Mertonians visiting Porto, a tour and tasting at Graham's 1890 Lodge would be a memorable occasion, with the added opportunity of lunch or dinner in Symington's Vinum restaurant, with spectacular views across the Douro and old Porto. Find out more at [grahams-port.com/1890-lodge](http://grahams-port.com/1890-lodge)*

## Min Yee Tseu (2008) *Private Client, Corporate and University Sales at the Oxford Wine Company*

*The Oxford Wine Company (OWC) is a multi-award-winning and well-recognised local independent wine merchant with a national profile. The company has won multiple prestigious awards including 'Regional Merchant of the Year' in the International Wine Challenge, and in 2023, 'Best Independent Wine Merchant in the UK' by Harpers Wine & Spirit's 50 Best Indies. Alongside its sales operations, OWC runs The Oxford Wine School, an accredited programme provided for the Wine & Spirit Education Trust (WSET), offering beginner to advanced level courses.*

I never imagined that I would end up working in the wine industry. After graduating from Oxford with a degree in biochemistry, I spent seven years as a strategy consultant in London and New York. Although interesting and challenging, I decided it was time for a change of pace and I spent a summer at Château Méauume in Bordeaux. I had a phenomenal time there and, coupled with the fact that I had already completed the WSET Level 2 and 3 qualifications several years earlier for fun, I thought I'd try my hand at its Level 4 Diploma in Wines. Unexpectedly, I found it easier than my biochemistry degree, and it was such a great experience learning to taste wines blind. I went from someone who'd simply say, 'This smells like a white or red wine' to passing all tasting elements of the Diploma with merit.

I joined The Oxford Wine Company in October 2020 as part of the retail team working in the shops, as wine was declared essential during the Covid pandemic. Simply being around wine was fantastic for learning, and I completed the Diploma in 2022. My role has evolved since then and I currently look after Private Client, Corporate and University Sales. It's been rewarding building this up from something I was given one day a week to focus on back in 2021 to a position where the turnover has been significant enough for me to work on this full time. It has also meant that I no longer work in an office or a shop, and I have the flexibility to manage my own time — and I'm definitely enjoying the freedom of working remotely and being results-driven.



Min Yee prepares for an *en primeur* tasting

My time at Merton has been invaluable to my career in the wine industry. Most of my work is with the Oxford colleges which, before I started at OWC, was a relatively untapped market. Understanding the college system and the idiosyncrasies of Oxford life has certainly been beneficial. I'm fortunate enough to interact with a range of people across the University, including Wine Stewards and Cellarers, Common Room Presidents and Social Secretaries, and Events and Catering Teams. It keeps things interesting and varied, especially when there are so many different requirements. I'm enjoying the social life and traditions without the academic pressure, and I get to experience so many of the best parts of Oxford for a second time — I think I've been to more college High Tables now than when I was a student!

Oxford is almost unparalleled in terms of the sheer prestige and quantity of wines in college cellars. If you're lucky enough to have access to them, I'd recommend buying a case or two as they often come at quite the bargain. There are also two wine societies that students can join: Bacchus, and the Blind Tasting Society. Bacchus meets on Mondays at OWC's Jericho Wine Rooms and has had some

fantastic tastings including Châteaux d'Yquem, Figeac and Angélus. They also host a termly black-tie dinner that was most recently sponsored by AXA Millésimes, who showed wines from Pichon Baron, Quinta do Noval, Disznókő and Suduiraut. The Blind Tasting Society has equally renowned wines and hosts and, as its name suggests, operates on a more serious and competitive basis that culminates in a yearly varsity match against Cambridge — which Oxford has won 46 times to Cambridge's 26.

For anyone who'd like to embark on a career in wine, the larger companies have graduate schemes or you could dip your toes in with WSET Level 2 like I did. For me, it's been an unexpected interest but it's kept me captivated so far as there are always new things to learn and to taste.

*The Oxford Wine Company's shops in the city centre are located on Botley Road, Turl Street and Little Clarendon Street. OWC run tastings in its Jericho Wine Rooms as well as smaller more intimate tastings in the historic and atmospheric cellar beneath the Turl Street shop. Drop by to see OWC's wares or check out its events calendar. [oxfordwine.co.uk/owc/our\\_tastings/](http://oxfordwine.co.uk/owc/our_tastings/)*



Igor with the beautiful Sill Family Vineyards 1935 Hudson Terraplane truck, originally launched by aviator Amelia Earhart

**Igor Sill (2005) *Winemaker and Vintner at Atlas Peak Mountain Winery, Sill Family Vineyards, Napa Valley, California, USA***

*Sill Family Vineyards (formerly Ardente Estate Winery), is a 24 acre Atlas Peak AVA mountain winery and vineyard. When establishing The Sill Family Vineyards, Igor Sill chose Napa's high elevation Atlas Peak volcanic appellation because of its longer sun exposure and cooler nights, and the characteristics of the soil. This vineyard represents a unique piece of Napa winemaking history as it was one of the most difficult to plant, hard to farm and its quality is truly exceptional. Sill Family Vineyards produces some of the greatest cabernet fruit that Napa has to offer each and every year, its high-ranking Cabernet Sauvignon achieves notable accolades, turning the heads of wine critics and collectors worldwide.*

I became passionate about Bordeaux wines after being introduced to Château Margaux, Château Latour and Château Lafite Rothschild in the late 1970s by H Lyman Emerson, a renaissance gentleman and noted fine wine collector. From 1997 to 2010 I worked with Francois Pinault's Group Artémis, owner of Château Latour. I went on to become a Court of Master Sommelier, judging wine competitions including the annual International Wine Challenge in London, and learned my winemaking craft via UC Davis' viticulture program. I worked at Italian wine producer V Sattui Winery and Opus One Winery in Napa, California. There, I fell in love with Napa's numerous microclimates and unique terroirs and started a search for an extraordinary volcanic mountain vineyard. That led to the purchase of the 24-acre Atlas Peak Mountain Winery property in 2016, turning my passion for collecting fine Bordeaux and Burgundian wines into a love for



producing them with an artisan Old-World approach.

At Sill Family Vineyards, we recognize that we are only the most recent stewards in a long history of our land, farming according to continually organic and sustainable methods. Our farm conservation plan for the vineyard includes environmentally-based practices that use beneficial insects and predatory birds in order to protect and sustain our environment naturally.

There are four seasons that affect growing grapes, and each requires distinct activities. The spring season is all about spurting new growth from a grape vine that has been dormant through winter, pruning each vine to help it produce a healthy crop and mowing the ground's cover crop for nutrients. We refer to this as budburst, flower cluster and fruit set. During the summer months we tie new growth shoots to trellis to train the vines to maximize sun exposure during the vine's berry development. As we are fully sustainable and organically farmed there is a great deal of manual labour in tending the vineyards. We harvest our bounty in the late fall, generally in October and November. The passing of each season signals the beginning of a new stage in the vineyard management cycle. Each requires extensive care while bringing tremendous personal rewards.

Like any other great work, mine arose out of the passion for uncompromised quality in creating exceptional wines. As a result, our wines receive worldwide rave reviews for their powerful expressiveness, density, character, elegance and silk-long finish. Robert Parker extended a 97 points rating to our 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon vintage and Wine Spectator rated it 98 points. Our 2015 Cabernet Sauvignon received the CWSA 2018 Wine of the Year award, as well as the Double Gold Medal, and our 2016 très Rosé de Chardonnay won the gold medal.

Sill Family Vineyards has a philanthropic strand to its mission. I'm particularly inspired by this quote from Winston Churchill:

*'What is the use of living, if it be not to strive for noble causes and to make this muddled world a better place for those who will live in it after we are gone?'*

Like Churchill, and like ethics researcher Toby Ord who started the organisation Giving What We Can, at Sill Family Vineyards we believe that we have a moral imperative to give to causes which do the most good, as well as to those less fortunate than ourselves. Accordingly, we have pledged to donate 10% of each year's profits to UCSF Benioff Children's Hospitals and Kadoch Lab, bringing together the cancer research community to tackle challenges in unravelling cancer, metastasis and the chromatin regulatory mechanisms.

When I think back to my Oxford days, I recognise that Merton is both historic and magical. It creates a cultural atmosphere that facilitates personal development in support of one's pursuit of knowledge. The research that goes on is world class and inspiring. My colleagues came from all over the world. They were fascinating, talented and engaging people, each with a story to tell and all seeking to make a difference, and a significant contribution. It was truly a productive and memorable time for me.

*Igor welcomes visitors at his estate tasting patio up on the Atlas Peak, where they can have an unforgettable tasting experience and enjoy spending quality time walking the vineyard, hearing more about the Sill farming philosophies, and enjoying the beauty of nature. Find out more at [sillfamilyvineyards.com](http://sillfamilyvineyards.com)*



A view from here:  
Jason Allen-Paisant, scholar,  
award-winning poet and writer

Photo: Clara Molden

Professor Jason Allen-Paisant (2011) is a poet and scholar whose work explores embodied experience in the context of Afro-diasporic history. In 2023 he won both the T. S. Eliot Prize and the Forward Prize for Best Collection for his collection of poems *Self-Portrait as Othello*. The collection reimagines Shakespeare's eponymous hero in a modern landscape, examining 'the missing backstory of Othello' and drawing parallels with the lives of Black male immigrants in Europe today.

In June, Jason kindly gave an interview with Alumni Communications Officer Julia Bell to talk about *Self-Portrait as Othello* and what winning these prizes has meant to him.

**In 2023, you were awarded the T. S. Eliot Prize and the Forward Prize for your second book of poems, *Self-Portrait as Othello*. What has this recognition of your work meant to your life and your career?**

Winning these prizes has been overwhelming. It's a canon-defining award: institutionally prestigious, with the winners taking on a particular stature in the eyes of other people. I feel privileged to have won this recognition. It feels like an affirmation of my work and it widens the horizon of possibility for me. In a certain way it lifts a weight from my shoulders, freeing me up to be more playful, to take more risks, to be adventurous in my work.

Currently I am writing some poetry which is unlike the poems I've written before. The prize-winning also comes just ahead of the publication of my first creative non-fiction book, in March 2025. I'm excited about readers discovering that aspect of my writing too. The book is called *The Possibility of Tenderness*, and is part memoir, part detective story. Overall, it's to be read as a novel. It's the story of a boy from rural Jamaica who leaves for places far abroad, and how on his return, after all that journeying, he re-embraces a kinship with the earth. It's about a tiny district and how it is situated within the global history of coffee, colonialism and land ownership. It's physical, and very sensual: a multi-faceted kind of work and I've been intentional in making it read as a novel. Its genesis was in my earlier poetry collection, *Thinking with Trees*.

**You describe the poetry collection *Self-Portrait as Othello* as telling the backstory of the character whose voice – in the sense of background and life – is not**

**heard in the play. What made you consider Othello, and what do you explore in this collection?**

*Self-Portrait as Othello* emerges out of a period that begins with Oxford in 2011. It's had a long period of gestation (I left Oxford nine years ago), but the book is a result of that gestation – the layers of thought and maturation. I chose *Othello* because I wanted to find a container mechanism that would allow me to explore the things I wanted to talk about: the feeling of being the only Black person in the room, the feeling of the interracial encounters with friends or lovers, and the spatial and visual dynamics of race within the city. In the Shakespeare play, Othello is the eponymous hero, yet his backstory is almost entirely absent: we know nothing of where his came from, or his story – how as a Black man, he came to be in Venice. I wanted to address this – to imagine what it must have been like as a Black man at that time in Renaissance Europe, and to see if there were parallels with the modern-day experiences of Black men, particularly migrants, in the Europe of today. There are themes of jealousy: the 'know your place' aggression as embodied by Iago. There are the ambivalences of welcome to the foreigner: on the one hand you are valorised and recognised but on the other, there is a resentment that has to do with race and certain anxieties around race. It addresses the White male anxiety about the Black male in relation to the White woman.

*Self-Portrait as Othello* is also about migration and crossing borders: the protagonist is travelling joyously in the first part of the book, jauntily moving from city to city and place to place. There is also the crossing of linguistic boundaries, as I've used French, Italian, and Jamaican patois in the poems. This linguistic fluidity de-familiarises the reader and some readers do not like that. But it is a challenge to the unquestioned centrality of the English language today. The use of different languages is joyous too; there's a physical pleasure that's involved: it is integral to the protagonist, who is keen and curious, finding his place in different communities. For me, language has infinite sanctuaries, one of which is the sensuality of sound itself, and the pleasure of trying out a new language on your tongue.

Other themes of the collection include the search for the absent father and the trials and tribulations of race. I wanted to keep all these themes in balance with the joy of finding one's place in the world.



Photo: Sarah Lee

**You spent time in Venice researching for the poems. Can you tell us a little about the process behind your poetry?**

I went to Venice twice, and the first time I was struck by the Renaissance portraiture and the Africans in it, particularly in works by Carpaccio and Veronese. It was later, when I was at an advanced stage of the work, that I realised I needed to go back there, so I went back intentionally to walk in the city and to visit museums and galleries, looking at those works again. You can see in the book the places and works that made their way in to the poems: in particular one work by Veronese, *The Feast in the House of Levi* (1573), which shows Black men and children: one man is a pickpocket but his portrayal is complex,

inviting reflections on the complexity of Africans in Venice in the Renaissance period. Before the emergence of racism as we know it, these individuals were often interestingly integrated into Venetian society. In some cases, I wrote a poem while standing in front of the work itself. The research also involved walking about in Venice, with questions in mind such as, 'So, what do I see here? How do I make sense of the 16th or the early 17th century, when this art was being produced, and the play was being written and staged?' I could feel myself within a time period in which Shakespeare's *Othello* and the brushwork of the Venetian masters are interconnected. Somewhere, they're part of the same history: part of the same time.

I also asked myself, 'How can I think about that period of time in the light of what I see now? How does Shakespeare's play and that representation of Venice inform what I see now? What continuities can I see between that period and today: what has remained, what has changed, and does it allow me to read the space, and find myself within the space?' This questioning is how I worked on these poems. I often work in that way: my first book, *Thinking with Trees*, was created from going for walks within the woods, and was a chronicling of the autoethnographic impulse that arose from that.

**In an interview in the *Guardian* you mention that you had been writing poetry since you were an undergraduate, but at Oxford 'something shifted and I started doing it seriously'. What influence did your time at Merton have on your career?**

I think the book distils the reality of my coming to Oxford, and from there to the École normale supérieure in Paris for a year's study as part of my DPhil. Jonathan Thackeray, who was a tutor of Spanish while I was at Merton, was the one who allowed me to go to the École normale, and I am grateful to him for this, as the experience of Paris massively shaped the person I would become. Being in Oxford and Paris was a rich but conflicted, and altogether generative, experience, both creatively and intellectually. It was about discovery: I came wide-eyed and I threw myself into it, and it rewarded me.

It was at Oxford that I began to consider myself a poet, accepting the hold that poetry started to have on me, and feeling the imperative to be a poet no matter what else. Oxford was a stimulating environment where I met like-minded people, a few of whom are still friends. It is a hyper intellectual place: a place where nights of poetry and pints – or bad red wine! – can go hand in hand. In Oxford, there might be three different places in one evening where you can read or discuss poetry with other people who are not necessarily poets themselves, but who like to talk about poetry. It was at Oxford that I read and discussed Eliot's *Four Quartets*, as well as Baudelaire, French symbolist poetry, and British American modernist poetry. I had opportunities to sit in those 'parliamentary green chairs' and share thoughts with others about what I was reading.

As well as the intellectual stimulus in Oxford, the medieval buildings contribute to there being something inherently inspiring about the city. Oxford is the sort of place that says, 'You can be who you want to be, you can pursue your creative impulses – you can be an artist.' Having said that, for me, being there felt improbable. I always knew I was talented and a bright young man but I had never imagined that I'd end up in Oxford. Being there made me look back on where I came from. I reflected on the distance between where I grew up – Coffee Grove, in rural Jamaica – and Oxford. As hungry and as excited as I was to be in Oxford and as much as I fully embraced the experience, there was still the shock of the radical difference of space. It was a huge journey I'd made, and one that I needed to chronicle. That's how, for me, the experience of Oxford generated poetry.

**How do you manage to create the space for your writing around your role as Professor of Critical Thinking and Creative Writing at Manchester University?**

I'm fortunate in that I have an employer who makes space for me, who values the writer that I am and nurtures that. I have made my creative work my academic work, and I no longer focus on traditional academic writing. I work on vernacular scholarship and critical creativity, and I fold the academic into my creative writing. With my new book, *The Possibility of Tenderness*, I discovered that I could do a lot of critical thinking, and carry it off in an easy, inviting way for the reader, by letting the storytelling guide everything. It was an important discovery.

**Finally, do you have any advice for anyone starting out in poetry today?**

Clearly, you've got to read voraciously, if what you'll compose is to be worth listening to. I'd add that you should expose yourself to different kinds of poetry, to all the things that poetry can be. That you should read poetry written in languages other than English. That you should give into your weirdness, your strangeness. Within that is a surprising thing that might not only get people to sit up and listen, it might be liberating to many. Additionally, being a good poet requires being attentive, not just to the big and colourful – that's easy enough – but also to the subtle and inconspicuous.

# Ten years of the Gerry Grimstone Travel Awards

*Lord Gerry Grimstone recalls his time spent abroad as a student and discusses his reasons for supporting student travel.*

The Gerry Grimstone Travel Awards are available to undergraduate and postgraduate students and can be used for a trip abroad, usually during the summer vacation, either directly related to the student's studies or for personal development. I chose to fund travel awards because it is a way of supporting students in a way that has immediacy and relevance to them during their studies. When I was a student myself, I was granted a travel award and used it for a trip abroad that made a real impact on me, shaping my degree and my subsequent career.

I read Chemistry at Merton, and during my degree I was writing a thesis on the chemical aspects of pollution. At the time, Croydon council gave the Frank Denning Memorial travel awards to students resident in Croydon to travel abroad in pursuit of their studies or for personal development. I was awarded £50 (which, 55 years ago, went a lot further than it does today) and put this towards a trip during the long summer vacation to Japan, where I joined a project in Minamata studying the effects of cadmium pollution on the local population causing the disease known as *itai itai* ('ouch ouch').

My trip lasted about four weeks and, in those days, it was a long time for a young person like me to be abroad. I was from a proud working-class family, and this was the early 1970s, when international travel was not as common as it is now: the opportunity for this kind of trip was entirely unexpected. The experience was utterly transformative. What I learnt during my time in Japan both shaped Part 2 of my degree and opened my eyes to travel and the possibilities of what I could do in my career. It gave me a perspective on globalisation in a way that I would not have got from reading. Having had this



experience during my degree, I then had an idea of what was out there for when I completed my studies.

After university, I went on to have an international career. I have worked in over 60 countries, including seven years in Hong Kong, three years in New York, numerous trips to India and around 300 trips to China. It's been fulfilling and rewarding. I think it would have been quite different without that Japan trip in my student days to act as a catalyst for all that came afterwards.

Travel is an important part of education for a young person, and it helps create social mobility. It can open their eyes to the globalised world in which we live and the role this might have in their lives and careers.

For some students, the trip will be the catalyst for their future career. I know of one student who went to China and is now a specialist in Chinese art, working in her own gallery. For others, the trip they make is not directly connected with their studies or future career but it is still a formative experience. Meeting people abroad can help students experience for themselves the universality of humanity that lies underneath differences in culture and background.

While having no involvement myself in how the travel awards are allocated, I do enjoy seeing the varying ways in which they are put to use. There seem to be no bounds to student ingenuity to make the money go far. For those who really want to create them, there are some wonderful opportunities.

I see common themes in the students' reports, and these have changed a little over time. Connection with people from other cultures is a perennial theme: the rewards of spending time with people from other backgrounds and cultures, often working together on a project. Students whose trip is directly related to their studies often report on feeling more equipped for their degree after their trip, and more informed for their studies. They are often inspired by their travels. New-found independence is another theme, particularly for students travelling solo for the first time.

In recent years, the trips have become more directly related to students' academic interests. This is probably due to the increasing economic pressures in the world today: in the current climate, students need to consider how to get the competitive edge when they are in the job market. It's true that when hiring someone, you look beyond the academic achievements to the other things the candidate has done in their life. In my experience, when the candidate has done interesting things such as an out-of-the ordinary experience abroad during their studies and shown some initiative – some spark – then they do stand out from the crowd.

This award started ten years ago and today is needed as much as ever, maybe even more so. The pressure of life today means that there is often no time to experiment or to be taken out of your comfort zone. I'm very pleased, in a small way, to help some Mertonians do this and add to College life in this way. Long may this continue!

*Here, some of the first recipients of the award, and some more recent ones, tell Postmaster how they used their awards and what the trip meant to them.*

## 2015 award recipients

**Markus A Braun (2015)** recalls a research trip to US Law Schools that he undertook in 2016 as a postgraduate, having just finished his MJur at Merton after almost a decade of previous law studies mainly in a civil law jurisdiction.

I was lucky and very grateful to receive the Gerry Grimstone Travel Award, which allowed me to gain a deeper insight from a US perspective into a much-debated topic (maintenance rules in non-residential tenancies) that I had previously analysed in depth from German, Austrian and Swiss perspectives. It also broadened my world view and contributed significantly to my personal development beyond academia.



Markus with Space Shuttle Commander John Creighton at the Kennedy Space Center, 2016

I travelled through three different US states (New York, California and Florida) to conduct research at the law schools at Columbia, the University of San Francisco and the University of Miami. Although my professional endeavours eventually led to a career as a lawyer in Munich in the fields of mergers & acquisitions and private equity, this fresh perspective

and another common law approach to the legal profession outside the UK reinforced my plan to work in an international environment as a corporate lawyer on multi-jurisdictional deals. Thus, the travel award contributed immensely to my professional development in a broader sense.

My travels through the United States also broadened my intercultural perspective. Some highlights were having lunch with astronaut and space shuttle commander John Creighton at the Kennedy Space Center; staying in Williamsburg, New York; and visiting Alcatraz in California, including my conversations with former prisoners who shared their views on life after enduring their time on The Rock. I also visited many great museums during my various stays in the US.

Today my wife Ann-Sophie and I live in Munich and we have two lovely daughters, Julia (4) and Alexandra (1). I am very grateful that Lord Grimstone has made a lasting impact on my life after Oxford through this generous travel award. Thank you, and happy tenth anniversary!



*Dr Abbey Ellis (2013) recalls working on an archaeological study season at Lefkandi with Merton Professor Irene Lemos, which she attended in 2016 between finishing her BA in Classical Archaeology and Ancient History and starting her MSt in Classical Archaeology (both at Merton).*



My studies at Merton College opened up countless opportunities for me, but I remember none more fondly than the summer at Lefkandi. I worked as part of a team tasked with bringing the material excavated there a step closer to publication. My daily tasks involved sorting, quantifying and cataloguing pottery sherds, identifying small finds and even trying my hand at drawing sketches of diagnostic sherds. This work provided a valuable, practical insight into the process of preparing an archaeological publication. During our time in Lefkandi, Professor Lemos also organised some enriching field trips, including visits to the archaeological museums at Thebes and Chalkida. These excursions made a lasting impact on me, allowing me to see objects that I had studied in books and photographs but never before seen in person. This was a new and profound experience, and I felt a truly tangible connection to the ancient world during my time in the museums.

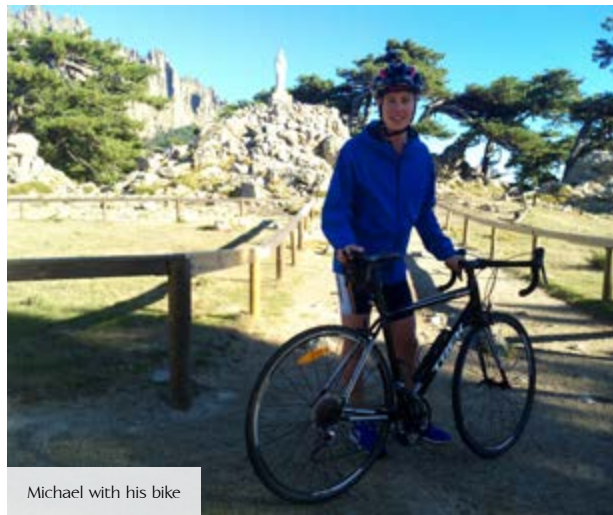
Abbey on a visit to the Parthenon in Athens, 2016



In part inspired by such visits, I went on to embark on a PhD in Museum Studies, as part of a collaborative doctoral programme between the University of Leicester and the Ashmolean Museum. One of the topics considered in my research, based in the Ashmolean's gallery of plaster cast reproductions of ancient sculptures, was the impact that these objects have on museum visitors. I am truly grateful to the Grimstone Travel Award for this transformative experience, which profoundly impacted my academic journey.

**Michael Adamer (2011)** remembers his solo cycling trip in Corsica in 2015 as a DPhil student in Systems Biology (EPSRC CDT) - Mathematics.

My cycling trip in Corsica was a wonderful experience and a challenge at the start of a much longer journey, my DPhil research at the Mathematical Institute. I cycled around the south half of the island in five stages, going through mountainous terrain with lots of uphill as well as thrilling descents down to the seaside where I could enjoy some of Corsica's sapphire blue water and beautiful, rugged coastline interspersed with white, sandy beaches.



Michael with his bike

This trip taught me the art of slow travel. Simply working your way through forests and mountains, stopping off in small towns, and getting to know the locals and local delicacies proved so much more rewarding than the style of travel that we usually employ in our hectic, time-critical world: darting from one tourist hotspot to the next, visiting all the overcrowded 'top sites' and taking pictures for Instagram. Exploring this beautiful little island by bike let me encounter free-roaming pigs, enjoy sunsets in a hammock on top of mountain passes, and many '*Bonne chance*' cheers from its inhabitants who clearly approved of my way of exploring their home.



Corsica's coast, as seen by bicycle

## 2023 award winners

*Third-year student in Biology **Anna Ahlberg** (2020) went on a one-month tropical biology and conservation field course in Uganda in 2023, organised by the Tropical Biology Association (TBA).*



Anna in Uganda, 2023

The TBA course was largely based at Makerere University Biological Field Station in Kibale National Park, a densely forested area famous for its primates. Through the course, I learnt a wide range of field biology techniques and developed my ability to plan and execute field research. This experience complemented and built on the knowledge I have gained from my degree, taking my understanding of biology and research from a largely theoretical level to a practical level. Moreover, the course gave me a unique opportunity to see and study tropical ecosystems in person and work alongside researchers and students from all over the world, which deepened my interests in tropical biology and research. The TBA course proved a rich and eye-opening experience, which I am sure will shape my life and career for years to come.

***Christian Schioler Hansen** (2021) travelled to South Korea and Japan for two weeks in September 2023.*



At the University of Creativity in Japan

In South Korea, I explored the Demilitarised Zone (DMZ), gaining a profound understanding of the Korean War, and visited the National Museum in Seoul, where I was deeply impressed by the legacy of King Sejong. In Japan, my experiences ranged from visiting the Bank of Japan, where I learnt about the practical and historical aspects of monetary policy, to exploring the University of Creativity and its innovative projects such as urban farming prototypes and gut-brain research. Participating in the Bon Odori traditional dance in Tokyo and hiking the Nakasendo trail allowed me to immerse myself in the culture.

Christian in the vault of the Bank of Japan



While I am very grateful for the rigorous academic training at Oxford, I believe that much knowledge and wisdom are acquired through new experiences in diverse cultures and contexts. This journey has left an indelible mark on my academic journey and personal growth, for which I am immensely grateful to Lord Grimstone.

**Rachel Blackhurst (2020) and Henry Smith (2020)** spent three weeks in Tanzania between the preclinical and clinical stages of their medical degrees.



Rachel and Henry (second and third from the right) with the maternity team at Meru District Hospital



Henry with a baby he helped to bring into the world

We volunteered at the Meru District Hospital near Arusha, and spent most of our time providing practical support in the maternity and infectious disease units. The generous support also enabled us to explore more of Tanzania in our spare time – for example, a weekend safari where we saw lions, elephants, zebra, giraffes and even an endangered black rhino, and a relaxing stay on the island of Zanzibar.

We are both extremely grateful to Lord Grimstone and Merton College for making this trip possible. We would highly recommend that other students make the most of this invaluable opportunity.



## Expedition Papua

### One year on from Expedition Cyclops

It started with Martha Kearney at 6.30am on 10 November 2023. That interview, with the *Today* programme (see above), was my first on a day where I hopped from BBC to Sky to ABC, and then back to the BBC before the American front opened in the evening. The news behind the frenzy was Expedition Cyclops, the Merton College scientific research mission I had led to Indonesian Papua's Cyclops Mountains in the summer of 2023. The media were particularly interested in our rediscovery of Attenborough's long-beaked echidna, an enigmatic, egg-laying mammal, related to the duck-billed platypus, that had been unseen for 62 years and feared extinct.

Being named for Sir David, I thought it only polite to first inform the naturalist that 'his' echidna is still alive, so I put an embargo on the news until I could do so. He asked me to come to his house for a blow-by-blow retelling, but he was unable to meet until early November. A disaster — this was after the planned publication date of *Postmaster* 2023, which was expecting my expedition report! 'If I was 30 years younger, I'd have been on that mountain with you!' exclaimed Sir David, as I sat in his living room, cognisant of the fact that I was responsible for the delayed publication of the 2023 edition of *Postmaster*.

As hoped, the press release won significant attention from international NGOs, Indonesian government, universities, and embassies, and this summer I spent a month in Indonesia to solidify new research partnerships and government engagement. Alongside a delegation from Papua, I will be speaking at Climate Week NYC in September to promote a new, larger research project focusing on biodiversity discovery across all Indonesian New Guinea. The aim is to provide the data needed to build a stronger case for increased protection of the world's third largest rainforest and most biodiverse island.

The expedition format not only produced fascinating science, it also provided opportunities to Papua's aspirational scientists and conservationists. They will form the core personnel for long-term, sustainable work in the region, and in May I was able to host Jeff Wonda, a star Papuan student on Expedition Cyclops, in Oxford for a month of data analysis training. One output of our time together is a co-authored manuscript on the echidna rediscovery which will declare through the scientific press (rather than the popular press) that Attenborough's long-beaked echidna is still alive and, for its future survival, in urgent need of further study.

You can follow the latest updates from ExpeditionCyclops and subsequent work here: [expeditioncyclops.org/](https://expeditioncyclops.org/)



## Music at Merton

The vision of Benjamin Nicholas, Director of Music and Reed Rubin Organist



*Since Benjamin Nicholas, Director of Music, joined Merton in 2008, music at Merton has gone from strength to strength. The College Choir and Girl Choristers have won acclaim for their performances and recordings of commissions from leading contemporary composers, the installation of the Dobson Organ has attracted international*

*organists, and all musical students at Merton now benefit from student-led ensembles, music awards and practice rooms. Alumni Communications Officer Julia Bell met up with Ben Nicholas to ask him how he has fostered music at Merton and what further plans he has in store.*

### What attracted you to Merton initially?

One of the chief 'draws' of Merton College was – and remains – its chapel. The size and shape of the building is key to its unique acoustic. It is an ideal location for a capella choral music, which really comes to life in this space – in fact, the Chapel is

one of the great spaces for a capella choral music in the UK. One thing I love witnessing is when a potential choral scholar walks in and is struck by the space. The Chapel is a great draw.

Of the events that we hold in Chapel, our most noted is the Passiontide Festival, the three-day series of concerts and services held over Palm Sunday weekend. The first festival was in 2010 and it had quite modest beginnings, coming from conversations with Simon Jones about doing something quite distinctive for Merton. It has grown over the years, and it is now a showcase for the Choir and the Girl Choristers and for visiting performers, including the Tallis Scholars, the Kings Singers, and The Cardinal's Musick. We include one of the Bach Passions most years, and feature soloists and ensembles alongside the Choir. The festival attracts both people who live in Oxford and visitors from far and wide, some of whom re-visit every year and stay at College for the duration of the three-day festival. The tickets always sell out and it has been described in BBC Music Magazine as 'an unmissable event on Oxford's musical calendar'.

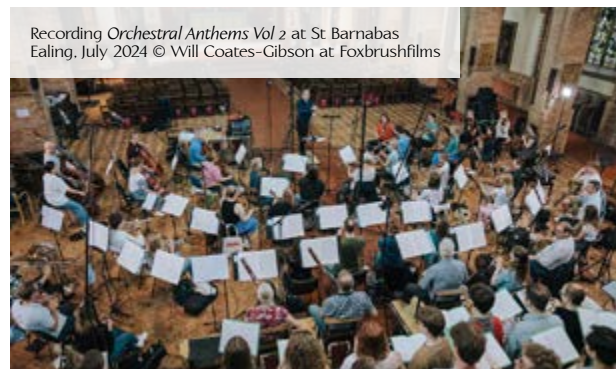


In 2013, the Dobson Organ was installed. Can you tell us about what makes the Dobson Organ so special?

Visually and tonally, the Dobson organ is a masterpiece. It was designed by Lynn Dobson, who spent many hours in the Chapel photographing details from the carvings in the stalls, some of which appear in the design. Tonally, it is perfectly judged for the building. It is voiced to sound best in the Chapel, meeting the challenge of transmitting sound from where it is situated, under the tower, to the main part of the Chapel. It's an eclectic instrument, meaning it can successfully play a number of different schools of music. In many chapels the organ is suited to one school, for example, Baroque, or French Romantic or 20th century. However, the Dobson Organ has a broad enough specification, with 44 different registers, to meet the demands of different schools. It is equally successful as a liturgical and as a concert instrument. And so altogether, the Dobson Organ is a big draw for organ scholars. Another unusual and beneficial feature of this organ is that you can see the organist when they are playing, rather than them being tucked away in a corner or up on a balcony. Installing the Dobson Organ led to a very successful concert series, and we were thrilled to welcome Olivier Latry, the Titular Organist of the Cathedral of Notre-Dame in Paris, to give the Dobson Organ Tenth Anniversary Gala Concert on 20 April 2024.

Today, the Choir of Merton College is a jewel in Merton's crown, with a well-earned international reputation for offering the best of choral music through recordings, tours and broadcasts. The Choir gives premieres of choral

works by world-leading composers, winning much acclaim. What would you say are the secrets to your success in achieving a college choir of this standard?



We are well supported by alumni, which enables us to attract these projects that in turn boost the Choir's repertoire, quality and reputation: these activities together constitute a virtuous circle. With regard to the composers we have commissioned, this is largely due to the success of the Merton Choirbook in 2014, which consists of a series of pieces for the Choir that we commissioned as part of the 750th anniversary of the College celebrations. The Choirbook was very much the brainchild of Peter Phillips and Michael Emery (1978, former organ scholar.). We have continued to work with a number of the composers to this day.



Recordings have become a big part of what we do. This year, we release a recording of Gabriel Jackson's *The Christmas*

*Story.* Recordings keep the Choir on the airwaves and help maintain the Choir's public profile. The process of producing recordings also benefits the Choir members musically, offering them the opportunity to work in great detail on various parts of the repertoire.

We ensure that the public can access the services, as each one is streamed. The Covid pandemic made us reassess how people hear the Choir. We started livestreaming and we haven't looked back! We regularly hear from people from all over the world following the transmission of our services. Our recordings are available as CDs from Presto Classical and are on all streaming platforms.

We are also fortunate to have received recognition in the form of awards. Winning the BBC Music Magazine Choral Award in 2020 was an amazing boost for the Choir. It was for Gabriel Jackson's *Passion*, a 2014 commission for the Choir that we then recorded in 2018. Our student choir won against two professional choirs! Achieving this recognition was great for morale, as students could see that something to which they had given great care and attention had received high-level recognition.

Touring maintains the profile of the Choir as a player on the global stage and is a fantastic opportunity to take something of Merton to the alumni around the world. The Choir members benefit from the experience of travelling together to perform in venues that are new to them, and tours provide a bonding experience for them socially too.

**When the Choir is rehearsing commissioned new works by high-profile contemporary composers, how closely involved are the composers? Do the Choir members meet them?**

Yes, composers are always invited to a rehearsal, and it's a very special experience. Judith Weir visited and worked with the Choir, and so have Harrison Birtwistle, Jonathan Dove, and just recently in June, Roxanna Panufnik. It is a helpful part of the process. It's an exciting experience for the Choir, who really appreciate hearing from the composer how their performance may be enhanced so as to interpret the music. The Choir is not scared of taking direction and it means a lot to them to be thanked and congratulated for their work

by the composer. Roxanna Panufnik's piece was premiered at Evensong at the end of Trinity term and will be recorded in December. Her music will also feature in the London Concert this year on 6 December at The Temple Church, London.



**Being a member of the Choir at Merton seems a rigorous musical training. Do many of the Choir members go on to pursue careers as professional musicians?**

An increasing number of them do, yes. Among those who are establishing careers as musicians are composer Alex Ho (2013), Tom Herring (2013) of vocal collective Sansara, Freddie Crowley (2015) of Corvus Consort, and Áine Smith (2018), soprano and Associate Partner with Tenebrae Choir. Tom Fetherstonhaugh (2016), a recent organ scholar, conducted his first Prom this summer, and has just finished a two-year stint as Assistant Conductor of the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra.

Being part of the Choir at Merton offers members countless social and musical benefits, enriching their time at the College, even for those who do not go on to pursue music professionally.

**Let's talk about the Girl Choristers, another of your innovations at Merton. In 2016, Merton became the first Oxford college to admit girls into its Choral Foundation. What made you choose to have girl choristers rather than the more traditional boy choristers?**

There have been boy choristers for hundreds of years in Oxford – at Christ Church, Magdalen, New College, and more

recently Worcester. When we were setting up our chorister programme, we saw an opportunity to provide something for girls at a similar age to the boys who are singing in the chapels of the colleges that I have just mentioned. Girls join as probationers at the age of eight and can sing here until the age of 16. All they need at the outset is enthusiasm and a good ear, and then we provide the training. They rehearse at Merton and sing in Evensong twice a week during school term-time and perform in a number of concerts and other activities each year, including a tour over the summer.



Merton Girl Choristers taking part in the Installation of the Warden, January 2024 © John Cairns

We are thrilled that two of our recent girl choristers hold choral scholarships at Cambridge. Maybe one day we'll see a Merton choral scholar too!

**The Girl Choristers receive lessons in singing and music theory and each receive an instrumental bursary to fund lessons on an orchestral instrument of their choice while they are a chorister. How important would you say it is for a choristers' programme to offer these things?**

It's very important: the lessons in music theory and singing lessons that the choristers receive feed into their performance in the choir, as they have to learn fast. Learning to read music and to sight sing is enhanced by learning an instrument – and so this rounded offer is essential. By providing these lessons, we ensure that cost presents no barrier to entry to the Choir.

**Merton held its first Musicians of Distinction concert in May of this year, with pianist Dame Imogen Cooper performing a programme of Bach, Beethoven, Schubert and Ades. Sponsored by Vijay Joshi, Musicians of Distinction is set to be an annual event. Can you tell us who else we can hope to see featured in coming concerts?**

Dame Imogen Cooper's concert, which launched the Musicians of Distinction concerts, was most well received and proved a great start to this new series. We were thrilled to have her perform here. We are now planning for the next three years. At this stage, I'm afraid I can't reveal any names: I can only say that the instrument will vary, as the concerts are not exclusively for piano.

## Musicians of Distinction concert series inaugural concert, 2024



The Musicians of Distinction concert series was inaugurated in May 2024 with a concert by the eminent pianist, Dame Imogen Cooper.



The series, which will run initially for ten years, is kindly sponsored by **Vijay Ramchandra Joshi, Emeritus Fellow.**



The Girl Choristers by Will Coates-Gibson at Foxbrushfilms.

**What other areas of music at Merton are you proud of?**

I'm glad to say that we have built up opportunities at Merton for all students who are musicians, enabling them to keep up their music-making, whatever their studies. We have recently had five practice rooms purpose-built for our students, thereby removing the obstacle of finding somewhere to practise. Since 2020, we have had eight Music Award holders, and these are students from any discipline who continue to have lessons whilst being a student. We have two student-run ensembles which have been popular with Mertonians for over 50 years: the Fidelio Orchestra (joint with University College), which has a symphonic repertoire, and the Kodaly Choir, which is a non-auditioned choir and gives termly concerts. The Fidelio Orchestra gives students the opportunity to try conducting, often for the first time (for photos, see the Music Society report on page 35).

Together, these opportunities comprise a wonderful way of encouraging students to continue music-making while at Merton, and they benefit intellectually and socially from making music with each other. Being seriously committed to another activity alongside their studies and developing a skill

to a high level alongside other like-minded people provides a healthy balance.

**Simon Jones is leaving to take up the post of Dean at Lincoln Cathedral. You two have been here at Merton for a long time. What will you most miss about him?**

Simon has been the most dedicated supporter of music in Chapel and College. His devotion to the Chapel has created a community like no other. Merton has a huge amount to be grateful for with regard to Simon. I look forward to working with Simon's successor and building on his legacy.

**Do you have any more plans as Director of Music over the coming years – any more treats in store for us all?**

Yes, of course! We have plans to work with new composers. We hope to tour in Japan with the Choir in 2025. And also in 2025, we will have a year-long residency at Merton with the Britten Sinfonia, which will see the release of two recordings with them; performances with the Choir in Oxford and further afield; and the principal players coming in and giving coaching to the College's best instrumentalists. It's going to be an exciting year.

A woman with short, curly brown hair, wearing a white lab coat and blue nitrile gloves, is holding a clear glass jar. Inside the jar, two dark, irregularly shaped objects, identified as cerebellar hemispheres, are submerged in a yellowish liquid (formalin). She is looking at the camera with a slight smile. The background is a blurred laboratory setting with shelves containing various bottles and containers.

## Research at Merton: unlocking the secrets of ancient brains

Alexandra Morton-Hayward, forensic anthropologist and doctoral candidate at the University of Oxford, holds the two cerebellar hemispheres of a 200-year-old brain, preserved in formalin

*In March 2024, the results of a study led by Alexandra Morton-Hayward (Merton College & Department of Earth Sciences) were published in the Proceedings of the Royal Society B. The article, 'Human brains preserve in diverse environments for at least 12,000 years', challenges views about the rarity of brains preserved in the archaeological record. The research team discovered more than 4,400 preserved human brains for their study – by far the largest study of the global archaeological literature to date.*

*Alumni Communications Officer Julia Bell caught up with Alexandra (Ally) to learn more about the pioneering research study and the focus of her DPhil.*

**Can you start by telling us a bit about yourself? When did you join Merton and what did you do before then?**

I came to Merton in 2021, and immediately before that I was a research assistant at the University of Copenhagen's Globe Institute, where I completed a one-year fellowship. That was after finishing my MSc in bioarchaeology and forensic anthropology at UCL, having done a first degree in archaeology. I'm also a trained psychotherapist, and specialised in grief counselling before I studied bioarchaeology. Working with the bereaved led me to become an undertaker, where you work with the recently deceased and their loved ones. I also worked as an embalmer in the evenings while I studied in London.

**What precipitated your research study into brain preservation?**

As an undertaker, I was keenly aware of decomposition of the human body after death, and how the brain is one of the first organs to decompose. I handled human remains with great care and respect, and the brain was always a marvel: holding a brain, I was holding the repository for that person's personality, their preferences and their treasured memories.

In parallel, in my bioarchaeology studies, I read about a brain found on an ancient site and it was 2,500 years old. I was fascinated as to how that was possible! The authors of the paper had collated other research on brains that had preserved over thousands of years; reading further, I gradually became aware of the extent of ancient brain preservation. I then became obsessed with getting to the bottom of it.

My original background was in archaeology, which is mostly focused on human bones – the hard tissues – and what they can tell us. I was also interested in soft tissues and what they could reveal about the lives of the long-dead. In bioarchaeology, I discovered a field where you can combine the two: bioarchaeology is the study of human remains found in archaeological contexts, with a view to understanding the life and environment of our ancestors. The bones tell us a lot about a person's life, especially about physical illness or trauma, but the soft tissue, the brain, can tell us so much more.

**How did you go about setting up the study, and how did you find your research partners?**

I started setting up this study during the lockdowns of the Covid pandemic, following up on the references in the paper about the 2,500-year-old brain, and in turn following up on *their* references. I wrote to everyone I could, asking for information, and in a lot of cases, people got back to me. Some still had the samples, even decades later. Sadly, sometimes samples had not been stored properly. Other samples were hard to access for geopolitical reasons, rather than a lack of goodwill to further the interests of science. However, there were some positive aspects: the oldest brain still extant is 8,000 years old from Stone Age Sweden, and we have samples stored in Oxford – alongside more than 500 others across the globe.

**What challenges did you have to overcome in carrying out the study?**

Initially I had some trepidation about the amount of soft tissue I might be handling, as we had 570 brains in the fridges in Oxford, and no more space. But that's not a bad problem to have. In fact, it was awful to learn of cases where specimens had been lost. For example, 91 ancient brains had been discovered in Windover in Florida in 1985. They were studied and their value to science appreciated, but sadly the collection was lost when the refrigeration being used to preserve them malfunctioned.

**Can you explain in layman's terms how it is possible for a human brain to last up to 12,000 years?**

As we age, we experience neurodegeneration, which is essentially the breakdown of molecules in the brain. This

happens after death too as the tissue decays, and the mechanisms that appear to preserve brain tissues in the archaeological record closely parallel those that underpin neurodegeneration in life. For instance, the dementias involve the crosslinking of proteins with other biomolecules (like lipids), and crosslinked molecular structures are resilient to decay. The brain has a unique molecular composition, and neuronal biochemistry lends itself to preservation in a way that other soft tissues do not.

### **Do you think you will find any brains that are even older?**

Yes, we may find some, although perhaps not human ones. I'm currently working on a paper on non-human brains, and there are more than 760 nervous systems preserved in a huge range of creatures, some of which are half a million years old. Often, brain is the only soft tissue that's left. There are also some beautiful specimens from mammoths, bison and horses preserved in permafrost, where there is greater preservation of the whole body.

### **Of the 4,400 brains covered in the study, is the distribution equal geographically and across the ages?**

No, because the type of preservation of the brains – for example, dehydration, freezing, saponification (the transformation of fats to 'grave wax') and tanning (usually with peat, which forms bog bodies) – is dictated by climate. Each type of preservation appears to have a certain 'half life': a period of time after which soft tissues are no longer stable as climatic conditions change, and preservation gives way to decay.

And although preserved brains are found on all continents except Antarctica, the geographic spread is not equal. Many of the brains in the research papers are found in oceanic climates – for example, Southeast Asia, New Zealand and Australia. Yet South America is also an oceanic climate, and we have very few brains from there. This could be because the research in the oceanic regions is primarily in English. Although we searched the scientific literature in more than ten languages, there is undoubtedly a bias towards research in the north part of the Western hemisphere. There could be many more brains preserved in oceanic climates in South America than we know of.

### **The research study focused on the global archaeological literature about preserved human brains. Is there potential for investigating the actual tissue itself?**

Yes there is, once the methods have been developed – and this is very much the focus of my DPhil. Analysing brain material is destructive, and so even though only a tiny, tiny amount of the specimen is used in the analysis, we want to ensure we've maximised our protocols to retrieve the most information we can from the least amount of tissue.

For example, in the field of palaeoproteomics (the study of ancient proteins) we tend to draw on a handful of protocols to extract proteins from archaeological tissues, but there are many more options available. We have tested nine different palaeoproteomic protocols on ancient human brains to determine the best to move forward with. The development of these methods is hugely important in establishing the way we should look at ancient preserved brains, and will be effective for other archaeological soft tissues too.

### **How does this link to your DPhil?**

The overarching question of my DPhil is, 'How do brains preserve when all other organs have decomposed?' We have no idea why a skeleton can be preserved with just the brain intact. With the study published in the *Proceedings of the Royal Society B*, we have put to bed the myth that brain preservation is a 'rare' or 'unique' phenomenon. We now need to answer the question of 'how', so that we can research them most effectively.

### **Can you elaborate on the implications of your research study?**

Some proteins act as biomarkers for obesity or starvation, and can tell us about health and dietary status; others are expressed at sites of inflammation or during physiological stress, and hint at the experience of the individual at the time of death. Certain proteins in the brain are biomarkers for neurodegenerative diseases (like Alzheimer's and Parkinson's) or mental illnesses (like depression and schizophrenia). Until now we have had no good, objective means of studying diseases of the brain and disorders of the mind in the ancient past. For example, one of the sites from which we have hundreds of preserved brains is the cemetery of a 19th-century Victorian workhouse, which also acted as the burial

ground for the nearby 'insane asylum' (as they were known at the time). Historical sources record the horrific conditions that inmates experienced, and we can see marks on the bones that indicate the diseases and physical trauma they suffered. However, the bones can't tell us about a person's neurological state – but the brain can. Consider the societal context in which individuals were confined to the workhouse: women could be labelled 'mentally ill' for disobeying their husbands, and in instances like this where the historical record is biased, the brain can reveal the truth.

Ultimately, our brains contain a wealth of information – so much more than hard tissue. Take teeth, for instance: teeth are biomineralised and so are tough and resistant to decay. They're frequently recovered at archaeological sites and the huge number of studies on dental tissues testify to their

value as archives of past life. But there are just six proteins in the teeth, compared with 20,000 in the human brain.

### What's next for you?

Archaeologists and bioarchaeologists are fascinated by ancient life. In my research at Merton, my role has become more like that of a chemist at the moment. I'm looking forward to being a bioarchaeologist again. There are so many exciting questions we can explore with this huge wealth of ancient brains, and I'm excited to see where this whole new field takes us.

*It has been a great year for Ally: in July, she learnt that she had won the Merton Graduate Prize Scholarship. We congratulate her and look forward to following the exciting developments in the field of research she has pioneered.*



Fragments of brain from an individual buried in a Victorian workhouse cemetery (Bristol, UK), some 200 years ago. No other soft tissue survived among the bones, which were dredged from the heavily waterlogged grave.



The 1,000 year-old brain of an individual excavated from the c.10th-century churchyard of Sint-Maartenskerk (Ypres, Belgium). The folds of the tissue, which are still soft and wet, are stained orange with iron oxides.



Sandy Irvine and George Mallory (top Left) with the British Expedition team at Base Camp, April 1924, by Captain John Noel © RCS-IBG

## Everest 1924–2024: the centenary of Sandy Irvine



This year, Merton College commemorated the life of Andrew ‘Sandy’ Irvine (1921), the young Blue rower and gifted student of chemistry who was part of the 1924 British Mount Everest expedition. Sandy Irvine’s short but action-packed life ended in tragedy on the upper slopes of Mount Everest on 8 June 1924. He and George Leigh Mallory, his climbing partner, were last seen by fellow climber Captain Noel Odell ‘going strong for top’ shortly after midday. They were never seen alive again. Mallory’s body was discovered by American climbers in 1999; Irvine’s body was only very recently found.

Sandy Irvine. Blue Boat portrait, 1923

## Online and Upper Library exhibition

In March, an online exhibition was launched on the College website, featuring an expedition timeline and a biography of Sandy Irvine. In April, an exhibition in the Mob Library was opened, which included items such as Sandy's ice axe, found at 27,000 feet in 1933; a set of replica clothing made from the scraps of material found on Mallory's body; and a fascinating series of bills, minutes and photographs from the College's own collection of Irvine material with additions from the Alpine Club. Both exhibitions were produced and curated by the former president of the Oxford Mountaineering Society, Dr Anna Saroldi.

## Everest symposium

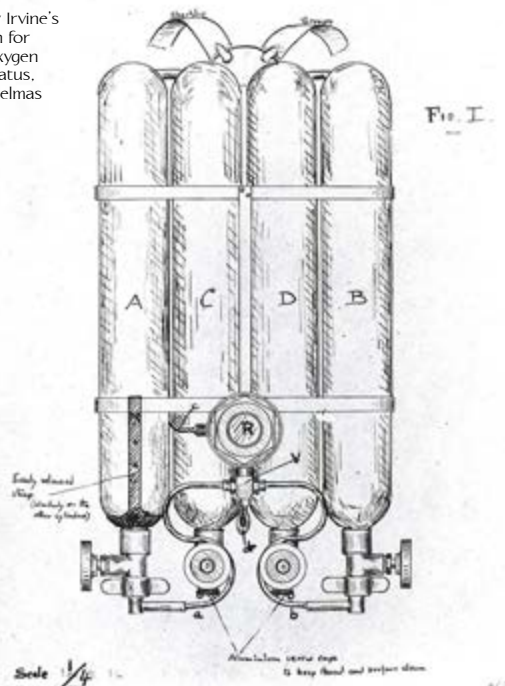
On Saturday 27 April 2024, Merton hosted a symposium to commemorate the life of Sandy Irvine. Over 100 guests gathered to join the Warden Professor Jennifer Payne in the TS Eliot Theatre, including Vice-Chancellor Irene Tracey and Professor Sir Adam Roberts of Balliol College, a distinguished climber and trustee of the Irvine Travel Fund, to hear presentations from an all-female panel.

Several members of the Irvine, Odell, Hazard and Somervell families (all descendants of members of the 1924 expedition) attended the symposium.

## Sandy's innovations for oxygen equipment: Melanie Windridge

The first speaker was Melanie Windridge, a physicist and writer with a taste for adventure, who climbed Everest in 2018. She spoke about the science of mountaineering and in particular the use of artificial oxygen to aid climbers as they ascend into the 'Death Zone' above 26,000 feet, where the barometric pressure is only one third of that at sea level, which means a two-thirds reduction in oxygen in the air. Oxygen was already known to be helpful to high altitude climbers before the first Everest reconnaissance expedition in 1921, thanks to the pioneering work undertaken by Himalayan explorer Alexander Kellas. Tragically, Dr Kellas died on that 1921 expedition and his expertise was sorely missed.

Sandy Irvine's design for the oxygen apparatus, Michaelmas 1923



Dr Windridge also explained Sandy Irvine's contribution to the oxygen sets used for the 1924 expedition. Mallory's second attempt on Mount Everest in 1922 had used oxygen sets that were heavy, clumsy and easily damaged on the rocks as the men climbed. The oxygen officer on that expedition, George Ingle Finch, had proved the value of using oxygen when he and his partner, Geoffrey Bruce, climbed higher than Mallory and three others, reaching 26,800 feet. In 1924, Finch was replaced by Merton's 21-year-old all-round oarsman and superstar of mechanics and chemistry, Sandy Irvine. Windridge explained that Sandy took the 1922 oxygen sets and completely remodelled them in his rooms in St Alban's Quad. His work on the apparatus reduced the weight by 30% and removed the unnecessary pipework; the pared-down sets were much easier for the climbers to use on the mountain. These innovations have endured, and climbers today benefit from Sandy's changes made over 100 years ago.

## The naming of Mount Everest: Julie Rak

Julie Rak is Professor of English and Film Studies at the University of Alberta, Canada, and author of *False Summit: Gender in Mountaineering Non-Fiction* (2021). She spoke about the various names given to Mount Everest — known locally by its Tibetan name, *Chomomlungma*, which translates as ‘mother goddess of the earth’; or by its Nepali name, *Sagarmāthā*, which means ‘the head in the great blue sky’. Peak XV, as it had been known by scientists, had been discovered to be the highest peak on earth by a ‘computer’ (in those days, teams of humans) working on the Great Trigonometrical Survey of India in 1852. Four years later, after much checking to ensure the accuracy of their calculations, they reckoned the summit to be at 29,002 feet, which is just 24 feet below its current height. The Surveyor General of India, Sir Andrew Scott Waugh, declared, somewhat controversially, that the mountain should be named after his predecessor, Sir George Everest (pronounced Eve-rest).

Dr Rak’s talk discussed the way in which mountains were viewed by the local populations in the 19th and 20th centuries. Most summits remained unclimbed as they were thought to be the abode of spirits or gods.

## Sandy Irvine’s life: Julie Summers and Rebecca Stephens

Julie Summers is Irvine’s great-niece and wrote his biography *Fearless on Everest: The Quest for Sandy Irvine* (2000). Rebecca Stephens was the first British woman to reach the summit of Mount Everest in 1993. She is also the first British woman to climb the Seven Summits, the highest peak on each continent. Together in conversation they explored Sandy Irvine’s short life.

Rebecca Stephens asked Julie about Sandy’s childhood and particularly about his early engineering experiments at school. When Sandy arrived at Shrewsbury School in the autumn of 1915 he struggled with Latin and Greek but showed himself very able at the sciences. The chemistry assistant spotted his natural engineering abilities and the two of them worked over the spring and summer of 1916 on a gyroscopic stabiliser for aircraft and an interrupter gear, enabling the pilot to fire his

machine gun without damaging the propellers. These designs were sent off to the War Office and Sandy received warm congratulations for both. At this stage he was only 15, but this achievement was extraordinary by any standard.

Sandy Irvine at Stroke in the Merton First VIII in Summer Eights



It was as an oarsman that Sandy Irvine excelled at Shrewsbury and this led him to a place at Merton College in the Hilary term of 1922. He was immediately selected for the Merton First VIII and the University Boat. That year Cambridge won, but the following year Oxford prevailed, beating Cambridge by three quarters of a length in a very fast time. Sandy was rowing at 3 in the Blue Boat.

Sandy Irvine at Shekar Dzong with his redesigned oxygen apparatus, Tibet, 1924. Photographer: Noel Odell © RGS-IBG



Rebecca and Julie explained why they thought Mallory had chosen Sandy Irvine as his climbing partner. The first reason was his brilliance with the oxygen sets which he had been working on throughout the trip across Tibet. The second reason was his great physical strength: he had an outstanding ability to push himself and was also able to adapt to high altitude, proving to be one of the best load carriers between the camps from base camp to the North Col. The third reason was that Sandy, junior as he was, would never have queried his experienced climbing partner's mountaineering decisions. This was important, as the 1924 expedition was Mallory's third and he could not return to Britain and his family without having given it his all.

Rebecca described the concept of summit fever, which is when climbers become so obsessed with their goal that they believe they will be the person who defies the odds and makes it to the summit despite all the challenges. She spoke from her own climbing experience in 1993, when she noticed one of her fingers showing signs of frostbite but concluded at the time that she could sacrifice a digit for the summit. Thirty years later, she recognises that this was a dangerous decision.

## The results of the 1924 expedition

Rounding off the symposium, Anna Saroldi chaired a Q&A with all four speakers, which touched on the question of whether they thought the two men had made it to the summit in 1924, 29 years before Sir Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Norgay. Julie Summers was doubtful, as was Melanie Windridge, but Rebecca Stephens believed they could have climbed via a slightly different route and made it. Julie Rak emphasised the extraordinary achievement of the early Everest pioneers. Anna concluded that, whether Mallory and Irvine had made it or not, they had earned their place in the history of the mountain as having been the first to get so close to the top of the world.

## Honouring Sandy's achievements

Merton put on a wonderful display to celebrate the Irvine Everest centenary. The College flag was flown at half-mast on 8 June 2024, a rare honour, and the gardeners created a beautiful Everest inspired garden in the Front Quad. But

the real focus was on Sandy Irvine, the undergraduate who climbed into the history books in 1924. He was described by Colonel Edward Norton in a letter to Sandy's parents three weeks after his disappearance:

'Much that your son was to us I have already written of in various communiqués to the *Times* — From the word go he was a complete & absolute success in every way ... It was not only that we leant on him for every conceivable mechanical requirement — it was more that we found we could trust his capacity, ingenuity & astonishingly ready good nature to be equal to any call. One of the wonderful things about him was how, though nearly 20 years younger than some of us, he took his place automatically ... from the very start, as one of the most popular members of our mess.

'Physically of course he was splendid — as strong as a horse — I saw him two or three times carry for some faltering porter heavier loads than any European has ever carried here before ... As for his capacity as a mountaineer, the fact that he was selected by Mallory to accompany him in the last & final attempt on the mountain speaks for itself.'

As Norton himself said to Geoffrey Bruce when discussing Sandy Irvine: 'It was worth dying on the mountain to leave a reputation like that. Men have had worse epitaphs.'

### Julie Summers

#### Stop Press

As *Postmaster* was going to press, we heard the news on the BBC that a boot and partial remains, almost certainly those of Sandy Irvine, had been found in September on the north face of Everest, revealed by melting ice on a glacier.

DNA analysis is being carried out for confirmation but the National Geographic documentary crew who made the discovery are confident of the identify, as the sock inside the boot bears the name, 'A.C. Irvine'.

# Memories of the late Dave Hedges

## Merton's much-loved Bar Manager

Sadly, David (Dave) Hedges, who was the College's Bar Manager for nearly 30 years, passed away on 11 December 2023. David joined Merton College in 1987 as a scout and his association with the Bar started shortly afterwards, when he became a 'Scout Barman' in 1990. In 2001 David became the Bar Manager, a role in which he excelled. He retired from Merton in 2017 and moved back to his hometown of Durham.

He is fondly remembered by students and staff alike:

'What a wonderful warm person he was! He was so dedicated to Merton, coming back to do the Father Christmas role at the staff Christmas lunch, even after he'd retired.' (Chelsea Chisholm, Alumni Relations Manager).

'Dave was a Merton legend and knew everyone in College. He had a wealth of stories about life from the Bar and could no doubt have written a book about the characters he met over the years! He was a proud man with a wicked sense of humour and was much loved by everyone in College' (Tim Lightfoot, Domestic Bursar).



Dave at the Bar with the calendar he was in

Alumni Communications Officer Julia Bell worked with the Year Representatives to gather reminiscences from alumni who knew Dave, which are shared here.



An afternoon with Dave in Durham. From left (standing): Pete Mabbs (1987) and Marie Smith (1988); (seated) David McDowell (1988) and Dave Hedges. Photo: Margaret-Ann McDowell

### Marie Smith (1988)

I have very fond memories of Dave and was incredibly saddened to hear of his death. Dave was my scout during my first year at Merton, in Rose Lane 5. Both of us being from County Durham, we hit it off straight away and became firm friends. Looking back, I realise how invaluable his friendship was during that time: as a young North Easterner, away from home for the first time and at times feeling incredibly overwhelmed, Dave's familiar accent and shared experiences of life in the North East were a source of comfort and very much helped me navigate the challenges of my first few terms at Merton. When back in Oxford in later years, whether for gaudies or other visits, a stop at the Bar to catch up with Dave and the latest college news and gossip was always on the itinerary. The last time I spoke with Dave in person was

in August 2021 during a chance encounter in Durham city centre while holidaying in the area with my husband Pete Mabbs (1987) and our friends David McDowell (1988) and his wife Margaret-Ann. We all arranged to meet the following day and had a wonderful afternoon together, exchanging updates and anecdotes, discussing mutual acquaintances and simply enjoying each other's company. Dave's friendship will be dearly missed by many.

#### Bev Carr (1990)

I knew David well, having been Bar Steward for a year and subsequently renting a room in his college house in Manor Road for two years. He was a wonderful landlord, always there for a chat and hilarious comments about what time his lodgers would come home, and with whom.



Jo Cooke sent in this photo from **Jim Freeman** (class of 1993): 'Classic Dave!'

I have many fond memories of David's love for Queen (the band and definitely not the monarch) and he was often found on a wet Sunday afternoon watching Queen videos in his living room. The annual 14 Manor Road household Christmas dinner where he insisted on washing up the main course before we could eat dessert has instilled in me a habit that my family find irritating but efficient. I still haven't learnt to turn the light switches off though, which would drive David mad.



Dave Hedges with barman Dave Grainger in Hilary 1996 © Anna Mather (née Field) (1994)

#### Jill Davies (1997)

I first met Dave in Freshers' Week and being from Newcastle, and also being 'Steve's sister' (1994) we got on well from day one. Dave was always there for a friendly chat and to make his delicious toasties when Early Supper wasn't quite enough or, worse, we had missed dinner altogether! He was one of the many amazing people in College who made Merton home for us all. When I returned to Oxford a year after graduating to complete my Legal Practice Course, I had the good luck to become Dave's lodger and the privilege to really get to know him. I soon found out that family meant the world to David and that he genuinely loved managing the Bar in Merton, loved living in Oxford, loved taking his canoe out for a spin and loved planning for his retirement with his wife in Thailand, a dream that was cruelly snatched from him when she was killed in a road accident. Dave was a great judge of character, a loyal friend with a warm heart, generous and thoughtful. I have many happy memories of watching TV with him, discussing world politics, looking at photos of the house he and Ari were buying in Thailand, and having the kitchen piled high with toasties that he would take into the bar for the new generation of hungry and grateful undergraduates! Dave was a true gentleman, a genuinely lovely guy and Max (1999) and I were so pleased that we were able to introduce him to our daughters. It was an honour to know him.



Dave with Jill Davies (1997)

### Ben Warth (1997)

Dave was a huge part of my experience at Merton. I think what made him so important to me was that he brought a sense of normality to a place which can be quite a strange environment. The College Bar felt to me like a pub and Dave's (and Dave Grainger's) real life experience contributed hugely to that. As someone from a 'bog-standard' comprehensive who was the first in his family to go to university, they provided a connection to the world outside Merton and Oxford, helping me to really feel at home.

I loved my time at Merton and Dave did as much as anyone (and more than most) to make that happen. He was a great bloke and I will always remember him with much affection.

### Simon Spink (1998)

Dave Hedges was a pillar of Merton student life. He had time for everyone from the pint drinkers to the 'Sprite and a pizza toastie' brigade. Everyone was welcome. In his own way, he contributed to the pastoral care of so many of us who passed through Merton and his bar. We were lucky to have him.



Jill Davies introduces Dave to her daughters

### Pamela Noakes (née Shorney) (1998)

Dave (and his namesake Dave) were what made the Merton Bar. Dave would catch my eye as I walked in through the door and if I nodded I knew that, by the time I reached the bar counter, there would be a pint of Guinness waiting for me with a cheery Durham greeting. I can imagine there are very few student bars with such amazing service! I am very sad to hear of his passing. A Merton legend.



Dave and friends in the Bar, sent in by Sarah Brightwell (1996)

### Edwin Northover (1998)

Like all of us, I have very fond memories of him and the extraordinary pizza toasties he made. I am not sure I ever understood any word he said through that Geordie accent beyond 'toastie'!

### Brian Melican (2003)

Brian shared a picture of a promotional beanie given to him by Dave in Michaelmas 2003. Brian says: 'It did sterling service as my headwarmer in the novice boat and then MI that academic year – and still sees regular outings whenever I'm back and go for a run! Quite the opposite of drinking in the College Bar, but always an occasion to think of Dave, his gruff affability, and his unfailing generosity.'



Brian's headwarmer from Dave

### Kieren (2005)

Dave was a delight  
Always had a smile on his face and a great attitude  
He gave us lots of fun times at the College Bar and every bop  
You could always count on him for a good laugh  
Merton lost one of its best  
Thinking of his family  
Kieren

### Greg Lim (2006)

Pat Hedges (Dave's sister) worked at Exeter College, where I did my undergrad. When I told her that I'd be moving to Merton College for my DPhil, she immediately said that she would let her brother, who ran the College Bar, know and that he would look out for me. Well, I frequented the Merton Bar often, and Dave was, indeed, always a welcoming and friendly presence (until it came to kicking-out time, at least!). Dave and the College Bar remain among my strongest and happiest memories of Merton.



Dave taking delivery of the special 750 ale for the Bar in 2014

Henry Grub (2016) shared some photos taken by Bertie Beor-Roberts at a Merton talent show in the TS Eliot Theatre in 1997.



Dave was interviewed in *Postmaster* in 2017, when he retired. His closing words were:

'Thanks for making me so welcome. I've enjoyed every second of it, and I'll miss it all. It's been the best 30 years of my life, without a doubt. And if I could rewind the video, I would do it all exactly the same.' I think we can safely say, 'So would we, Dave!'

# Lost, Little Known and Unbuilt Merton

More views of Merton College and some eminent Merton Victorians in *Vanity Fair*



View of Merton College by David Loggan, a native of Danzig, published his *Oxonia Illustrata* in 1674. It was a companion to Anthony Wood's *History of Oxford* of the previous year.



The entrance to Front Quad. This fanciful view is by 'Josh Nash, pupil to A W N Pugin', c.1850. The stairs up to the Hall are those designed by Edward Blore in 1838.



*Vanity Fair*, 'the society journal', was published between 1868 and 1914. Its two principal contributors were 'Ape' (Carlo Pellegrini) and 'Spy' (Sir Leslie Ward). However, several others produced the occasional drawing. Max Beerbohm contributed nine caricatures. Twelve drawings of Mertonians were to appear between 1884 and 1907. Of these, three included Lord Randolph Churchill.

**Alan Bott (1953)**  
Bodley Fellow

- 1 George Charles Broderick, by Spy, 1884. The Hon GC Broderick was Warden from 1881 to 1903. He is particularly memorable for having, in 1862, saved Mob Quad and the old Library from destruction for the planned building of what became a smaller Grove Quad.
- 2 Lord Halsbury, 'From the Old Bailey', by Spy, 1890. Lord Chancellor 1885–1905. Presided over the production of the complete digest of Laws of England.



3



4

- 3 Lord Randolph Henry Spencer-Churchill, 'A younger son', by Spy, 1880. Chancellor of the Exchequer, 1886. He was one of the founders of the Myrmidons Club. Churchill's entry in the *Dictionary of National Biography* includes a quote from his tutor, Dr Mandell Creighton (see image 5), who 'saw nothing to censure in the behaviour of Lord Randolph Churchill during his residence at the college, and that he was much impressed by his pupil's ability and mental alertness'.
- 4 Sir Max Beerbohm, 'Max', 1897. The artist of this caricature was Walter Sickert. Signed by him as *Sic*, it is also a pun on the Latin word for *thus*. There is a fine exhibition of Max's work in the Library.



5



6

- 5 Mandell Creighton, Bishop of London, 'Ecclesiastical History', by FT Dalton, 1897. Wrote *History of the Papacy*. Represented the English church at the coronation of Tsar Nicholas II in Moscow, 1896. In 1862 he gained a Postmastership at Merton College, Oxford.
- 6 FE Smith, Lord Birkenhead, MP, 'A Successful First Speech' ('Moab is my Washpot'), by Spy, 1907. Lord Chancellor 1919-22. He was the first Law don, appointed by Merton, 1896. I was told by the Scout Baskerville (in the 1950s) that when FE Smith came to dine in Merton, in the 1920s, he arrived late, strode grandly through the Hall and sank two bottles of Champagne!

# Records



# Merton College 2023-24

## The Visitor

The Most Reverend and Right Honourable  
the Lord Archbishop of Canterbury

## Warden

Jennifer Payne, MA, (MA Camb)

## Fellows

Steven John Gunn, MA, DPhil, FRHistS  
Professor of Early Modern History & Tutor  
in History

Richard Anthony McCabe, MA, (MA Dublin;  
MA, PhD Camb) FBA Professor of English  
Language & Literature & Tutor in English  
(until 30 September 2024)

David James Paterson, MA DPhil, (MSc, DSc  
Hon DUniv WAust) FRBS, Hon FRSNZ, Hon  
FPhysiol, MAE Professor of Cardiovascular  
Physiology & Tutor in Pre-Clinical Medicine

Timothy Charles Guilford, MA, DPhil  
Professor of Animal Behaviour & Tutor in  
Zoology, Garden Master (until 30 September  
2024)

Artur Konrad Ekert, MA, DPhil, (MSc Cracow)  
FRS Professor of Physics

Alan David Morrison, MA, DPhil, (MSc Lond)  
Professor of Law & Finance, Sub-Warden,  
Secretary to the Harmsworth Trust

John Stuart Giers Gloag, MA, MRICS Estates  
Bursar and Land Agent

Julia Caroline Walworth, MA (BA  
Swarthmore; MA, PhD Yale) FSA Librarian

The Revd Canon Simon Matthew Jones, MA,  
DPhil, (BA, MA Durh; PhD Camb) Chaplain  
(until 13 September 2024)

Peter William Harold Holland, MA, (PhD Lond;  
DSc Rdg) FRS Linacre Professor of Zoology

Kathryn Lee Blackmon, MA, (BS Clemson;  
MBA, PhD North Carolina) Associate  
Professor of Operations Management &  
Tutor in Management Studies

Simon Martin Hooker, MA, DPhil Professor  
of Atomic & Laser Physics & Michael Baker  
Tutor in Physics

Irene Stavros Lemos, MA, DPhil, FSA  
Professor of Classical Archaeology

Alexander David Scott, (BA, PhD Camb)  
Professor of Mathematics and Dominic  
Welsh Tutor in Mathematics

Jonathan Ralph Warburg Prag, MA, (PhD  
Lond) Professor of Ancient History and  
Tutor in Ancient History, Senior Treasurer of  
the Amalgamated Clubs

Michael Hilton Whitworth, MA, DPhil,  
Professor of Modern Literature and Culture  
and Tutor in English

Ian MacLachlan, MA, DPhil Professor of  
French Literature & Tutor in French, Dean  
of Graduates

Béla Novák, MA, (MSc, PhD, Dr Habil, TU  
Budapest; CSc DSc Hungarian Academy of  
Science) Professor of Integrative Systems  
Biology

Alan James Barr, MA, DPhil, (BA, MSci, PhD  
Camb) Professor of Particle Physics & Tutor  
in Physics

Rhiannon Ash, MA, DPhil, (MA Toronto)  
Professor of Roman Historiography &  
Christine Blackwell Tutor in Classics

Patricia Thornton, (BA Swarthmore; MA  
Washington; PhD Berkeley) Associate  
Professor of Chinese Politics & Tutor in Politics

Matthew Grimley, MA, DPhil Associate  
Professor of Modern History, Mark Reynolds  
Tutor in History

Alexander Schekochihin, MA, (BSci MIPT;  
MA, PhD Princeton) Professor of Theoretical  
Physics, Tutor in Physics, Steward of  
Common Room

Daniel Grimley, MA, DPhil, (BA, MPhil, PhD  
Camb) Professorial Fellow

Sir Andrew Wiles, MA, DSc, (PhD Camb)  
FRS Royal Society Research Professor of  
Mathematics

Charles Alan Heathcote Alexander, BA, (MBA  
Harvard) Finance Bursar

Andrew Mackie, MA Professorial Fellow,  
Director of Legal Services & General  
Counsel, University of Oxford

Julian Charles Knight, MA, MBChB, DPhil,  
FRCP, FMedSci, Professor of Genomic  
Medicine & Tutor in Medicine

Bassel Tarbush, MPhil, DPhil Tutor in  
Economics and Principal of the Postmasters

Radek Erban, MA, (Mgr RNDr Prague,  
PhD Minnesota) Professor and Tutor in  
Mathematics, Senior Treasurer of the Junior  
Common Room

John Samuel Christopher Eidinow, MA, (Dip  
Law City Univ; Barrister Middle Temple) Dean  
& Keeper of the Statutes

Hugh Watkins, MD, PhD, FRP, FMedSci, FRS  
Radcliffe Professor of Medicine

Timothy John Lightfoot, MA, (BSc Hons  
Brunel) Domestic Bursar

Lorna Hutson, MA, DPhil, FBA Merton  
Professor of English Literature, Research  
Convener

Debut Hrushovski, (BA, PhD Berkeley) FRS  
Merton Professor of Mathematical Logic

Matthew Kenneth Higgins, (BA (Hons) PhD  
Camb) E.P. Abraham Professor of Structural  
Biology

Madhavi Krishnan, (BTech Madras; MS,  
PhD Michigan) Professor in Physical &  
Theoretical Chemistry, Tutor in Chemistry

Helen Small, MA, (BA Hons Wellington;  
PhD Camb) Merton Professor of English  
Language & Literature

Alice Brooke, MSt, DPhil, (BA Camb)  
Associate Professor in Spanish Golden Age  
Literature & Tutor in Spanish

Jennifer Altehenger, (BA, MA Camb; PhD  
Heidelberg) Associate Professor of Chinese  
History and Jessica Rawson Tutor in Modern  
Asian History

Thomas Richards, MSc, DPhil, (BSc Lond)  
Professor of Evolutionary Genomics and  
Tutor in Zoology

Jane Charlotte Gover, (BSc Newc; PhD Bris)  
Senior Tutor

Nathaniel Lane, (BA Mass, MA Columbia)  
Associate Professor of Economics and Tutor  
in Economics

Alice Gwen Nora Burnyeat, (BA Leeds; MPhil  
Camb; MPhil Bogota; PhD UCL) Junior  
Research Fellow in Anthropology (until 1  
January 2024)

Xiangyu Jie, DPhil, (BSc Beijing) Junior  
Research Fellow in Chemistry (until 14  
October 2023)

Nicholas Aidan Thomas Irwin, (BSc Hon PhD  
BColumbia) Junior Research Fellow in Biology  
(until 31 December 2023)

Mark Steven Coote, MA, (BA (Hons) Nott;  
MA Lond) Development Director, Wine  
Steward

James John Michael Newton, (BA Camb; PhD  
ICL) Professor in Mathematics & Tutor in  
Mathematics

Chloe Floriana Thérèse Deambrogio, MA,  
DPhil, (BA MPhil Florence) Junior Research  
Fellow in Law

Vatsal Khandelwal, MSc, DPhil, (BA Mumbai)  
Peter J Braam Junior Research Fellow in  
Global Wellbeing

Helen Rachel Craske, BA, MSt, DPhil Junior  
Research Fellow in Modern Languages

Hadleigh Robert Douglas Frost, MMathPhys,  
DPhil, (BSc Cant) Junior Research Fellow in  
Mathematics

John Richard Geddes, (MB, ChB, MD  
Leeds) FRCPsych WA Handley Professor of  
Psychiatry

Daniela Josefina Dover, (BA Yale; PhD NYU)  
Associate Professor in Philosophy and Tutor  
in Philosophy (until 30 September 2024)

Lindsay Baker, (BSc Hons Guelph;  
DPhil Toronto) Associate Professor of  
Biochemistry and Tutor in Biochemistry

Naomi Waltham-Smith, (BA, MA Camb;  
Mmus, PhD Kings) Professor of Music and  
Douglas Algar Tutor in Music

Lucy Brookes, BA, DPhil, (MA York) Fitzjames  
Early Career Researcher in Medieval English  
Language & Literature

Alexander George Lipp, (MA, MSci Camb;  
PhD Imperial) Early Career Researcher in  
Geochemistry

David Philipp Nadlinger, DPhil, (BSc, MSc ETH)  
Early Career Researcher in Physics

Krishnan Jesse Ram-Prasad, (BA, MPhil, PhD  
Camb) Early Career Researcher in Classics &  
Linguistics

Martina Astrid Rodda, DPhil, (BA, MA Pisa)  
Leventis Research Fellow in Ancient Greek,  
Equality Adviser

## Emeritus Fellows

Robert Basil Champneys Hodgson, MA

Michael Simpson Dunnill, MA, (MD Bris)  
FRCP, FRCPATH

John Carey, MA, DPhil, FBA, FRSL

The Revd Mark Everitt, MA

Sir Gyorgy Karoly Radda, CBE, MA, DPhil, FRS

Dame Olwen Hufton, DBE, MA, (BA, MA  
Harvard; PhD Lond) DLitt, FRHistS, FBA

Nicholas James Richardson, BPhil, MA, DPhil,  
FSA

Michael George Bowler, MA, (BSc, PhD Bris)

Henry Shue, (AB Davidson College; MA, PhD  
Princeton)

Vijay Ramchandra Joshi, MA

Philip John Waller, MA

Paul Francis John Chamberlain, MA, (BA, MD  
Dublin) FRCS(C) FACOG

Guy Manning Goodwin, BM, BCh, MA, DPhil,  
FRCPsych, FMedSci

David Gordon Ellis Norbrook, MA, DPhil, (MA  
Aberd)

Simon Wren-Lewis, (MA Camb; MSc Lond)

Robert Nigel Gildea, MA, DPhil, FRHistS, FBA

Boris Zilber, MA, (MSc, CandSc Novosibirsk;  
DSc Leningrad)

Douglas John Bamber, MA, MIH

Jane Christine Holmes Taylor, MA, (BA Hons  
Bris)

James Jeffrey Binney, MA, DPhil, (MA Camb)  
FRS

Timothy Softley, MA, (PhD S'ton) FRS

Judith Patricia Armitage, MA, (BSc, PhD Lond)  
FRS

Gail Fine, MA, (BA Michigan; MA, PhD Harvard)

Simon Saunders, BA, MA, (M Math Camb;  
PhD Lond)

Mindy Chen-Wishart, MA, (BA (Hons) LLB, LLM, Otago)

Chih-Hao Luke Ong, MA, (MA Camb; PhD Lond)

## Honorary Fellows

Sir John Boardman, MA, (MA Camb) FBA, Hon RA, FSA (deceased May 2024)

Sir Christopher John Ball, MA, FRSA

HM Emperor Naruhito of Japan, Hon DCL

Sir Alec Jeffreys, CH, MA, DPhil, FRCPath, FLS, FRS

The Rt Hon Sir Jack Beatson, MA, DCL, (LLD Camb) FBA

Richard Charles Levin, BLitt, (BA Stanford; PhD Yale)

David Robert Holmes, MA, Hon DCL

Robert Owen Paxton, MA, (PhD Harvard)

Sir Howard Stringer, MA, Hon DLitt

Jonathan Alan Hodgkin, MA, (MA, PhD Camb) FRS, FEng

The Rt Hon Sir Brian Henry Leveson, MA

Sir Howard John Davies, MA, (MS Stanford)

Sir Charles Antony Richard Hoare, MA, FRS, FEng

Sir Anthony James Leggett, KBE, MA, DPhil, FRS

Sir Richard Hughes Trainor, KBE, MA, DPhil, FRHistS

The Rt Revd Nicholas Thomas Wright, MA, DPhil, DD, FRSE

Sir Jeremy Israel Isaacs, MA, FRSA

Sir Ian Kershaw, (BA Liv) DPhil, Hon DLitt, FRHistS, FBA

Sir Martin Read CBE FIET (BA Camb) DPhil

Sir Mark John Thompson, MA, FRTS, FRSA

Adam John Hart-Davis, BA, (DPhil York) FRSA

Sir Callum McCarthy, BA, (MS Stanford; PhD Stirling)

Sir Guy Howard Weston, BA, (MBA INSEAD)

Peter Warry, MA, (LLB Lond; PhD R'dg) FEng, FSA

Martha Piper, OC, (BSc Michigan; MA Connecticut; PhD McGill)

Timothy Dewe Phillips, CBE, MA, (AMP Harvard)

Julian Blackwell, DL

Anastasios Leventis, CBE, OFR

Dame Jessica Mary Rawson, DBE, MA, DLitt (MA, LittD Camb) FBA

The Rt Hon Lord Hogan-Howe, Kt, QPM, MA (MBA Sheff)

Lyndal Roper, (BA Melbourne, PhD Lond) FBA, FRHistS

Dana Scott, (PhD Princeton) FBA

The Rt Revd and Rt Hon Lord Williams Of Oystermouth, PC, DD, Hon DCL, FBA, FRSL, FLSV

Erich Gruen, (BA Columbia; PhD Harvard)

The Rt Hon Dame Philippa Whipple, DBE, MA

The Rt Hon Lord Grimstone Of Boscobel, Kt, MA, MSc

Martin Ney, MA

Baroness Hollick, (BA Sussex) OBE

Sir Martin Taylor, MA, (PhD Lond) FRS

Dinah Birch, CBE, MA, DPhil, FRSA, FEA

Alison Blake, MA, CMG

The Hon Dame Kelyn Bacon, MA, DBE

The Most Revd Michael Lewis, BA, MA

The Hon Sir Andrew Baker, MA (MA Lond)

Irene Tracey, CBE, MA, DPhil, FRCA, FMedSci, MAE

Baroness Willis of Summertown, CBE, FGS

Anne Keast-Butler, BA

## Bodley Fellows

Richard Bellerby Allan, MA, FCA

Alan John Bott, OBE, MA, FSA

Robert Gould McKelvey, MA, (BA Wesleyan)

David Harvey, MA, DPhil

Reed Rubin, BA

Robert MacLaren, MB, ChB, DPhil, DipLATHE, FRCOphth, FRCS, FMedSci

Adrian Vickers, MA

Peter Phillips

Christopher Ramsey, MA, DPhil

David Ure, MA

Benjamin Nicholas, MA

Nick Allard MA, (JD Yale)

Catherine Paxton MA, DPhil

## Sir Henry Savile Fellows

Dame Eleanor-Jane Milner-Gulland, DBE, MA, BA (PhD ICL)

Ulrike Luise Tillmann, MA, (BA Brandeis, PhD Stanford, Habil Bonn) FRS, FIMA, FAMS, Mem Leopoldina

Andrew John King, MA Status, (BSc, PhD Lond) FMedSci, FPhysiol, FRS

Francis Platt, MA Status, (BSc Lond; PhD Bath) FMedSci, FRS

Sir Peter Horby, (BSc, Lond; MSc PhD LSHTM) FMedSci, FRCP, FRS

Anant Parekh, MA, DPhil, FMedSci, FRS

## Julia de Lacy Mann Fellow

Joseph Gough, BA, (MPhil Cam, PhD Sussex)



## Supernumerary Fellows

Nicole Zitzmann, MA, (MSc, PhD Dundee) FSB  
 Hilary Greaves, MA, (PhD Rutgers)  
 Susannah Katherine Orkin, MA, MPhil, DPhil,  
 (BSocSc Cape Town)  
 Helen Barron, (MA Camb)  
 Michael Booth, (MChem S'ton; PhD Camb)  
 Craig MacLean, MA, (BSc, PhD McGill)

## Wylliot Fellows

Charles Manby, MA, (MBA Insead)  
 John Booth, MA  
 Peter Braam, MA, DPhil, (BSc, MSc Utrecht)  
 John Moussouris, MSc, D Phil, (AB Harvard)

## Visiting Research Fellows

Bevis Bowden October 2023 to August 2024  
 (Creative Arts – Film)  
 Suzannah Clark, Michaelmas term 2023

Stuart Jones, Michaelmas term 2023  
 Addario-Berry, Hilary term 2024  
 Jacques Lezra, Hilary term 2024  
 Julian Paton, Trinity term 2024  
 Michelle Witen, Trinity term 2024

## Elections

*To an Official Fellowship with effect from 1 September 2024*  
 Samuel Fletcher, (AB Princeton; MS, MA, PhD UCI) Associate Professor of Philosophy and Tutor in Philosophy  
 Rory Gregson, BCL, MPhil, DPhil, DPhil, (BA Cam) Associate Professor of Law and Tutor in Law  
 Ted Tregear, MSt, (BA PhD PGCert Camb) Associate Professor of English and Tutor in English  
 Stanislav Zivny, PhD, (Mgr Charles; MSc Vrije) Associate Professor of Computer Science and Tutor in Computer Science (from 2 September 2024)  
*To an Emeritus Fellowship with effect from 1 October 2024*

Richard Anthony McCabe, MA, (MA Dublin; MA, PhD Camb) FBA  
 Timothy Charles Guilford, MA, DPhil  
*To a Julia de Lacy Mann Fellowship with effect from 1 October 2024*  
 Gabrielle Messeder, (Bmus, MA, PhD Lond) Fitzjames Early Career Researcher in Music  
 Andrés Bustamante Agudelo, (BA Yale; MPhil, MPhil Camb; PhD Yale) Early Career Researcher in History  
 Katharina Friege, MSt DPhil (BA Sciences Po; BA UBC) Early Career Researcher in History  
 Raz Slutsky, (BSc Tel-Aviv; MSc, PhD Weizmann) Early Career Researcher in Mathematics  
*To a Visiting Research Fellowship in the Creative Arts (Book Arts) Michaelmas Term 2024*  
 Joumana Medlej  
*To a Visiting Research Fellowship in the Creative Arts (Book Arts) Hilary Term 2025*  
 Paul Johnson  
*To a Visiting Research Fellowship in the Creative Arts (Book Arts) Trinity Term 2025*  
 Gareth Brookes



#### *The following Fellows retired*

Richard Anthony McCabe, MA, (MA Dublin; MA, PhD Camb) FBA

Timothy Charles Guilford, MA, DPhil

#### *The following Fellows resigned*

Xiangyu Jie, DPhil, (BSc Beijing) Junior Research Fellow in Chemistry

Nicholas Aidan Thomas Irwin, (BSc Hon PhD BColumbia) Junior Research Fellow in Biology

Alice Gwen Nora Burnyeat, (BA Leeds; MPhil Camb; MPhil Bogota; PhD UCL) Junior Research Fellow in Anthropology

The Revd Canon Simon Matthew Jones, MA, DPhil, (BA, MA Durh; PhD Camb) Chaplain

Daniela Josefina Dover, (BA Yale; PhD NYU) Associate Professor in Philosophy and Tutor in Philosophy

## Fellows' Honours and Appointments

**Nick Allard** was awarded the George Parkin Service Award by the Rhodes Trust.

**Alan Barr** led the BigData:ATLAS schools project team which was awarded the Partnership Award in the South East Physics Network (SEPnet) Public Engagement Awards 2023. The team also won the Outstanding Partner in the Institute for Research in Schools (IRIS) Awards.

**James Binney** received the 2023 Isaac Newton Medal and Prize from the Institute of Physics.

**Mindy Chen-Wishart** was honoured with a Lifetime Achievement Award at the 17th Annual International Conference on Contracts (KCON XVII) in June 2024. KCON is the largest annual international academic conference dedicated to contract and commercial law. She was also awarded an Honorary Doctorate of Laws at the University of Otago.

**Artur Ekert** was awarded the Milner Award and Lecture 2024, made for an outstanding achievement in computer science by a European researcher.

**Radek Erban** received the Keynote Presentation Award at the ACM NanoCom 2023.

**Professor Sir Peter Horby** was elected to the Fellowship of the Royal Society, the UK's national academy of sciences.

**The Revd Canon Dr Simon Jones** was appointed as Dean of Lincoln.

**Anne Keast-Butler** was made an Honorary Fellow.

**Julian Knight** was elected a Fellow of the Academy of Medical Sciences in May 2024.

**Professor Irene S Lemos**, Professor of Classical Archaeology and Fellow of Merton College was elected as a Corresponding Member of the Archaeological Institute of America.

**Kate Orkin** was awarded the ESRC Outstanding Public Policy Impact Prize 2023 for research impact from her work on 'unconditional cash transfers'. Her work helped the South African government set up a new welfare payment during the Covid-19 pandemic, leading to 5.5 million fewer people facing poverty and hunger.

**David Paterson** was appointed as an Honorary Fellow of the Physiological Society of the United Kingdom and Republic of Ireland.

# Undergraduate Results, Awards and Prizes 2023-24

All academic results, awards and prizes are correct as of 30 September 2024.

|                      | Entry | Distinction/1st | 2.1 | 2.2 | 3rd |
|----------------------|-------|-----------------|-----|-----|-----|
| Final Honours School | 67    | 32              | 32  | 3   | 0   |

|                   | Entry | Distinction/1st | Pass | Partial pass |
|-------------------|-------|-----------------|------|--------------|
| First Public Exam | 89    | 29              | 59   | 1            |

## Undergraduate College prize

Mason, E, Norton Rose Fulbright Prize for best performance in Law Moderations

## Undergraduate University Prizes

Aitken, P, Second-year prize for best performance in Practical Chemistry

Borghi, S, Organic Chemistry and Chemical Biology Part II Thesis Prize (2nd place)

Farrelly, E, Crowther Prize for Meritorious Work in Biology

Flugler, M, Martin Wronker Prize for Admin Law (2023)

Gamble, M, Law Faculty prize for Advanced Criminal Law (shared)

Ganzer, L, University commendation for performance in the Psychology for Medicine paper in the First BM Part II

Girdhar, P, Research Project Prize in Genome Diversity and Evolution

Nielsen, J, Gibbs Prize for First BM Part II (Proxime Accessit)

Nielsen, J, University commendation for performance in the

Psychology for Medicine paper in the First BM Part II

Plater, H, Dolores Oria Merino Prize in Written Spanish

Risher, M, George Webb Medley Prize for the best thesis in Economics (2023)

Tangamornchaipattana, W, Gibbs Prize for the best performance in the Part IB examination (2nd place)

Ward, O, Second-year prize for best performance in Practical Chemistry

# Graduate Results, Awards and Prizes 2023-24

All academic results, awards and prizes are correct as of 30 September 2024.

|                       | Entry | Distinction | Pass |
|-----------------------|-------|-------------|------|
| Taught Course Results | 50*   | 19          | 17   |

\*14 results outstanding, as at 30 September 2024

## Graduate University Prizes

Leung, D-H, Law Faculty Prize in Trade Marks and Brands

Robertson, G, Law Faculty Prize in Law in Society

Van Hout, K, Law Faculty Prize in International Law and Armed Conflict

Webster, M, Law Faculty Prize in Principles of Intellectual Property Law

Webster, M, Law Faculty Prize for Comparative Copyright

# College Staff

| Name              | Position                               | First appointed | Name                   | Position                                        | First appointed |
|-------------------|----------------------------------------|-----------------|------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|-----------------|
| Mr R Wiggins      | Decorator                              | 16/3/1987       | Mr T Cortes Rodrigues  | Cleaner                                         | 31/10/2011      |
| Mr J Lisle        | Groundsman                             | 17/10/1988      | Mrs S Rai              | Cleaner                                         | 31/10/2011      |
| Mrs J Gerhardi    | Graduate Officer                       | 2/1/1991        | Mrs J Rusaitiene       | Cleaner                                         | 16/1/2012       |
| Mrs S Allen       | Hall Assistant                         | 7/7/1998        | Miss J Dziadosz        | Hall Steward                                    | 22/05/2013      |
| Mrs N Mahmood     | Cleaner                                | 23/4/2001       | Mrs G Pal              | Cleaner                                         | 3/11/2014       |
| Miss S Bird       | Chef de Partie                         | 8/10/2001       | Mrs F Lawrence         | Head of HR                                      | 2/12/2014       |
| Miss L Reveley    | Bursary Clerk                          | 11/2/2002       | Miss N Lane            | Lodge Porter                                    | 19/8/2015       |
| Mrs C Lewis       | Resource Description Project Librarian | 7/5/2002        | Mr N Hall              | Bar Manager                                     | 21/9/2015       |
| Mr C Joyce        | Kitchen Porter                         | 29/7/2002       | Miss I Siwczak         | SCR & Hall Supervisor                           | 27/10/2015      |
| Miss L Savin      | Head Gardener                          | 7/10/2002       | Mrs M Serhej           | Linen Room Assistant                            | 6/6/2016        |
| Mr J Reid         | Archivist                              | 2/12/2002       | Mrs S Camino Carrera   | Cleaner                                         | 03/10/2016      |
| Ms L Lawrence     | Executive Assistant to the Warden      | 1/9/2003        | Mrs D Balcyte          | Cleaner                                         | 05/12/2016      |
| Mr C Bridgman     | Sous Chef                              | 29/9/2003       | Miss C Chisholm        | Alumni Relations Manager                        | 9/1/2017        |
| Miss J Baker      | Cleaner                                | 2/1/2004        | Ms M Clarke            | Housekeeping Operations & Accommodation Manager | 20/3/2017       |
| Mrs M Skalik      | Head Steward                           | 10/8/2005       | Mr K Watts             | Maintenance Manager                             | 3/7/2017        |
| Mr J Pawlowski    | Lodge Porter                           | 24/10/2005      | Miss J Wingrove        | Senior Chef de Partie                           | 31/07/2017      |
| Mr M Furse        | Senior Gardener                        | 2/1/2007        | Miss P Martin Montalvo | SCR & Hall Supervisor                           | 28/09/2017      |
| Ms N Harrison     | Estates Administrator                  | 23/7/2007       | Mrs J Cullen           | Estates Secretary                               | 30/10/2017      |
| Mr P Macallister  | Sous Chef                              | 22/10/2007      | Mr E Tesfalem          | Servery Assistant                               | 16/11/2017      |
| Mrs K Adamczyk    | Senior Housekeeping Supervisor         | 1/11/2007       | Mr P O'Keefe           | Servery Assistant                               | 27/11/2017      |
| Ms S Hague        | Head of Accommodation                  | 2/2/2009        | Ms V Parkinson         | Resource Services & Support Librarian           | 03/1/2018       |
| Mr I Knight       | Accommodation & Conference Porter      | 13/7/2009       | Mr C Soares Godinho    | Cleaner                                         | 05/02/2018      |
| Miss H Bednarczyk | Deputy Head Porter                     | 4/1/2011        |                        |                                                 |                 |
| Mr S Bowdery      | Head of IT                             | 1/4/2011        |                        |                                                 |                 |

| Name                       | Position                            | First appointed | Name                  | Position                        | First appointed |
|----------------------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------|
| Mr M Martinov              | Deputy Development Director         | 19/2/2018       | Mr M Randolph         | Database and Operations Manager | 08/11/2021      |
| Ms H Campbell Longley      | Deputy Librarian                    | 26/2/2018       | Mr A Pilendiram       | Deputy Head of IT               | 13/12/2021      |
| Miss M Dziadosz            | SCR & Hall Supervisor               | 28/09/2017      | Mr D Lay              | Cleaner                         | 13/12/2021      |
| Mrs A De Ostoja-Starzewska | Butler                              | 16/4/2018       | Ms A Szymanska        | Cleaner                         | 13/12/2021      |
| Mr M Carroll               | Senior Chef de Partie               | 08/5/2018       | Ms S Hines            | Cleaner                         | 13/12/2021      |
| Mr K Lau                   | Lodge Porter                        | 08/10/2018      | Ms J Underdown        | Academic Registrar              | 21/02/2022      |
| Mr H James                 | Head Porter                         | 07/1/2019       | Ms G Arroyo Payan     | SCR & Hall Assistant            | 8/02/2022       |
| Ms Wilkins                 | Academic Officer                    | 25/2/2019       | Mr J Clark-Johnson    | Chef de Partie                  | 07/03/2022      |
| Mr S Saprykin              | Lodge Porter                        | 08/4/2019       | Mr A Pereira Da Silva | Cleaner                         | 22/04/2022      |
| Mr L Fekete                | IT Officer                          | 09/4/2019       | Mrs A Ponting-West    | Bursary Clerk                   | 25/04/2022      |
| Miss K Leach               | Assistant College Accountant        | 27/08/2019      | Ms P Yordanova        | Cleaner                         | 20/06/2022      |
| Ms J Barrett               | Senior Welfare Advisor              | 01/10/2019      | Mr P Freitas          | Weekend Cleaner                 | 23/07/2022      |
| Ms E Casey                 | Chapel Office & Choir Manager       | 21/10/2019      | Mr P Bashir           | IT Officer                      | 22/08/2022      |
| Miss A Forrai              | HR Officer                          | 3/02/2020       | Mx J Crompton         | Verger                          | 06/09/2022      |
| Mrs E Ortega Palazon       | Cleaner                             | 13/07/2020      | Mr S Jones            | Maintenance Technician          | 12/09/2022      |
| Mrs S Meldere              | Cleaner                             | 6/08/2020       | Ms J Fung             | Administrative Assistant        | 19/09/2022      |
| Mrs J Reid                 | Clerk of Works                      | 01/10/2020      | Mr O Barratt          | Lodge Porter                    | 26/09/2022      |
| Ms H Kimmett               | Governance Officer                  | 05/10/2020      | Ms J Bell             | Alumni Communications Officer   | 25/10/2022      |
| Miss B Sarkozi             | SCR & Hall Assistant                | 07/12/2020      | Miss A Yapp           | Library Assistant               | 31/10/2022      |
| Mrs S Storey               | Payroll Administrator               | 08/03/2021      | Ms M Latos            | Cleaner                         | 05/12/2022      |
| Miss K Calvert             | Deputy Head of Events & Conferences | 16/08/2021      | Mrs E Irving          | Academic Officer                | 03/01/2023      |
| Mrs M Horanyi              | Housekeeping Supervisor             | 16/08/2021      | Mr S Crawshaw         | Head Chef                       | 03/01/2023      |
| Mr J Madeley               | Lodge Porter                        | 20/09/2021      | Mr C O'Connell        | Gardener                        | 16/01/2023      |

| Name                   | Appointment appointed              | First      | Name                  | Appointment appointed                       | First      |
|------------------------|------------------------------------|------------|-----------------------|---------------------------------------------|------------|
| Ms J Simanova          | Lodge Porter                       | 16/01/2023 | Ms D Bistika          | Events & Conferences Coordinator            | 04/03/2024 |
| Mr S Chira             | SCR, Hall & Bar Supervisor         | 12/02/2023 | Miss C Forest-Johnson | Gardener                                    | 25/03/2024 |
| Mr R Greaney           | College Accountant                 | 13/02/2023 | Ms O Astakhova        | SCR & Hall Assistant                        | 13/05/2024 |
| Ms N Cristea           | Chef De Partie                     | 01/03/2023 | Mr H Tilling          | Assistant Accommodation & Conference Porter | 29/04/2024 |
| Ms I Lewis             | Housekeeping Supervisor            | 09/03/2023 | Miss L Bulhakova      | SCR & Hall Assistant                        | 22/05/2024 |
| Mr D Janciauskas       | SCR, Hall & Bar Assistant          | 13/03/2023 | Miss R Day            | Lodge Porter                                | 01/07/2024 |
| Mr I Rivero Humanes    | Chef De Partie                     | 17/04/2023 |                       |                                             |            |
| Mr B Tobin             | Lodge Porter                       | 01/05/2023 |                       |                                             |            |
| Mr S Gurung            | Chef de Partie                     | 09/05/2023 |                       |                                             |            |
| Miss L Madeira         | Cleaner                            | 22/05/2023 |                       |                                             |            |
| Mrs O Vaz              | Cleaner                            | 22/05/2023 |                       |                                             |            |
| Mrs S Wiggins          | Cleaner                            | 26/06/2023 |                       |                                             |            |
| Ms R Stewart           | Head of Events & Conferences       | 10/07/2023 |                       |                                             |            |
| Ms N Griffiths         | Welfare & Disability Administrator | 14/08/2023 |                       |                                             |            |
| Miss R Wilson          | Web & Media Officer                | 14/08/2023 |                       |                                             |            |
| Mr D Osborne           | Maintenance Technician             | 05/09/2023 |                       |                                             |            |
| Miss L Johnson         | Lodge Porter                       | 06/11/2023 |                       |                                             |            |
| Miss J Shaw            | School Liaison & Access Officer    | 13/11/2023 |                       |                                             |            |
| Miss K Selwood         | Admissions Manager                 | 13/11/2023 |                       |                                             |            |
| Miss C Centore         | Fundraising Officer                | 27/11/2023 |                       |                                             |            |
| Miss R Sanchez Ribeiro | SCR & Hall Supervisor              | 01/12/2023 |                       |                                             |            |
| Mrs L Champion         | College Nurse                      | 08/01/2024 |                       |                                             |            |
| Mr C Leong             | SCR & Hall Assistant               | 08/01/2024 |                       |                                             |            |
| Mr M Robinson          | Chef de Partie                     | 02/01/2024 |                       |                                             |            |

# Publications

## Selected Fellows' Publications 2023–24

**Allard, N.** (2023) 'What Lawyers Can and Must Do,' *preLaw and National Jurist Magazine*, spring 2023

**Allard, N.** (2024) 'Tribute to the G.O.A.T: American Secretary of the Rhodes Trust Elliot F. Gerson', *American Oxonian*

**Ash, R.** (2024). 'Heralding a 'proem in the middle? The Pisonian conspiracy of Tacitus and the end of Nero', *Illinois Classical Studies* 48: 45–70

**Ash, R.** (2024). 'Tiberius in space: proxemics and the portrayal of a princeps' in S Malik and C Davenport (eds), *Representing Rome's Emperors: Historical and Cultural Perspectives through Time* (Oxford University Press), pp. 40–62

**Rodda, MA** (2023). 'Becoming the octopus: three variations on a metaphor', *TAPA* 153(2): 315–23

**Rodda, MA** (2023). 'Repetition as a meaningful element' D Beck (ed.) *Repetition, Communication, and Meaning in the Ancient World. Orality and Literacy in the Ancient World*, vol. 13', (*Mnemosyne* Supplements 442.), *The Classical Review* 73(1): 7–10

**Rodda, MA** (2024). 'Antoine Meillet et la langue homérique: au-delà du "Parryisme"', *Études de lettres* 322: 43–72

El-Baba, TJ, et al. including **LA Baker** (2023). 'Uncovering the role of *N*-glycan occupancy on the cooperative assembly of spike and angiotensin converting enzyme 2 complexes. Insights from glycoengineering and native mass spectrometry', *Journal of the American Chemical Society* 145(14): 8021–32

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'Duress, undue influence and unconscionable dealing', pp. 901–1010

'Action for the agreed sum, specific performance and injunction', pp. 2425–95

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# Graduate Publications 2023–24

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**Payne, J** (2024). 'Managing the conflicts between regulatory goals' in R Veil (ed) *Regulating EU Capital Markets Union* (Oxford University Press), pp. 208–29

**Paxton, RO** (2023). 'The discreet eminence. On the enduring legacy of Marshal Pétain', in *Harper's Magazine* (New York) 347(2083): 72–9

Hosking, DN and **AA Schekochihin** (2023). 'Cosmic-void observations reconciled with primordial magnetogenesis', *Nature Communications* 14: 7523

Adkins, T, PG Ivanov and **AA Schekochihin** (2023). 'Scale invariance and critical balance in electrostatic drift-kinetic turbulence', *Journal of Plasma Physics* 89(4): 905890406

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**Das, S** (2023). 'Weapons of the strong: Imperialism and the beginnings of wartime mass-internment in Cuba and South Africa (1895–1902)', *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress* 81: 954–962

**Das, S** (2021/2023). "Next time when you feel compelled to make a confession, please, speak for yourself only and not for me without asking me. I am not a Nazi, definitely not!": A vignette on gendering German internment in Second World War India", *Studies in Humanities and Social Sciences* 28 (1): 113–125

**Fanning, A** (2023). 'The function of space in Patrícia Galvão's *Parque Industrial*', *Portuguese Studies* (39)2: 176–91

**Limongelli, E** (2023). "“They perished through their own folly”. An enquiry into Homeric *Atasthalia*", in S Dova, C Callaway, GA Gazis (eds), *Homer in Sicily: Essays from Fonte Aretusa's 2022 Symposium in Siracusa* (Syracuse, Sicily: Parnassos Press), pp. 31–52

**Lorenz, J.** (2023). 'Kleidung und der mystische Körper: Von physischen Ankerpunkten unbeschreiblicher Erfahrungen', *Oxford German Studies* 52(4): 416–35

**Morton-Hayward, AL** et al. (2024). 'Human brains preserve in diverse environments for at least 12,000 years', *Proceedings of the Royal Society B* 291: 20232606

Chaniotis, A et al. including **J Hua** (eds) (2023). *Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum, Volume LXVIII* (2018) (Leiden: Brill)

**Patton, O** (2024). 'The literary works of the Gentlemen of the Elizabethan Chapel Royal: politics, religion, and print', *The Court Historian* 29(2): 103–18. doi.org/10.1080/14629712.2024.2367336

**Patton, O** (2024). 'Northern souls', *Early Music*, caae015, doi.org/10.1093/em/caae015

**Patton, O** (2024). 'Byrd 400 festival', *Early Music* 51(4): 639–40, doi.org/10.1093/em/caad062

**Scarsbrook, L**, LAF Frantz and G Larson (2024). 'Unwrapping the palimpsest of animal domestication through ancient nuclear genomes', in D O'Rourke (ed.) *Encyclopaedia of Quaternary Science*, 3rd edn (Elsevier), pp. 1–10  
Stray, B. et al. including **J. Schelfhout** (2024). 'Centralized design and production of the ultra-high vacuum and laser-stabilization systems for the AION ultra-cold strontium laboratories', *AVS Quantum Science* 6(1): 014409

**Smith, H** et al. (2024). 'Manipulating regulatory T cells: is it the key to unlocking effective immunotherapy for pancreatic ductal adenocarcinoma?', *Frontiers in Immunology* 15: 1406250

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**Tanaka, AM** et al. (2023). 'An optimal envelope ejection efficiency for merging neutron stars', *Monthly Notices of the Royal Astronomical Society* 522(1): 1140–54. doi:10.1093/mnras/stad971

# Selected Alumni Publications 2023–24



Below is a list of publications by alumni in the 2023–24 academic year that we have been made aware of. If you have a book or book chapter due to be published in the 2024–25 academic year and would like it featured in the next edition of Postmaster, please get in touch at [development@merton.ox.ac.uk](mailto:development@merton.ox.ac.uk)

**Andrew Adam (1958).** *Over my Dead Bodies: From the Lab to the Slab* (independently published, 2024)

**Benjamin Alpers (1986).** *Happy Days: Images of the Pre-Sixties Past in Seventies America* (Rutgers University Press, 2024)

**Jeremy Black (1979):**  
*A Brief History of History* (Indiana University Press, 2023)  
*In Fielding's Wake* (St Augustine's Press, 2024)  
*Defoe's Britain* (St Augustine's Press, 2024)  
*Paris: A Short History* (Thames & Hudson, 2024)  
*A Brief History of America* (Robinson, 2024)  
*The Age of Nightmare: The Gothic and British Culture, 1750–1900* (St Augustine's Press, 2024)

**Alex Edmans (1998).** *May Contain Lies: How Stories, Statistics and Studies Exploit Our Biases – and What We Can Do About It* (Penguin Random House, 2024)

**John Crabtree (1970).** J Wolff and F Durand. *Business Power and the State in the Central Andes: Bolivia, Ecuador, and Peru in Comparison* (University of Pittsburgh Press, 2023)

**John Crabtree (1970).** 'Peru and the search for a development model that works', in E Amann and PN Figueiredo (eds) *Innovation, Competitiveness, and Development in Latin America* (Oxford University Press, 2024)

Catherine and Guy English (1963). *Holy Wells Cornwall: Odyssey and Memorial* (independently published, 2024)

**Paul Everson (1965)** and D Stocker. *Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Stone Sculpture. XIV, Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire* (Oxford University Press, 2023)

**Paul Everson (1965).** Introductory chapter in C Wakeling and N Pevsner (eds) *Staffordshire, Pevsner Architectural Guides: The Buildings of England*, revised (Yale University Press, 2024)

**Ronit Ghose (1991).** *Future Money: Fintech, AI and Web3* (Kogan Page, 2024)

**Lawrence James (1966).** *The Lion and the Dragon. Britain and China: A History of Conflict* (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2023)

**Vanessa Johnen (2009)** and FX Neubert. *Rewind: A Sailing Adventure* (Blackheath Publishing, 2024)

**Peter Laurie (1963).** *The House that Disappeared* (independently published, 2023)

**Hugh Macmillan (1963).** *Max Gluckman* (Berghahn Books, 2024)

**Denis MacShane (1966).** *Labour Takes Power: The Denis MacShane Diaries 1997–2001* (Biteback, 2023)

**Andrew Martin (1981).** *The Night in Venice* (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2024)

**Stephen Mills (1971).** *Natural Causes: The Wild Life of a Wildlife Filmmaker* (Chiselbury, 2024)

**Arthur GO Mutambara (1991).** *Design and Analysis of Control Systems: Driving the Fourth Industrial Revolution*, 2nd edn (Routledge, 2024)

**Robin Saikia (1981).** *Drink & Think Venice: A Blue Guide Travel Monograph. The story of Venice in twenty-six bars and cafés* (Blue Guides, 2024)

**Michael Taylor (1976).** Hugh Miller, *The Old Red Sandstone 1838–1920*. 2 vols (National Museums Scotland Publishing, 2023):  
*Volume 1: Critical Study* (eds Michael Taylor and R O'Connor)  
*Volume 2: The Text* (eds R. O'Connor and Michael Taylor)

**Jonathan Zamet (1965).** *Magic and Mystery: A Potter and His Pots* (independently published, 2024)



**Philip Stibbe (1939).** *Return via Rangoon*, 3rd edn (Pen & Sword Books, 2023) [pen-and-sword.co.uk](http://pen-and-sword.co.uk)

## Return via Rangoon

First published in the 1940s, *Return via Rangoon* was republished in 1994 and then once more in 2023, to mark the 80th anniversary of the first Chindit expedition behind enemy lines in Burma.

*Return via Rangoon* is an auto-biographical account of the wartime experiences of Philip Godfrey Stibbe (1939), whose tutor at Merton was Edmund Blunden. After Dunkirk, Stibbe told Blunden he believed it was his moral duty to join up. His first company commander in a coastal defence battalion in Lincolnshire was Michael Trubshawe, a close friend of David Niven. Late in 1941 Stibbe's battalion was ordered to send subalterns to India. Stibbe recounts the training and fighting for the first Chindit expedition in the Burmese jungle behind Japanese lines, and how every Chindit agreed with their leader, Orde Wingate, to be left behind if wounded. When Stibbe was wounded near Hinthia in March 1943, a Burmese rifleman, Maung Tun, volunteered to stay behind with him. Maung Tun was captured, tortured and then killed because he refused to reveal where Stibbe was hidden. Stibbe himself was captured, tortured and eventually imprisoned in Rangoon jail.

After being reported as 'Missing presumed dead', Stibbe returned to the UK in 1945. He sent money to Burma for the family of Maung Tun, saying: 'As long as I live, I shall feel my life is not my own.'

In autumn 1945, Philip returned to Merton and was given the room he had left five years earlier; this was a gesture he thought typically kind. He read English and his tutor from 1945 to 1948 was Hugo Dyson.

On completing his degree, Philip taught at Bradfield College and from 1974 was Head of Norwich School. He is remembered by his pupils as a kind and well-respected teacher. He retired in 1984 and died from Parkinson's disease in 1997. This was the direct result of the food he ate during his two years as a Japanese prisoner of war.

On the cover of Philip's book, The Right Hon. the Lord Owen (a pupil of Philip's at Bradfield) pays tribute to the Chindits and Philip Stibbe:

'Bravery, in a nutshell, is what the word "Chindit" has come to signify. But Philip Stibbe captures something much more – the inner strength of the Chindits which lay in its extraordinary combination of ordinary people, be it the Liverpudlian or Burmese rifleman in the jungle or in prison. The real heroes are unsung, their contribution cumulative, their record that of the whole, their platoon, regiment or brigade.'

Philip's brother Edward Hugh Stibbe was also at Merton.

# Mertonians



Farewell drinks for the Revd Canon Dr Simon Jones during the Merton Society Reunion

## The Merton Society

What a busy year; the Society is active and firing on all cylinders!

We have had a series of well attended events for Mertonians, kicking off with Michaelmas drinks at the Antelope pub in Belgravia. Instead of the traditional Christmas carol service we were privileged to join the Merton College Choir and the Girl Choristers, conducted by Director of Music Benjamin Nicholas, for the world premiere of Gabriel Jackson's *The Christmas Story*, sung in the stunning venue of St John's Smith Square in Westminster. It was an event that will linger long in my memory.

Our annual lecture was again held at Lazard in London (many thanks to Patrick Long (1995) for again providing the superb venue) in what has now become the usual post-Covid hybrid format, which seems to work very well. In front of a full house and with over 100 online attendees, James Kempton (2011) gave

us a riveting and witty account of his extraordinary expedition to Papua to rediscover the long-lost Attenborough's long-beaked echidna, a peculiar egg-laying mammal that was long thought extinct (see page 134 for a full report).

The Merton Society Reunion in College in June was a great success, held once again in brilliant sunshine. Everyone enjoyed tours of the College Gardens, Upper Library and/or Chapel Tower in the good weather. Alex Edmans (1998) was our dynamic and highly engaging afternoon speaker. His latest book is *May Contain Lies: How Stories, Statistics and Studies Exploit Our Biases – And What We Can Do About It* (Penguin Random House, 2024). His talk explained how to separate fact from fiction and was followed by lots of questions. The dinner menu celebrated the famous Merton explorer Sandy Irvine (1921) who died aged 22 on Mount Everest 100 years ago. Chef was ingenious, and the starter of fish pâté from a tin can was particularly memorable!

After over 20 years we are sad to lose our wonderful Chaplain, the Revd Canon Dr Simon Jones, to become Dean of Lincoln. He celebrated his final Evensong at Merton, after which Dame Philippa Whipple (1984), as Society President, presented him with a leaving gift from the Merton Society during drinks in the antechapel.

Our new(ish) subject groups are going from strength to strength. The Net Zero Group held an excellent event in the TS Eliot Theatre, given by Chris Stark, then CEO of the Climate Change Committee. He gave an insightful talk, 'Is the UK on track for Net Zero by 2050?', followed by the usual high-quality questioning that you would expect from a Mertonian audience (full report on page 45) and ably chaired by Naga Suresh (2021). For this listener it was really informative and thought-provoking. The Biomedical and Life Sciences Group held a successful day in College, organised by David Clark (1984).

After a successful pilot stage, the Merton mentoring programme was launched in its full format, with over 100 mentors to match with mentees. Organised brilliantly by Dame Philippa Whipple (1984) and her husband Sam Whipple (1983), together with the Development team, it is already proving a great success, as these quotes attest:

### **Mentor:**

'I am enjoying the mentor programme very much, and I think my mentee is too. I think our compatibility (both in creative industries) has helped, but also the understanding that there is trust and commitment needed on both sides. As a first-time mentor, I have certainly learnt a lot about the process and developed my listening skills, amongst other things'.

### **Mentee:**

'I have thoroughly enjoyed being mentored, and feel I have access to a unique resource in my mentor's knowledge. So far, our sessions have mainly focused on leadership and management, where my mentor's extensive experience and vivid anecdotes provide very helpful steers. He clearly prepares well before the sessions, for which I am very grateful. He is good-humoured, very easy company and allows me space to speak freely. All in all, the start of my mentoring has been a very rewarding experience'.

A big thanks goes to the Warden and team at the Development Office, my fellow executive members, Dame Philippa as President and Dr Gregory Lim (2006) as Secretary, as well as all Council members, for their full and energetic support without which none of this could have happened.

**Mark Davison (1978)**  
Chair



Cocktail reception hosted by Amna Naseer

## MC3: Merton College Charitable Corporation

### Events

Our North American Merton community remains enthusiastically active as measured by MC3's shared goals of supporting the College we love and promoting friendships and rich interactions at interesting events and programs with Merton colleagues. The Warden's first trip to the United States in her new role was a resounding success. On 2 December 2023, Board Development Chair Amna Naseer (1997) and her family hosted a cocktail reception for the Warden and the Director of Development, Mark Coote, in their beautiful Manhattan home. Over 40 Mertonians, representing a wide spectrum of matriculation years, attended the event. Everyone was able to enjoy significant time with the Warden and one another. The party lasted well into the night!

The combined Annual Meeting of the MC3 Board of Trustees and Members was held on Friday 5 April at Hudson Yards in New York City. The meeting and lunch were generously hosted by MC3 Investment Chair Neil Brown (2002) high atop his KKR headquarter offices with stunning views of the Hudson River, and Manhattan and Long Island to the east, and breathtaking vistas north and south toward the City's iconic harbour. These captivating vistas are rivalled only by the extensive gallery of extraordinary contemporary art indoors. For the first time since 2019, this Board meeting was held in person (although the meeting proceedings were also livestreamed). As ever, there was a robust agenda of MC3 business, including updates on fundraising, investment performance, and finances. There

was productive discussion on how to bolster fundraising, increase MC3 membership, and reach a wider audience with MC3 events. The Warden joined the meeting virtually for this event, and Mark Coote attended in person. Both offered reports and remarks that were well received.

The meeting was also memorable in that it was punctuated several times by iPhones lighting up with emergency alerts about an unusual earthquake and aftershocks whose epicenter was across the Hudson River in not-too-distant suburban New Jersey. In tribute to the architect's design and the sound construction of the structure, although we were working in the highest part of the skyscraper above its 'Sky Lobby,' we did not feel any tremors or otherwise notice the significant seismic events, even though shockwaves were felt throughout Manhattan. After leaving the meeting evidence of its significant impact was easy to observe in lower Manhattan, midtown, and beyond.

After the meeting, Reunion Co-Chairs Marina McCloskey (2003) and Charles Scudder (1971), and their Committee, arranged a guided tour of the spacious glistening new building at Penn Railroad Station named for US Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan (the MC3 President once served as the Senator's Chief of Staff). Moynihan Hall takes up the entire city block on the location of the old central US Post Office. It is located between 8th and 9th Avenues across from and connected underground to the old Penn Station, which is adjacent to Madison Square Garden. The tour was followed by a lively and delicious drinks and dinner party in a private room in the Queensyard restaurant located in the 'Shops' section of the Hudson Yards complex. This large boisterous dinner gathering was notable in that the entire group engaged in a series of round robin conversations on several different topics.

Finally, Charles Scudder (aka Charles I), Charles Tolkien-Gillett (2019; aka Charles II) and their Reunion and Events Committee, including Jin Kim and Susan (Kirby) Cullman, are well underway planning an in-person MC3 Reunion – the first in four years, due to Covid – in New York City on 1-3 November. The Warden and others from the College will be attending. Alumni from the UK as well as all points of the compass are welcome to attend. The reunion program will feature, on the Friday evening, dinner in an Upper Westside

restaurant followed by Verdi's *Rigoletto* opera at Lincoln Center. Planned Saturday events include lunch and a curator's presentation and guided private tour of the American Wing of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, with time afterward to explore other treasures of this storied museum. The day will culminate in dinner at the University Club, with remarks from the Warden. Sunday will offer, as in past years, a getaway brunch at Susan Cullman's penthouse on Park Avenue.

## Financials

By mid-June, MC3 had raised a total of \$705,280 in 2024. MC3 raised a total of \$657,545 in 2023. We are happy to report that in 2023 the greatest number of Mertonians donated more than \$10,000 through MC3. We also are proud that despite the uncertainties of our fraught times and some market volatility, alongside persistent inflationary pressures, our dedicated MC3 community came through for its alma mater and kept its tradition of generous giving alive. Highlights of the fundraising program include in 2023 \$102,500 for Merton's Chapel and Choir (with special acknowledgement for the ongoing generosity of Reed Rubin (1957) which continues in 2024); \$100,740 for the new library; \$45,750 for the Reach Scholarship; \$40,576 for the Library Medieval Stained Glass Window Restoration; and \$32,693 for Ukrainian Doctoral Scholar Support.

Thanks to very generous donors, some 2024 fundraising highlights so far include \$379,336 for Merton's Choir and the Dobson Organ (Reed Rubin); \$150,000 for scholarships for organists (from the Reed Foundation); \$105,000 for the new Reach Scholarship (Reginald Hall); and \$10,000 for the Library Medieval Stained Glass Windows (Neil Brown).

## Supporting Merton Society Initiatives

In addition to enthusiastically attending and participating in Merton Society events and programs, over the past year MC3 continued to be involved in the organization and launch of the Merton Society's impressive mentorship program. Going forward, MC3 member Charles Tolkien-Gillett is serving as the MC3-MS liaison on this important project to assist with mentoring activities involving North Americans. The MC3 President volunteered and became the 100th Merton Mentor.



## In Memoriam

For those present at the creation of MC3, like our incomparable founder and de facto premier Bob McKelvey (1957), and this writer, recent years of major milestone Gaudies, reunions, and return visits to the College are beginning to pile up. Yet with every return to the College the years fall away, and we seemingly pick up conversations where we left off with Fellows, colleagues and old friends. We MC3 old timers remain reasonably vibrant, engaged, and improving like a fine wine selected by SCR Wine Steward Mark Coote.

Nonetheless, in recent years MC3 has said goodbye to several unforgettable mentors and long-time friends, such as Warden Rex Richards, former MC3 President John J Kirby (1962), and unforgettable dons such as Professor John Lucas and, this year, Professor Dominic Welsh.

We will always remember the two original MC3ers whom we have lost since the last Merton Society AGM: Francis Finlay (1962) and Edward (Ed) I. Selig (1956). The wife of Ed Selig, Renata, has been a constant presence at MC3 events and an ardent supporter, and we welcome her to continue to join us in future activities.

Tributes for Professor Dominic Welsh, Francis Finlay and Ed Selig can be found in the *In Memoriam* section.

## Future plans

As may be suggested from the preceding notes, on the 'to do' list for MC3 is to collect and prepare an MC3 history, derived from oral histories of MC3 members, which it is our collective conceit to believe it may be of some use and interest to future Mertonians. We have identified at least one videographer who has an excellent track record on such projects, we have the storytellers although we need to get going because some of us are not buying green bananas and we need to determine how to finance the project.

The project devoted to recording for posterity the origin and history of MC3 underscores the importance of MC3's recent success. It is also a priority for MC3 to renew and expand MC3 membership to include more recent graduates and 'keep the line moving'.

In addition, we need to update our Privacy Policy which now is in the capable hands of Rob Mitchell (1974), the new Chair of the MC3 Law Committee.

We will be working to fund our top priority, scholarships, and to fulfill our pledge to the College's Regius Professorship. We plan to fund a fourth Merton Scholarship and alongside this support Merton's needs and priorities.

**Nick Allard (1974), Bodley Fellow**  
MC3 President



## Merton Lawyers' Association

The Merton Lawyers' Association (MLA) is open to all alumni who read Law, who practise law or who simply have an interest in Law.

The MLA is keen to expand its reach and its activities to strengthen the alumni community, assist young alumni and current students. MLA events and activities are announced on the College web page ([merton.ox.ac.uk/merton-lawyers-association](http://merton.ox.ac.uk/merton-lawyers-association)) and on the MLA LinkedIn page ([linkedin.com/company/merton-lawyers-association](https://www.linkedin.com/company/merton-lawyers-association)).

On Thursday 16 November 2023, the annual gathering was hosted at the offices of Slaughter and May with a large turnout including current students. After an update from the Warden there followed a witty and informative conversation between leading advocate and BBC Reith Lecturer Lord Pannick KC and the Dean of the College of Law at Jacksonville University, Florida, Nick Allard (1974), under the rubric 'The psychology of persuasion in Law – an English and American perspective'. It was masterfully facilitated by Katie Ratcliffe (2014), barrister at Essex Court Chambers. There then followed a drinks and canapes reception.

This year's event will be held on Thursday 7 November at Dechert and will be a conversation between Supreme Court Justice Philip Sales and Professor Paul Davies. Booking information will come from the Development Office in due course.

In spring 2024 MLA Committee members Philippa Hopkins KC and Katie Ratcliffe, together with Anna Williams, organised a visit to Essex Court Chambers, with an opportunity for discussion about careers at the Bar, and a tour of Lincoln's Inn. In September, we held a young alumni social event at a pub in London and we are now planning an online lecture in 2025 by incoming new Law Fellow Dr Rory Gregson (2016, Wadham).

The MLA committee members are Naomi Horton (1985), Dan Schaffer (1986), Charles Wynn-Evans (1989), Philippa Hopkins (1989), Ben Perry (1992), Susie Daykin (1994), Toby Grimstone (1994), Steven Elliott (1997), Jessica Kemp (2000), Alice Walker (2015), Niamh Herrett (2016), Katie Ratcliffe (2014), Riya Bhatt (2017) and Adrian Burbie (2017).

**Dan Schaffer (1986)**  
Chair



## Merton Society Annual Lecture 2024

*This year's annual lecture was given by James Kempton (2011), who recounted the adventures of Expedition Cyclops, the research expedition to the Cyclops Mountains of New Guinea in search of the long-lost mammal, Attenborough's long-beaked echidna. The lecture was hosted in person and online at Lazard in London for the second year running. We are most grateful to Patrick Long (1995) for providing this splendid venue.*

As a DPhil biology student, James Kempton knew of the Cyclops Mountains in New Guinea as a remote setting with an intriguing biodiversity. Twentieth-century explorer-scientists, Evelyn Cheesman and Ernst Mayr, had failed in their attempts to reach the steep, hostile summits of the north side of the mountains. Cheesman, however, had hypothesised that these mountains had once been islands with their own flora and fauna, evolving in isolation from the surrounding mainland. Biologically, there were tantalising indications that this hypothesis could be correct: there were endemic species found only here such as Mayr's honeyeater (discovered by the biologist on his 1929 expedition), as well as the matter of a unique species, Attenborough's long-beaked echidna, an egg-laying mammal lost to science for over 60 years. Locals living near the northern slopes claimed to have spotted this echidna in the last 16 years.

In 2020, while ruminating on this elusive echidna, James had attended a meeting of the Oxford Indonesian Society. There, he had approached someone, who revealed he was Papuan. James asked whereabouts in Papua he came from.

"I'm from the Cyclops Mountains," came the reply.

This was James' serendipitous meeting with MBA student and Papuan chieftain, Pascal Norotouw. Pascal was a chieftain in the very area that James wanted to explore for evidence of the echidna. James and Pascal became friends, and over time this led to a series of connections with villagers at the base of the Cyclops Mountains, local NGOs working across the Papuan and Indonesian communities, students from universities in Indonesia, and contacts in local and national government. Three years later, James had made arrangements with these contacts, mustered a diverse team of academics from complementary disciplines, and raised the funds for the expedition.

In the summer of 2023, Expedition Cyclops set off. Among the photos that James showed us of the expedition were the awe-inspiring rainforest slopes of the mountains — steep, covered in thick vegetation and with no discernible paths. This place of intrigue and discovery was also one of daily deluges.



Attenborough's long-beaked echidna, as videoed by a camera trap during Expedition Cyclops

frequent earthquakes, and discomfort-causing creatures, namely leeches, biting bugs and a variety of snakes including the 'death adder'. The expedition involved short nights and long days in intense heat. Heavy equipment and all supplies, including 30-40kg containers of water, had to be carried over valleys to the base camp, which was the hub for scientific analysis as well as providing shelter and accommodation. The equipment included the camera traps the team used to gather video evidence of creatures in the forest. These were carried on 11-hour treks, high up into the upper slopes.

We heard that of 20 or so local student scientists who had volunteered for the training, only six students came on the expedition. There was a flicker of worry when we heard that of these, 'only two made it to the end' — a statement to which James hastily added, 'Don't worry, they're still alive, they just dropped out'.

The gruesome story of the removal (with ethanol) of a leech from an eye of one of the student researchers was an off-putting story for any would-be explorers in attendance at the lecture (although we were reassured that the student did return to the expedition and that 'his sight has now fully recovered'). Perhaps worse was the story of the overly keen

researcher who broke James' rule of 'yes to specimens at camp but no to snakes'.

Evidence of the resounding success of the expedition was abundant. James reported that his geologist colleagues were able to age the mountains from the rock specimens gathered. He then showed us photos of some of the tens of insect, reptile and amphibian species that were discovered, from the several weevils to the tiny 'goblin frog'. There was also short footage of Mayr's honeyeater, not seen by science for over 20 years, as well as other more common but impressive creatures such as the cassowaries, wallabies, and other mammals.

The pièce de résistance was, of course, the short video of Attenborough's long-beaked echidna. The film was captured by a camera trap on the last day of the expedition and has been independently verified. The presence of Attenborough's long-beaked echidna, described by James as 'the poster boy of extinction' due to its high profile among conservationists, is proof of the biodiversity unique to these specific rainforest slopes, and the pristine environment. The involvement of so many local stakeholders — from the local inhabitants in Pascal's and other villages, to the NGO Yappenda, which mediates between Indonesia and Papuan leaders, to local students, and Indonesian government — was what enabled Expedition Cyclops to be successful in its aims to establish the geological origins of the mountains and to gather evidence of the area's incredible and unique biodiversity.

James explained that the rediscovery of this echidna is in part what will propel the long-term conservation goals of Expedition Cyclops. International interest in the area's unique biodiversity is one way to save it from the mining and logging activities that it is otherwise likely to suffer. He is working with the local Papuans to establish a cultural heritage centre which will be the hub for carefully managed eco-tourism. Creating new, sustainable livelihoods for local young people in this way will both help local history, traditions, folklore and culture to survive and will protect the unique biodiversity of this region. James returned in August to continue his work, as reported in 'Expedition Papua' on page 92.

**Julia Bell**  
Alumni Communications Officer



## The ‘Town and Gown’: Bidwells Oxford 10k

I was pleased to join Team Merton for the 2024 Bidwells 10k (formerly known as the Town & Gown 10k), which took place on Sunday 12 May in Oxford city centre. The Oxford 10k dates to 1982 (moving from Blenheim Park to the city centre in 1985) and has inspired similar events in Cambridge, Leicester, and Durham over the years. All proceeds from the events support the work of Muscular Dystrophy UK (MDUK), a charity helping over 110,000 people living with more than 60 rare progressive muscle-wasting and weakening conditions.

This year, Team Merton included our very own Warden alongside tutors and students. It was my second time running with the team, joined by familiar faces such as our JCR President, freshers and finalists. We arrived at University Parks for a group photo at 9:15am, before some group warm-ups and stretches ahead of the 10:00am start. The event attracts people from colleges and other organisations from across Oxford (around 4,500 runners in total), so the morning atmosphere was buzzing with anticipation. As last year, we were lucky to be running in some gorgeous weather – but I knew the going would get tough in the heat and made sure to keep hydrated on the track.

The start of the race is always a scramble, so I positioned myself near the front for a clear opening. The route winds all over Oxford’s central streets: from South Parks Road to Holywell Street, up High Street past the Sheldonian and Bridge of Sighs, before a long stretch past Keble via Parks Road. It was a challenge to keep pace in the heat, but this year my resolve was firm. In 2023 I was overtaken at the

finish line by our Director of Music, Benjamin Nicholas, who had been tracking me for the entire race. Ben prides himself on defeating his organ scholars on the track, but this year I could not let that happen. Against the searing heat, spurred on by my running partner (and fellow choir-member) Alex Smith (2020), I was able to secure victory with a new personal best of 49 minutes and 21 seconds, finishing 847th overall. Ben was left in the dust: I was totally exhausted afterwards, but my perseverance had paid off.



Free brunch in Hall following the race was a great chance for Team Merton to share congratulations. On behalf of the team I would like to thank the Development Office for their continued support, organising Merton-branded T-shirts and arranging the post-race brunch in Hall.

**François Cloete (2022)**  
Junior Organ Scholar



Varsity Alumni match competitors. From left: William Bailhache, Chris Mercer, John Heaton, David Riddiford, Andrew Trotter, Nigel Haigh

## Merton Golf Society

2024 has seen the Golf Society get back into full swing with three events: the spring meeting, held in March at Newbury and Crookham Golf Club; the autumn meeting, held in September at Oxford Golf Club; and participation in the Varsity Alumni match, in June, at Berkhamsted Golf Club.

Eight of us took part in the spring meeting. As usual, with all our meetings, the day starts with coffee and bacon rolls. Morning rain had left the course a bit boggy in parts, but this did not deter the usual friendly competition. Nick Silk ran out the winner, with Paul Robinson taking second place.

In June, Merton were again invited to take part in the annual Varsity Alumni match between teams from Oxford and Cambridge colleges. This time, Merton were able to help the organisers out by fielding three pairs, a quarter of the field, and the most of any of the Oxford colleges. It was a glorious summer's day and, unlike our usual meetings, very competitive.

Congratulations to John Heaton and David Riddiford who came third overall, with Will Bailhache and Nigel Haigh coming fourth. Unfortunately, these sterling efforts were insufficient for Oxford to beat the Tabs, although it was a

very close-run thing; only a half Stableford point separating the sides. Cambridge are now 2-1 up in the event.

Our final event of the year, the autumn meeting, took place at Oxford Golf Club – which many may remember as Southfield. The weather was ideal for golf, although the wind made it quite interesting at times! The course was in great condition and thoroughly enjoyed by all.

Paul Robinson won, with Chris Mercer taking the runner-up slot. The golf was rounded off with an excellent dinner in the SCR in College, and we hope that this will be an annual event.

The Merton Golf Society is open to all alumni, present students and College staff. Our aim is to have an enjoyable day with friends, and although there is a lot of friendly competition, that is not the prime reason for getting together. If you are interested in playing, or even if you would just like to keep in touch with the Merton golf scene, please contact me at: [play@mertongolfsoc.org.uk](mailto:play@mertongolfsoc.org.uk)

**Nigel Haigh (1971)**  
Merton Golf Society Chair

# News of Members

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## Up to 1948

**Year Representative:** Michael Millard

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I am grateful to have had contact with six Mertonians this year: each of us in varying degrees of physical decay. I have heard the cheerful voices of **Brian Chapple** and **Guy Harris**. **Martin Reynolds** writes interestingly of the Algarve. **Tony Williams** writes appreciatively of the care he has had from the NHS; and he has now started to learn Cornish. **Claver Toalster** tells me that one of his amusements is playing bridge. Claver and his partner, from the other place previously, occasionally (legitimately no doubt) make comments to each other in Latin. This is not always appreciated by their opponents.

I have also had a letter from William Charlwood telling me of the death of his father **Ron Charlwood**, whom many of us will remember with pleasure. **David Lane** has pointed out that those of us who matriculated in 1948 will, if we survive until Michaelmas, have been Mertonians for 76 years, which is one tenth of the College's 760 years. On the subject of Mertonians I may add that, of my nine great-grandchildren, seven have either Mertonian parents or grandparents.

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## 1949–1956

**Year Representative:** Richard Kenyon

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Some of the most interesting triggers of memories of our

times at College were generated by the sad passing of **Ted Mullins** (1954), **Michael Edwards** (1956) and **Ed Selig** (1956). Individual memorials may be found in the *In Memoriam* section. Early in the 1956 Michaelmas term there was an exodus of about 120,000 young Hungarians fleeing their homeland when the Soviet Union brutally squashed an uprising. **John Mitchell** (1955) recalls that Ted, as president of the JCR, asked him to write to Old Mertonians to help the College fund a Hungarian undergraduate place, of which **George Radda** (1956) became the beneficiary. **Rex Jamison** (1955) tells us how Ted and he persuaded the Junior Common Room to raise funds for a Hungarian student scholarship fund. **Laszlo Heltay** (1957) arrived a term later. After one year the College assumed responsibility for both positions. George, in chemistry, and Laszlo, in music, left lasting impressions and thanks to the generosity of **Reed Rubin** (1957) the musical impact is still very impressive today.

As usual the early responses were from the United States as a result of the time difference. This year **Stuart Lynn** (1955) won the gold medal, writing from Palm Springs, CA. We reminisced about his fellow contemporaries, mathematicians **Mike Slattery** and **Barry Martin**, and others such as **David Hall**, **David Ricks** and **Ed Taylor**. We discovered that in the late 1950s we had both written programs in binary for computers with minute storage and power by today's standards, before spending several years in what was to become 'IT'. Stuart spent most of his career in academe in the United States, but retired in 2003 following a stint as president of ICANN, the non-profit international organisation responsible for coordinating naming and addressing policy across the internet. We are both fortunate to have children and grandchildren, though I am just ahead with one very young great-grandson.

Displaced from his usual medal, **Jay Keyser** (1956) wrote more shortly but with his usual humour. 'How's your French? Better than mine, I'll wager!' I was reminded of my first *Postmaster* report when he had just published his book *The Pond God and Other Stories*, and kindly signed a copy for my eldest grandson. His next book, *Play It Again, Sam*, is scheduled for publication by MIT Press in 2025. The subject is the role of repetition in the sister arts of poetry, painting and music

Again from the United States, **Reg Hall** (1954) sends a fine essay with the instruction: 'Best I can do. Slash away at it.' So, with due apologies, here goes. At 88, he has nothing much to report though he does wake up each morning, a tribute to his genetic inheritance. His lifestyle now is healthy which it certainly wasn't in times past. With his wife, they now find travel has become a tiresome bore, not least because of the frenzy of Atlanta airport, the busiest in the world – and it shows. They still go back and forth between Greensboro and Woodbridge in Suffolk, but lean much more towards the USA because of the weather. Last year, they felt they had become more American than English and would not move back to the UK permanently. A month at a time was long enough.

They are not fans of the National Health Service or rather Disservice. The British could learn something from the French which charge 10 Euro for a visit and again for a prescription. It's not much but cuts out a lot of the 'social' visits. He doesn't compare it unfavourably to the ludicrously expensive US system, though as seniors they benefit from Medicare which cuts sharply into its cost. Being in the Georgia countryside they escaped the worst of Covid, which had little effect on the local social life.

To complete the US story, **Truman Schwarz** (1956) told us about the passing of his close friend **Ed Selig**, and was very pleased to write an obituary. From his Merton days he recalled his encounter with a Morris Minor on High Street, in front of the men's clothing shop. He had lapsed into Yankee habits and looked the wrong way, but summoned his best recently acquired stiff-upper-lipness and asked the terrified driver if he could take him to the Radcliffe Infirmary.

Back in the UK we also sadly note the passing of **Mike Edwards**. Mike read PPE and was a very popular member of the JCR, taking part in many activities, most notably the hockey club. On going down he joined Royal Insurance where he spent the whole of his working career. He maintained regular contact with Merton for the rest of his life, never missing a Gaudy, and later was a stalwart of the golfing activities. His full obituary, for which he wrote much of the text, may be seen in *In Memoriam*.

**Richard Harvey** (1956) came across a photo of the 1958 First VIII which ended third in the Head of the River.



Merton's First VIII, 1958. Top row: Peter Wiles (1955), Dick Price (1955), Richard Harvey (1956), John Shore (1953), Brian Roberts Wray (1956). Middle row: John Mead (1957), Alan Edwards (1957) and Reed Rubin (1957). Bottom row: our splendid cox who played a trombone, David Earle (1955).

**John Shore** (1953) writes: 'It is amazing to realise that in October this year it will be 71 years since an 18-year-old me turned up at Merton Lodge to start a new chapter of my life: a chapter which eventually comprised a DPhil in Chemistry and a Henley Regatta winner's medal. I am incidentally the only survivor of the Merton crew that won the Visitors Challenge Cup for coxless fours in 1956 – the others being **Robin Raikes** (1953), **Brian Mawer** (1952) and **Tony Stearns** (1954) – and also of the four chemists in my year (1953), the others being **Barry Palmer**, **George Tusa** and **Tony Verdin**. Though health remains pretty good, life these days consists of gradually dropping responsibilities, and looking after my wife whose mobility has decreased considerably this year. We are very grateful for the support of fellow church members and friendly and helpful neighbours.'

Once again on the musical front, **Richard Thomas** (1956) is lucky to have three excellent annual music festivals near him in East Kent: the Peasmarsh Chamber Music Festival (international and intimate), the Stour Music Festival (founded by Alfred Deller and still going strong), and the JAM Festival, which takes place in a variety of the wonderful Romney Marsh churches and always features the London Mozart Players. He went to Venice in October to a couple of Verdi operas, *La Traviata* in the Fenice (terrific) and a chamber production of *Rigoletto* (interesting). In spring he was once again back at Merton for the Passiontide Festival.

which was as wonderful as ever (even if he had found the Aavo Pärt *St John Passion* pretty demanding). It was good to see Simon Jones back in charge, after his stint as Acting Dean of Lincoln. Late this autumn, if all goes to plan, the Thomases will be moving back into college. Not Merton this time but Wye College, which used to be the agricultural bit of London University and is now being converted into flats. Theirs will be in the main quad, and suitably gothic. Quite an upheaval looms.

**Michael Gazzard** (1955) responds from a quiet life in Dorset. As for so many of our generation, assimilation of internet communication facilities poses its problems. He would like to contact **Mike Dyson** (1956) with whom he spent six terms as lodgers in Jeune Street just off the Cowley Road. Mike went to Australia in the 1960s and the snail mail address we have is a 'splendid house in a prosperous suburb of tropical Brisbane'. Time will tell whether we can bridge the gap.

Mertonians have always been adventurous and the **Peters Westwood** (1955) and **White** (1955) were prime examples. The photos show them now and in 1955 when they planned a motorcycle trip to Tibet and convinced the *Daily Mail* to contribute £40 towards it. By the time they got to the Alps Peter Westwood's motorbike was beginning to fall apart. And by the time they reached Greece, the carrier, the pannier tags and the mudguard had all gone so there was nothing behind the saddle except the back wheel and Peter was carrying all his kit in his rucksack on his back. They then gave up on both the motorbikes and the idea of getting to Tibet and decided instead to explore places nearer to home. After Athens, they went to Crete, visiting Knossos and sleeping on the beach, before taking the boat to Istanbul. They spent a couple of days exploring the city and then caught the train to Vienna. Disaster struck again when the train they were on had to stop as the train tracks were broken and the engine came off the rails. All the passengers had to get out and put rocks under the wheels to get it back on track. Running out of money, they finally decided to hitchhike home, and in Salzburg were given a lift by a Count who invited them to stay in his castle, gave them a fine dinner and rooms to sleep in, in one of the towers. They came home safe and sound and still reminisce about the wonderful experiences they had 70 odd years ago.



The Peters Westwood and White, in 1955 and in 2023

On a personal note, your correspondent had a very disappointing experience of the lack of interest that major banks show in fraud scams. On receipt of an email asking for an Amazon voucher for a friend, I offered help by asking for details of her bank to make an online transfer. To my surprise the bank checking system confirmed that the details were indeed genuine. I then ignored her request but took the details to the local branch of Halifax and also sent them to the chairman of Lloyds. The branch showed no interest and the chairman did not reply!

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## 1957

**Year Representative: Graham Byrne-Hill**

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## 1958

**Year Representatives: Bryan Lewis**

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and **Peter Parsons**

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My annual request for contributions to *Postmaster* produced only a few replies this year. I like to think this is born of self-effacement and not because of *dolere* (Italian argot for 'the joy of idleness') or the Dutch *nicksen* ('doing absolutely nothing') or even the Scottish *hurkle-durkle* ('staying in bed past the time when you should be up doing things').

Indeed that's far from the case when I read what **Brian Laventure** wrote. 'Incredibly I am still in practice as a chartered account but anticipate retiring next year because my compulsory professional indemnity insurance is becoming disproportionate to my fees as a professional trustee to a number of family trusts! We continue to enjoy our Dorset cottage and the rich Hardy associations of the area but reel at the cost of thatch replacement. This year the cost of the ridge alone was £10,000 with a further £6,000 for scaffolding hire. I keep up my classical associations by being a member of the Horatian Society which is an Oxford-style dining society in honour of the Roman poet Horace with speeches by luminaries of the classical world. We had a speech by the elder brother of **Michael Raeburn** (1959) who had been a lecturer at New College since the early 1950s. My second grandson is studying classical history, the period covered being from the fall of Troy to the fall of the Eastern Roman Empire – quite a span.'

**Richard Hawkes** has retired as Honorary Treasurer of the Hampshire & Isle of Wight Branch of the Oxford University Society, a position he'd held since 2014; and from the committee of the Winchester Bridge Club. He is not sitting on his hands though: 'I am working to take over as Treasurer of the Wessex Glyndebourne Association. This will leave me enough time for further travel opportunities – recent years will have seen me in Egypt, Ecuador and the Galapagos Isles, Ethiopia, Chile, Brazil, Madagascar and Georgia with many chances to see unusual birds and visit different opera houses – and I am booked into Austria and Turkey within the next 12 months, with Iceland on the proximate wish list.' If that was not enough: 'I managed a week's gentle skiing in March but fear that old age will mean that skiing will not feature again, leaving gentle sailing, the occasional croquet event (Inter Livery Championships) and walking.'

**Andrew Adam** has not been idle, either. He wrote a letter to 'Dwindling Band of Mertonian Friends' about his paperback autobiography *Over my Dead Bodies: From the Lab to the Slab*, mainly about his times as a pathologist with a modest mention of his Merton days. He added: 'Be assured there are no grounds for personal litigation.' His was an unconventional zigzag career (amazing what can be done with a degree in modern history): *Times* journalist, male

model, medical student, RAF medical officer, NHS consultant, pathologist, pastor, police chaplain, freelance writer, guest speaker on P&O and Cunard cruise ships. I found it enlightening, entertaining and, indeed, moving. It can be purchased through Amazon for a modest amount.

By coincidence, **David Forsyth** (1959) who also read modern history, took up medicine and became a general practitioner and, unbeknown to Andrew, also enrolled in the RAF to see him through medical training. **John Simms** in New Hampshire continues to be heavily involved with building a model railway museum – a three-year project now entering its seventh year. 'At least it keeps the brain functioning although at times I wonder if the fog has already started to descend. Veronika wishes it were over and done with and I am starting to agree, but it keeps us focused on something harmless and nearby while everything else goes to hell in a handcart. I don't want to look up – I know I won't like what is out there.' **Peter Palmer** (1968) has visited the museum.

**John Bradshaw** wrote a contemplative piece 'Why do we live so long when our genome can no longer usefully respond to evolutionary pressures?' Given his wife of 57 years has been mute, paralysed and wheelchair-bound for the 13 years since her devastating stroke in 2010: 'We should perhaps count whatever blessings fate leaves us amidst the litter of ever more rapidly falling leaves.'

Alas, two leaves have fallen since the last *Postmaster*. First, **David Waterhouse** in February from complications arising from emergency surgery. I used to visit him in recent years when I went to my family home in Shrewsbury. He'd retired there with his wife Verena living in a property abutting the castle high above the River Severn. He was a big man physically and in personality with a stentorian laugh. In retirement he contributed much to the cultural life of the town, recognised by the many tributes he received from its citizens. An appreciation of his life appears in *In Memoriam*.

There has also been a recent announcement of the death of **Peter Blunt**, too late for an entry in this year's *In Memoriam*.

To continue in a somewhat melancholy mood I was reminded recently of 'Sailing to Byzantium' by WB Yeats, reflecting on

the struggle to keep the spirit alive within the failing body:

*An aged man is but a paltry thing,  
A tattered coat upon a stick, unless  
Soul clap its hands and sing, and louder sing*

Mind you, that was written in 1926 when Yeats was only 61, so keep singing.

On a more cheering note, I read that the goalkeeper of the Netherlands football team rejoices in the surname **Verbruggen**. I wonder if, like me, you'll recall the Henry (a College handyman) of that surname whose ever-cheerful whistling used to be heard around the College. It used to lift many spirits.

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## 1959

**Year Representatives: David Shipp**

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and **Roger Gould**

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You will have seen a brief note in *Postmaster* 2023 that **John Williams** has died. An obituary for John appears in this edition of *Postmaster*. It has been compiled by Richard Nelson, with help from John's widow Elizabeth, his son Michael, and John's colleagues Nick Fiennes and Joe McDonald.

**Richard Allan** reports: 'Diana and I still here: bright summer and autumn excursions to Crete and Portugal respectively; depressing winter, visiting too many friends in various stages of decay; miserable spring, but we did track down **Hume Hargreave** and his wife Mary Ann in Wetheral; two stimulating Merton events in April (symposium on Irvine's Everest attempt in 1924 and talk on Kempton's echidna expedition in 2023); much gentle walking to keep active; and hoping to make the Society dinner in June.'

**Graham Boulton** reports: 'In most respects life for me is unchanged. I have had a new knee fitted and so am back to my hobby of line dancing. The lady that my first wife and I met whilst line dancing has been my partner now for several

years. We married last October. Otherwise, we all just get older and a little slower.'

**John Dance** says: 'Basically, nothing much to report. Still here and functioning reasonably well. I guess that's as good as it gets these days.'

**Antony Ellman** reports: '2023 was marked for me by the tragic death on 31 December of my much-loved second wife Constance Regnier. She collapsed suddenly on Christmas Eve with an acute attack of asthma, from which sadly she never regained consciousness. Constance had become increasingly anxious over the last two years of her life, at her loss of memory and cognitive ability. She had observed with dismay the sad decline and death of her brother-in-law in Germany, who had been a top judge and a charming man until he was struck low by Alzheimer's disease. Constance was convinced that she was on the same slippery slope to dementia and said many times that if her brother-in-law's fate was what the future held for her, she would rather die. So her sudden death in December was in many respects a blessing for her, but very hard for me and those who were close to her to bear.

'Prior to this ending, 2023 was one of the fullest and happiest years Constance and I had experienced in our 25 years together. We made two visits to Holland in the spring – to the Vermeer exhibition in Amsterdam in March and to the tulip display near Harlem in April. Then we had a short cycling trip in France in the summer, and a wonderful last holiday in Sicily in September. Between these travels Constance continued her volunteering work helping children with their reading in a local primary school, and I kept busy with the band in which I play tenor saxophone, tending to my bees and garden, following a course on French culture and society, and making fruitless attempts to pressure the government to give higher priority to aid to African agriculture.

'In March this year we held a moving event to celebrate Constance's life, attended by over 120 family and friends. Now I must get used to living on my own. With a lot of support from family and friends, including one granddaughter who stays with me until she starts university in September, I will survive! I am clearly not a good bet as a husband, having buried not one wife but two. But I had 30 years with Ruth before she

sadly died of cancer in 1997, and 25 years with Constance until her death in 2023. I suppose this is not such a bad record. I have been so lucky with both the women in my life.'



Antony Ellman and his late wife Constance

**David Forsyth**, responding to our recollections of John Roberts and Roger Highfield, recalled that he had asked Roger whether he might be allowed to read medicine instead of history. Both Roger and John were keen that David be given the opportunity but advised that he first complete his history degree because he might not like the science, it being new to him. In his fourth year at College he had to study physics, zoology and chemistry from scratch. He passed in physics and zoology in five months (May 1963), and when back at home for Easter, received a postcard signed by John. There were no words, just a line drawing of a matchstick man, two hurdles lying flat behind him, and his right leg raised to go over the third, a reference to the chemistry that he would be facing later in the summer. David felt this was typical of John. David has had a difficult year since the summer of 2023 with a serious illness. However, he hopes to be leading a normal life by summer 2024. He pays tribute to Merton friends who

supported and encouraged him with letters, phone calls and visits throughout this period, including **Jim White** and his wife Joanna, **David Marler** and his wife Belinda, **Anthony Fletcher**, **Bob Moore** and **Niall Campbell**. He now hopes to resume the publication of his 18th book.

**Peter Hayward** writes: 'Fascinated by your extracts from *Postmaster* of 1964. I have very little to report. Ann and I are still reasonably fit, and I am about to celebrate my 85th birthday and our 55th wedding anniversary. Travels have been modest. I did fulfil a long-standing wish to see an opera at La Scala in Milan and also, after previous attempts over the years had failed, to see 'The Last Supper'. That was followed by a few days in Florence. The weather was pretty awful. In Milan it rained most of the time and the sun only came out briefly in Florence. But it was March. We are off tomorrow for a couple of weeks to northern Greece where we shall see remains of the Macedonian kings and also some hiking up to mountain-top monasteries. Should be fairly energetic and good fun.'

**John Latham** writes: 'Life goes on as normal. But my son George has just run the Cherry Blossom half marathon in South Korea! You referred to the Crown Prince of Japan in your piece on *Postmaster* of 30 years ago. What you probably don't know is that my main Japanese contact, Heita Kawakatsu, Governor of Shizuoka Province, is a personal friend of the Crown Prince, now Emperor Naruhito. In our edited collection *Asia and the History of the International Economy: Essays in Memory of Peter Mathias* (Routledge, 2018), Heita and I used two papers by the (then) Crown Prince. I sent a copy to the Warden for the College Library. Both Heita and the Crown Prince were supervised by Peter Mathias, then at All Souls. Heita was I think at Wolfson, not Merton, but he is an Oxford DPhil.'

**Richard Nelson** recalls 25 September 1971. 'This is not exactly current news, but the details came back to me recently and I doubt if anyone has similar experiences in today's woke and H&S environments. In the early 1970s Salvador Allende headed a left-wing government in Chile, disapproved of by the United States. Arising out of this, our company got a contract to supply fettling material to the Chilean steel industry in lieu of the US. Orders were shipped on Soviet

vessels and I oversaw these in my role as shipping manager. On the day in question, I went to see cargo loading on the *Anatoly Lunacharsky* at Immingham. As usual our agent and I repaired to the Captain's cabin where we were joined by the chief engineer for an interesting fraternal meeting, facilitated by two bottles of home-made vodka which the engineer had distilled in the engine room. My recollection is that the captain had been in a tank at the huge battle of Kursk in 1943 and had a very scarred arm as evidence.

'On leaving, I discovered that the stairway by which I had entered the ship had been replaced by a rope ladder dangling about 20 to 30 feet above the dock (it was a large ship). Fortified by half a bottle of vodka I negotiated this (no risk assessments in 1971) and then drove 60 miles back to the office (no breathalysers). And the significance of the date? That day Ted Heath expelled half the Russian Embassy as spies and when my assistant went the next day hoping for some Soviet hospitality, he met with a firm *nyet* and never got on the ship.'

**Bill Woods** in laconic mood says: 'We are still here and OK. I suppose it is a good thing that, unlike their father, the family can accept the way things are these days.'

As for your Year Reps:

**Roger Gould**, having joined a Probus group for the first time when moving to Keyworth three years ago, simply to meet new people, now finds himself elected vice president of the group and due to take over as president in October 2024 with the prospect of presiding at fortnightly speaker meetings for the following 12 months – a greater commitment than he was looking for, but the variety of subjects should be interesting. In joining U3A, also for the first time and for the same reason, he has so far avoided any responsibilities and enjoyed some good discussions. Unfortunately, the state of the world shows that the PTWTR (putting the world to rights) group he now belongs to has obviously failed to achieve its aim. One other preoccupation has been having cataract operations, the first of which has led to him discovering that his view of the world has been obscured by 'brunescence' and is now not just brighter but shows up blue and purple colours that had previously been a dull, brownish red.

**David Shipp** was reminded by Peter Hayward's note that he saw the Da Vinci 'Last Supper' in his second long vac. He was on his way to Naples to take part in a dig at Herculaneum. There was a train strike and he had to spend time in Milan until trains were running again after midnight. The first train out was absolutely packed! But he did see the cathedral and the Da Vinci while waiting. Now his eldest granddaughter is the same age as he was then. She is looking forward to her second long vac, also in the Bay of Naples, but in her case organising a sailing expedition for York University Sailing Club. David and his wife Phillida had an interesting visit to Sarajevo in 2023, hosted by their friend Aida, who returned home to live there after 30 years in England, where she came as a refugee in 1992. David was in Bosnia as an election supervisor in 1996. The effects of the war are still apparent in Sarajevo, both physically and in the memories of the people. However, the peace has lasted and Bosnia is now a place to visit for its beauty and history.

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## 1960

**Year Representative: Keith Pickering**

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**Andrew Devine, Richard Mulgan, Tim Phillips and Nick Woodward** are all still with us, but with nothing to report for *Postmaster*.

**Keith Aspinall** says he has nothing really to divulge to *Postmaster*, other than a very pleasant lunch in January with a reprobate Old Mertonian (**Keith Pickering**), who just happened to be in the same restaurant near Kew Gardens. Otherwise, life proceeds as normal.

**Stuart Blume**, in clearing out an archive, came across a 'Fresher's Guide to Oxford' from 1960 – did such things ever exist? His research on vaccine history and politics is continuing, with a growing focus on Eastern Europe. In that context, he spent the month of April in Bucharest as visiting researcher at Bucharest University's Institute for Advanced Study. For the rest, as for us all, life just moves along.

**Gerald Cadogan** is still alive and is now sailing in calmer waters having earlier in the year been required to cope all

at the same time with a grandchild, Lucy's needing care following broken vertebrae, and the need to write a speech to give in Greek at a conference in Heraklion.

**Geoffrey Copland** is working towards retiring from those residual charities for which he is still a trustee, while ensuring they are in good shape to face the future. For one, the Thomas Wall Trust, this requires a complete re-write of its governing documents to meet the needs of charities and those who seek help these days. This is taking some time, but he has approval to make changes for a trust deed that is over 100 years old. Sadly, he has become less mobile and is finding it difficult to navigate through the convoluted waters of the NHS and private health sectors. He retired from the Board of Governors of Trinity Laban Conservatoire in summer 2023 after 16 years as a trustee and was delighted to be awarded the title of Companion of Honour of Trinity Laban, joining a very distinguished, small group of such Companions.

**John Cotton** is soldiering on, thanks to the Good Lord who has been very kind to him and his family.

**John Crossley** has resumed overseas travel and will be in the UK in June. In October 2023 he went to the Philippines for two purposes: first, as he had been invited to give a talk in the Philosophy Department at the University of the Philippines, Quezon City, this being partly to celebrate their association of over 49 years, and partly because Henry Fernando, nephew of Emmanuel (Toto) Q Fernando (1987) (see *Postmaster* 2020, pp. 297–9), issued the invitation; and secondly, to attend the Philippine National Historical Society (PNHS) meeting in Silliman University, Dumaguete. It was good to resume going to PNHS meetings – the first visit since 2019 – and to renew old acquaintances and make new ones. In February 2024 he went with his Chinese-Australian co-worker, Tony Lun, to Christchurch, New Zealand, for the annual Australian and New Zealand Association for Medieval and Early Modern Studies (ANZAMEMS) conference where, like a happily increasing number of people, they were working to widen the view of the Middle Ages and Early Modern Period to a more global and less Eurocentric view. Fifty years ago John and friends published a tiny (82-page) book *What is Mathematical Logic?* with OUP. They have now signed a contract for a new edition.

**George Darroch** and Angela are reaching their 40th wedding anniversary and learning to cope with the various childhood illnesses of their grandchildren. In September George fulfilled a long-time wish to revisit Iona and though the weather was Scottish actually managed an hour of sunshine. There are some inscriptions on a wall in the Abbey, one of which was that if you had visited Iona twice you would always want to come back for a third time. Well, this was his third time. He and Angela later visited Tobermory, which hasn't changed since they watched the TV series *Balamory* with their children some 20 years ago.

**Leslie Epstein** is still in action, though planning to retire at some point from the army. He has been primarily concerned with the production of his 2007 play *King of the Jews*, which he adapted from his novel (published in England as *The Elder*). It ran in Manhattan in October/November and was quite an experience. His next step is to try to interest a television company in Europe do it in that form. He has published a few things in the *Tablet*, including an article about the painting 'It was a Great Day' by Vivan Sundaram, which he had to sell in order to help finance the play.

**Peter Fattorini** has returned from visiting family in Australia, jet lag no better, he and Vicky having been married now for 55 years, and responsible for four children and 14 grandchildren. He continues to cycle, though staving off the day when he has to go electric, and has maintained an annual walking trip with four friends slightly less geriatric than himself. He has entered the correspondence stakes, having had one letter tangential to the Truss premiership published in the *Spectator*, one on the subject of Serge Gainsbourg in the *Times* and has his eyes on similar success on any subject in the *Economist*. (Stop press: this ambition was achieved in May 2024.) He lives in a very small village in an attractive part of the Yorkshire Dales, the only activity of which is a trekking centre, and he has worked out that there are more horses than people.

**David Fletcher** notes that the climate change situation seems to be deteriorating at a clip. This matters because he is currently fighting writer's block while attempting to get his book on the issue finished by September, in the hopes that it might offer some solutions. Thereafter he and Bonnie hope to make another UK visit to see his sister and family and friends.

**Bruce Gilbert** and Dot are still going strong, which gives him pause for thought to realise that this year he has a younger brother turning 80, one of their sons clocking up 50 and their two grandsons reaching 20 and 18. He hopes the champagne required for these many celebrations will keep them going for another year or two. He and Dot continue to bask in their usual hobbies – walking in the Dales and Lakes, reading and music. One particular highlight this year was singing Elgar's *Dream of Gerontius* with the university choir in the end-of-year concert in York Minster. On this occasion it was an especial pleasure to meet Mertonians **Tony Ridge** (1961) and **David Shipp** (1959), who were present to listen to David's granddaughter playing the trombone in the University Symphony Orchestra.

**Francis Glassborow** seems to be in a reasonable condition for his age, aided by a daily routine which includes 20+ minutes of exercise and 20+ minutes of meditation. His reading diet tends to the serious, the outstanding book for him this year being *The Extended Mind* by Annie Murphy Paul, which he believes should be read by anyone with pretensions to being educated. He continues to write two bimonthly columns for C Vu (one of ACCU's computing publications), and he will be giving a 90-minute talk titled 'The benefits of learning a different language' at the ACCU annual conference this year. Though the talk is about computer languages (he has just added APL to his own such language portfolio), much of the content is relevant to natural languages.

**John Hartnett** had a heart attack at home last year in July. There was a brilliant response from our 'failing' national health service. He was in hospital and receiving attention in less than an hour and sent home a few days later with an armful of medication and advice to exercise regularly. Thanks to both he feels fine and has nothing but praise for the NHS for the speed of response and the treatment afforded.

**Philip Hawkes** continues the splendid system of Patricia acting as his amanuensis, in which capacity she is happy to note that they are worry free and still looking after their business of selling historic French houses while working to keep up their own Château Misery for holiday rentals and family life. They attended the sad event of Francis Finlay's funeral in London at the end of last year, remembering the privilege of

spending a last Christmas with him and the wonderful Olivia in the Hudson Valley, where they were most agreeably spoilt for ten days. So it has been especially wretched for them to lose such a friend – in fact Patricia's family and his parents lived within two streets of each other in Kensington from just after the war until the 1960s and Francis's memorial service was in the same church where her six brothers and sisters were christened. Quite a homecoming.

**Arthur Hephher**, after due consideration, feels that he is still maturing, but with bags of potential, and is hoping to reach his prime upon attaining the age of David Attenborough.

**Alan Heppenstall** has no major changes to note, other than the shock of becoming 82. He is still doing much the same as last year, working on his family tree while fell walking and orienteering to keep fit. He still has his Ukrainian guests, as sadly the circumstances don't exist yet for them to return permanently, though mother and daughter are planning to have an Easter 'holiday' in Kyiv.

**Mike Hind** enjoyed a minibreak to Hadrian's Wall, but his general plans have been thwarted by needing to subscribe to an NHS treatment regime which tends to vacillate in direction from time to time. All being well, he will join **Richard Thompson** and **Keith Pickering** for their annual lunch later in the year.

**Alan Keat** is still living on his own at home, though benefiting from a modicum of external assistance, and continues to enjoy his wine and cigarettes, while generously maintaining a covey of bookmakers in the level of comfort to which they have become accustomed.

**Roger Laughton** and Sue have relocated from Kew to Hampshire in order to be closer to their daughter, Cathy, and are happily settling in to their new home.

**Keith Pickering** would like as always to thank the 1960 cohort for so kindly taking the trouble to respond with their updates for *Postmaster*, which he reads each year with genuine pleasure. In amongst the several occasions of breaking bread with many of his old Merton friends he is delighted to say that at long last he has been able to repay John Crossley's

incredibly generous invitation to the All Souls Encænna Luncheon of 2019, by joining John for a convivial conclave this June in John's home stamping ground of Yorkshire. A personal highlight for him and Sandy was a return to Trinidad, where they lived from 1972 to 1974, and to discover that the old colonial house, which passed as The Park Nursing Home when their daughter, Joanna, was born there in 1972, was still standing, but in the interim had morphed into a steel and glass, immensely modern health centre.

**David Price** and Sue are just emerging from the cultural shock of downsizing, moving from rural surroundings to a retirement village in a city, and feeling as though it's a return to a collegiate environment. For those who have read him, Richard Osman is deadly accurate. Drink flows as freely as in the old days, even if it tends more towards wine than beer, and they and their fellow inhabitants move somewhat more slowly than of old. There's something of the air of a cruise about it but there's no hassle of getting there to join one, so no worries about air miles: even less so for the final journey, as the crematorium is next door.

**Nick Silk** is bumbling along as before, keeping the brain and body going with golf, bridge and his allotment.

**Glynne Stackhouse** and Pat are packing in as many trips as they can to Stratford for Shakespeare and others, to Birmingham for concerts by the CBO, and operas when they turn up somewhere affordable and accessible. This no longer includes anything in London — it's just too difficult — though they did manage their first ever visit to the Globe Theatre for *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and sat on hard benches under cover while the groundlings stood in the pouring rain. They've enjoyed visiting new places in England and Wales, and some they haven't been to for years, such as Aldeburgh and the various sites associated with Benjamin Britten, the Elan Valley in mid-Wales, and North Yorkshire including the spectacular 14th-century wall-paintings in Pickering church — though there are some almost as spectacular only about five miles away in Chalgrove. On these trips they have been playing a new game of spotting unexpected countries and cities in unlikely locations: New York not far from Pateley Bridge, Wales and Rhodesia near Sheffield, New Zealand in Wiltshire, and of course Stackhouse in Ribblesdale. Glynne

is still playing the organ in Streatley Church, West Berkshire, and gave an organ recital there last September; he enjoys working with the small ladies' choir and writing simple two-part anthems for them. On the lighter side of music-making, in 2023 he provided two entertainments for members of the Jane Austen Society of North America on their pilgrimages to the Austen shrines. Both he and Pat are delighted to watch their grandchildren growing up, though they are at a loss to understand how it can be that later this year their daughter will be 50 and their grandson 20.

**Richard Thompson** feels that most importantly his and Jane's health are standing up and hence they are still able to travel independently to see family, and abroad to France, Spain and Italy. They are selling their house in France after 30 memorable years. It was a wrench to make the decision, but the maintenance and travel were becoming onerous. They have had two holidays in Spain, one in Madrid with daughter Eleanor in charge, and one with the family in Majorca, and are hoping to take some time in Italy later in the year. Overall, they derive constant pleasure from their garden.

**Michael Thorn** is back in the teaching mode, with a university extension adult course examining Holocaust survivor texts.

**Jim Trefil** is still soldiering, at work on three books: one on super massive black holes (Smithsonian Press), and two with National Geographic — one on future technologies, the other on astronomy. He is still Clarence J Robinson Professor of Physics at George Mason University, while in parallel he teaches in the Honors College and is really enjoying the kids. He works out regularly; same old, same old.

**Bruce Walter**, like many of us, has been in the clutches of the medicos, but after a raft of exhaustive tests it would appear at this stage that he does *not* have amyloidosis. There is every prospect that he will be able to meet **Keith Pickering** and Sandy when they stop over for a night in Athens in September prior to embarking on a ship the following day.

**Philip Webb** has effected an IT revolution during the past year. His eight-year-old computer started showing its age, so he built his sixth since 2000 and successfully grappled with all the technical changes involved; he continues to use

Gentoo Linux. Then his big bad landline company converted to fibre, which didn't work, so he bought a cell phone. Athene, whose hot spot he now enjoys from time to time. Finally, he got out his netbook, Horace (2009), which still meets his needs. He continues to avoid the medical profession and their dangerous drugs, and is happy to reside in one of the world's best cities to live in, and to be in Canada, currently the planet's most successful nation.

**John Wood** and Kate are leading a quiet and happy life, awaiting the second of their granddaughters to marry next year.

**Jonathan Wright** is still writing and has a chapter in a German volume appearing later this year. Keeping up his work enables him to have the pleasure of maintaining constant contact with younger historians, especially when their perspectives are different (but not too different!) from his own.

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## 1961

**Year Representative: Peter Cope**

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**Tony Ridge** writes: 'You will gather from this that I and family are all thriving, deo gratias, and I have no other special news of interest to fellow Mertonians save that: (a) I am President of the York & North Yorkshire branch of the Oxford University Society and would be delighted to hear from any Mertonians, or indeed Oxonians, living anywhere near York who would like to be in touch with that organisation (for details see the Facebook page); and (b) we continue to have annual walking holidays with **Peter** and Maxine **Richmond**, and **David Shipp** (1959) and his wife Phillida — this year the Northumbrian coast from Beadnall to Berwick.'

Tony also sent me an account of his visit, with his wife Judy, to **Abdool Mamoojee** and his wife Aisha in Thunder Bay, a little town on the Canadian shore at the western end of Lake Superior. Abdool and Aisha were originally from Mauritius, and Abdool spent many years teaching classical studies at the nearby Lakehead University. The fascinating tale is reproduced at the end of this report.

Abdool himself writes: 'For the past seven years I have devoted much time to pension matters as representative of pensioners on Lakehead University's Pension Board but have now completed this work. My wife and I continue to travel to Cape Town, South Africa to be in the company of our younger daughter and her three children whenever we can, to escape the brutal winter of Northern Ontario. Trips to visit the elder daughter in Florida are occasional.'

**Howard Stringer** enjoyed going to the retirement dinner for the retiring Oxford Chancellor and was lucky enough to sit next to that marvellous Mertonian Irene Tracey, who as we all know is now having to manage policies at a University level as Vice-Chancellor. His own news is a deal with the BBC to air a radio drama called '*Central Intelligence*' with a range of American actors signed but the air date is not yet announced. 'Stay tuned', he says.

**Misha Donat** writes: 'Beethoven has loomed large in my life over the past few years. My introductions for the new Bärenreiter editions of his piano sonatas, piano trios and late string quartets have now all been completed and published, and my book on Beethoven's chamber music will finally appear in print next summer. In addition to the writing, I've been busy as artistic director for a series of concerts in Norwich, though my involvement there came to an end in April this year. I remember in my Merton days having put on a performance of Bartók's *Sonata for Two Pianos and Percussion*, together with my New College friend Tim Souster, who sadly passed away many years ago. I wouldn't be able to play anything as hard as that these days, though I'm still vainly trying to maintain a career as a virtuoso, and my efforts in that direction have been helped by the recent acquisition of a decent Yamaha digital piano. Apart from all that, my grandson will soon be as tall as me, so it's probably time to retire gracefully — not that I ever will.'

**Terence Finley** writes about his life after Merton: 'After the PGCE at the London Institute of Education and a year teaching English, I decided I didn't want to stay in education. I was fortunate to be asked by Amnesty International to go to Bulawayo in Zimbabwe (then Southern Rhodesia) to work with Amnesty and the churches in support of the families of political prisoners. My work contributed to the creation

of the charity Christian Care. Subsequently I worked for the World Council of Churches refugee programme in Botswana and elsewhere, and later on scholarship programmes for refugees. I was married in 1973 and my wife Diana and I moved to Northumberland, and since 1980 we have lived in Newcastle. I was the National Council of Social Service's development officer in Tyne and Wear from 1975 and later General Secretary of Newcastle Council for Voluntary Service between 1978 and 1987. I then became self-employed as an adviser to national and regional charitable trusts funding projects in the north-east of England. Our sons Luke and Thomas got firsts, respectively at Newcastle and Nottingham — Luke now being a professional editor and Thomas a maths teacher. Diana became a speech and language therapist specialising in work with autistic children and, since she retired, has had three novels published by Harper Collins.'

**Peter Finlay** also writes at some length about his life after Merton. 'After Merton I discovered the reality of a very living Jesus in my life and moved to studying theology at New College, Edinburgh. Thereafter, through the Church of Scotland, to Zambia's remote Northern Province as a minister with the United Church of Zambia. On return I was in the wonderful parish of mountainous Torridon. From there to two inner-city parishes, first in Paisley's Ferguslie Park. After this I met my wife, Marjorie, and together we moved to my second inner-city parish of Royston in Glasgow's East End. An early Victorian church building whose spire boasted being the highest point in the city — used by German bombers to guide them towards the Clyde shipyards way out to the west. By the time I got there the church building was falling apart, and the congregation would sometimes have meetings in our flat. (I lived with my wife Marjorie and little son Hamish on the ninth floor of a tower block.) We also used the hall in the block of flats for our youth club. Our experience was of many very friendly people and a place it was good to live where we felt no danger lurking for ourselves or our young child. Since these days I have been living in retirement in the Isle of Arran with Marjorie.'

I (**Peter Cope**) would just like to add that I was amazed to learn for the first time that I wasn't the only Mertonian of '61 to have a career in full-time Christian ministry.

**Peter Steele** writes: 'I am not able to travel easily now as I do not drive and am unwilling to inflict that burden on my poor wife, Jackie, except in cases of dire necessity. I do not expect any more invitations to Mertonian gaudies and, were one to come my way, I should have to have a serious conversation with myself as to whether or not I should accept. However, I should like to have one more encounter with you and the other lads of the year of '61 — and contemplate for what would have to be the last time the Tsar of All the Russias' baptismal font in the College Chapel — so I suspect that I would succumb to such an invitation as a thing very much to be desired should it be offered to me.'

**Frank Kelsall** writes: 'My book, *Nicholas Barbon: Developing London, 1667-1698*, co-written with Timothy Walker (Brasenose, 1963), was published at the end of 2022 to some good reviews and a distribution of more than a thousand copies through the London Topographical Society. I have now turned my antiquarian attention to the early history of semi-detached houses and a London property developer's plan book of the mid-18th century. When not in archives and libraries I act as bowls captain for the Finchley Victoria Bowling and Croquet Club and believe that bowls should be added to the croquet traditionally played on the Merton grass; it is, after all, an older sport. And as a good building conservationist my wife Diane and I have just restored the sitting room in our Edwardian house after the ceiling collapsed.'

**Ian Harrold** writes: 'I continue to enjoy good health and the gentle routines of my retirement village here in Gloucester. My singing voice is still going strong, and I use it with Gloucester Choral Society and the Three Choirs Festival Chorus. (After years of singing alto and tenor, I am back at bass, just like 63 years ago at Merton.) I continue to compose, getting performances here and there. I have concentrated on woodwind ensemble music and I am trying to corner the market in wind quintets — I have just sent off number eighteen to my publisher in Yorkshire.'

**John Sandercock** writes: 'I am still going into work each day, except that it is a hobby and doesn't count as work anymore. Jenny and I are both keeping well. Jenny had a minor stroke over two years ago and is having some trouble

with her leg muscles. We don't know if this is a result of the stroke or long Covid. Fortunately it is not affecting her ability to get around. Although not much has been happening recently we have made several jazz river boat trips: on the Rhone, Seine and Rhine. In September we are going up the Moselle and Saar. Excellent jazz musicians play for a few days and then others join the trip and take their place. Of course plentiful good food. I still play tennis (doubles only) but am less mobile than I used to be.'

**Bob Machin** writes: 'Marcia has had a mini-stroke, which has played havoc with her memory. We are planning to downsize somewhere in Bridport and disposing of my library and research files has proved to be a somewhat distressing experience.'

**Richard England** writes: 'Aware that a committee can be clogged up with elderly members who are entitled to remain on it for life, I stepped down after 25 years on the committee of the English Schools' Athletic Association; I have also now retired from athletics officiating. But I keep in touch with the sport by acting as announcer when invited, and in this role I was at Iffley Road last year for Oxford & Cambridge v Cornell & Pennsylvania and this year for the varsity match.'

**David Judge** writes: 'The good news is that I am still alive and well. The bad news is that we have various problems here mainly with animals. It may interest you to know I am still with the girl (now my wife) who ran into me on her bike in November 1961 when I was crossing the road to see a friend at Magdalen and hope to reach 60 years with her in September.'

Finally, it has been a very interesting experience for me, **Peter Cope**, to gather news from our Year of 1961 for the first time, and to learn many details about friends and colleagues which I never knew before. My wife Melia and I have enjoyed living in Ludlow for the last six years, but in 2024 decided that we should move house to be closer to at least two of our four children, who live in Nottingham and Cambridge. Although we have had no viewings of our house in six weeks of being on the market, the estate agent tells me that about 300 people each week have looked at it online, so we live in hope of a sale.

## Tony Ridge: our visit to Thunder Bay

In October 2023 I with my wife Judy paid a long overdue visit to my dear friend and fellow Mertonian **Abdool Mamoojee** (1961) and his wife Aisha in far-off Thunder Bay, on the Canadian shore at the west end of Lake Superior.



Tony and Abdool

Abdool who, with Aisha, was originally from Mauritius, came to Thunder Bay after Oxford and spent many years single-handedly running a classical studies section in the department of languages at Lakehead University. He is now retired, and the classics programme alas is no more. However, there is something epic in the notion of somebody from a small island in the middle of the

Indian Ocean carrying the light of classical civilisation to deepest Canada. They now live quietly in the leafy suburbs and in the ferocious winters like to visit their daughters, placed conveniently in Florida and South Africa. Cold and smoky England must have come as quite a shock after his tropical island, yet Abdool has the happiest memories of his time in Oxford and England, and he says he was never aware of any racial discrimination except once in an Indian restaurant where the waiter could not believe he was one of the diners. But that was in the 1960s.

Thunder Bay is a quiet provincial town, off normal tourist trails but with a fascinating history of trans-shipment from land to water. At first there was just the stockaded Fort William, where trappers from the wild interior (mostly indigenous) traded furs for European manufactures, which were then carried by the *voyageurs* (mostly French, though the British ran the fort) in large canoes by lake and river to Montreal and Quebec. The original fort has gone, but a faithful replica has been built on the Kaministiquia River, with houses for the Europeans – log cabins on the outside, Jane Austen on the inside – and genuine birch-bark wigwams for the Indians.

The modern town, though far from the sea, has a major port (formerly Port Arthur) and railhead, and every day we saw ocean-going ships standing off. Grain and other commodities go from there to the Atlantic via the Great Lakes & St Lawrence Seaway. Nearby also are the Kakabeka Falls, which locals consider superior to Niagara, and the Sleeping Giant peninsula. It is this which, when the wind blows up the gulf between its cliffs and the town, creates the boom for which the indigenous people gave Thunder Bay its name.



To all these places, and others including a quick trip over the US border to Grand Marais, Abdool took us as well as Lakehead University which, like the university at York where I live, is tastefully arranged around a small lake. The name, though, refers to Lake Superior, and what lingers is the memory of the rocky shores and forested promontories, glorious in their autumn colours, plunging into the clear waters of that huge body of water which stretches away for ever. Fairly, I think, the classical scholars of Thunder Bay might have said, adapting Horace: *'Nullus in orbe sinus Baiis superior istis/ Altitonantibus esse potest'* though as a resident of York I would feel an obligation to put in a word for Scarborough.

Apologies for the Latin tags but we classicists don't get many chances these days!

Many thanks to Abdool and Aisha for their hospitality.

**Tony Ridge** (1961)

## 1962

**Year Representative: Martyn Hurst**

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**Andrew Morton** has reluctantly decided to hang up his sea boots after 24 Round the Island races after many years skippering the good ship *Balerno*. With many yachts, the kettle is the most used piece of nautical equipment (mainly in harbour). This was certainly not the case with *Balerno*.

**Keith Burton** is still busy with philately but this is interrupted from time to time helping his grandson with A-level questions. Some advance preparation is, however, required.

**Paddy Millard** reports that he is in the land of the living but checks the obituaries regularly to ensure this is still the case. He has relinquished his consultancy to collect the 25p (taxable) increase in state pension and to provide more time in the garden, which seems to enlarge unaccountably each year.

**Alan Eastwood** attended the May Morning celebrations at the upmarket venue of the Botanic Gardens complete with croissants, coffee and morris men (and ladies). He maintains his close connection with Denmark and has managed to fit in visits to Portugal, Italy and France.

**Charles Webb** has a new neighbour.

**Martyn Hurst** has recently returned from a battlefield tour of Gallipoli – a sobering but enlightening experience. He is now editor of the Wey and Arun Canal newsletter, which indicates a major issue with the age demography of the membership. When not catching up for lost time at the opera, he spends time in the south of France – pioneering gardening.

**John Keane** is playing golf and badminton as well as enjoying family life. He is looking forward to the Merton Society Weekend.

**John Palmer** has been researching the livelihoods of the costal fishermen of Guyana who have been experiencing a steep decline in their catch. Whether this is due to increased

human activity in terms of oil exploration is not clear. After much effort, the *Routledge Handbook of Community Forestry*, written by John and his wife, was finally made available open access online, which means its guidance and advice are more likely to be heeded.

**Peter Jones** spent his career in the metals industry – some of his time focused on titanium for the critical parts of jet engines. He is now an enthusiastic and energetic walker with 8 to 12 miles the norm. He has enhanced his interest in languages, history and architecture by visiting South Africa and China this year and has plans for Australia and New Zealand next.

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## 1963

**Year Representative:** Guy English

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**Peter Laurie** in Paradise: 'I surprised myself last year by winning the first prize for my novel *The House that Disappeared* in Barbados' annual literary competition. A dystopian novel about death and the extraction of body organs for export to China. A fun read. I also write an occasional column in a local newspaper. I have written four novels so far, seven plays, and one film script, *Time Longer than Rope*, reimagining the life of Jesus in 19th-century Barbados. I offer advice from time to time to our visionary prime minister, Mia Mottley, who has acquired quite an international profile.'

**Richard Boyd** of the crumble cohort, still (pretends to be) master of the tennis court on Sunday mornings. And enjoys other pleasures, such as inspection of the allotment for signs of asparagus growth, and learning languages from grandchildren. He intends to live long enough to celebrate the UK rejoining the EU. This may require implausible political agility; what is Merton doing to expedite things?

**Jonathan Powell Wiffen**, other than in the croquet season, staffs the Sheffield Health Trust with children and grandchildren; is in touch with **Lawrence Fenelon**, who in turn is too busy seeing grandchildren in Florida and California to respond.

**Les Holborow** appears to be in NZ, is still alive and playing golf. 'Main signpost event in last year was opening of the renovated Gallery for which I chaired the fundraising campaign in recent years. It has significant holdings of early works of the NZ painter Frances Hodgkins, a leading figure in the London arts scene in the first half of the 20th century.'

**Roger Garfitt** reports: 'Margaret and I were delighted to celebrate my 80th birthday with **John** and Carolina **Arrowsmith**, whom we hadn't seen since the lockdown. John had remembered my liking for brandy and brought a fine bottle from an artisan producer. He also brought a copy of *Corona*, a post-apocalyptic novel by his son David, who is now a full-time novelist, continuing the tradition of Duns Scotus, the literary group we had formed at Merton. David thanks John for educating him in film, a legacy of all those evenings we spent in the Scala.'

**Brian Butterworth** writes: 'I continue to do research collaborating with colleagues in Italy, Singapore, Australia, Cuba and Argentina. As the saying goes (due to Freeman Dyson), young men do science, old men write books. So mostly I write books, e.g. *Dyscalculia: From Science to Education* (now preparing a second edition of *Can Fish Count? What Animals Reveal about Our Uniquely Mathematical Mind*).'

**Geoffrey Stewart** remains around York. 'I still have a few books in print but have stopped writing, although I still do some work for one of the A-level examination boards – but not marking, which I gave up in 2011 when I resigned as chief examiner.'

**Charles Tongue's** life is extremely quiet and at time of writing has Covid. Otherwise fine.

**John Bamfield**: 'The only topic that might be of interest is a planned visit to Merton in July by our local arts society (Hart, in East Hampshire). It was hoped to include the Upper Library in the tour of the College but building work will prevent this.'

**Ralph Abraham**: 'I am still alive – busy professionally and that means keeping out of mischief. What keeps me ticking are the huge advances in science and medicine that will enable the next generation to tackle new problems with a greater

degree of confidence. In my professional lifetime, I have seen diseases that were thought to be incurable, now offer hope and a good quality of life to many. And I will never forget that Merton plays such an important role in this.'

**Gordon Whatley** has nothing salacious to report but here are a couple of highlights from 2023–24.

'I hardly knew **Ian Buckingham** during our Merton years but one day last autumn when (after **Rick Allen** put us in touch), Ian and I spent a diverting couple of hours catching up on our past lives, over tea and biscuits in his comfy office, near the Morgan Library on Madison Avenue in New York: his psychiatry practice is a stone's throw from my occasional old hangout at the CUNY Graduate Center.

'Since then my beloved Mary and I have driven to and from Palm Springs, California (round trip of nearly 6,000 miles). Despite spending almost four-fifths of my life in the US, this transcontinental road-jaunt was a first for me (not for Mary). In between the outbound and return legs, Mary for her health's sake spent four months (December through March) enjoying the desert sun and warmth of the Coachella Valley. Meanwhile, during the winter's depths her spouse was back here in Connecticut, mainly in his study, trying to keep warm with his dictionaries and sainted mistress, Eugenia of Rome. Did I say 'winter'? Our vintage Ariens snow-blower was needed only once in two and half months ... and the robins arrived two weeks early.'

**John Allen:** 'The 60th anniversary lunch was a wonderful opportunity to re-connect with people I hadn't seen for 50 or more years, but other than that precious little has happened. I spend most of my time researching architectural history and hope to have a second website covering English church architects and artists available by the end of this year, to match my long-running one on the parish churches of Sussex. Otherwise, I frequently enjoy the company of my grandchildren, all of whom live within a ten-minute walk.'

**Hugh Macmillan:** 'I live in Dorchester on Thames, a village with a population of still only 1,000. We have a wonderful abbey and it can be a very busy place. We've just finished the bi-annual festival during which I attended a concert each

night, classical, jazz or folk, for eight nights! My latest book, a shortish biography of Max Gluckman, a social anthropologist specialising in South Africa and Zambia, as I have done, came out from Berghahn Books in New York in March. I attend the South African seminars in Oxford and aim to get back to South Africa every year, as I did in February–March this year. I go to escape the worst of the British winter but I can always pretend I'm working!'

**Peter Moss**, Emeritus Professor of the Thomas Coram Research Unit, tramps parts of the country, this year Yorkshire, Dorset and hopefully meeting Guy in Cornwall.

**Peter** and **Felicity Livesey** have surveyed the Gothic cathedrals of northern France: Beauvais, Laon, Amiens (twice the size of Notre Dame), Reims and St Remi, and finally Strasbourg. They wax enthusiastically on the stonework, and the speed and punctuality of the railway links. Also, despite more than one redrawing of local government boundaries, Picardy, Champagne and Alsace each retains a strong regional identity – and excellent regional food and drink.

**Basil Eastwood** has left Oxfordshire for Bristol, near grandchildren and with culture in walking distance. He is still a trustee of Cecily's Fund (look it up) so still visits Zambia to see its great progress. Keeps abreast of the appalling situation in the Middle East, giving talks to U3A and others.

**Stephen Ralls** writes: 'At the end of 12 months devoid of much action (except having to attend to increasing creakiness), we are revived by the memory of a sunlit weekend at the end of June 2023. Merton Garden looked fabulous in the summer heat as we enjoyed the Garden Party, together with a College community ranging, at a guess, from 2 to 82. Coconut shies, treasure hunts, strawberry tarts, Pimms, a brass band, all gave enormous pleasure. We reconvened in Chapel for Evensong, inspired by the choir to raise our voices in thanksgiving. Next day, the College did us proud with our Diamond Jubilee lunch. Were there about 20 of us, with partners, who managed to climb the stairs to the groaning board? It was well worth keeping in touch with our alma mater.'

**Alan Malcolm** visited Drumnadrochit, for no other reason than the name. He has his sights on Ardnamurchan this year.



Guy English and  
his Pilot Gig World  
Championships medal

As for me, **Guy English**: apart from savagely editing a great crop of contributions this year, I belatedly find myself a company director (sole trader), manager of two websites and a published author – of *Holy Wells Cornwall: Odyssey and Memorial* – a ten-year project. I still race my modest yacht twice a week, also even more modest dinghy; and this year was my last rowing in the Pilot Gig World Championships, where I won my first and last medal. My garden is wilding itself with little help from me.

## 1964

Year Representative: Richard Burns

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The highlight of the last year for me as Year Representative was undoubtedly the Diamond Jubilee Lunch held on Sunday 23 June, the Sunday of the Merton Society weekend. This attracted a tremendous turnout of 22 Mertonians, half of them accompanied by their wives. This represented over a quarter of those who had matriculated almost 60 years earlier. We, who I described in a brief speech as 'The Cutting Edge of the Baby Boom', agreed how lucky we have been in our lives, not just having been at Merton in an era when fees and student debt were not an issue, but also because there had been no big wars like those which had blighted the lives of our parents and grandparents, because improved healthcare had enabled us to live longer and healthier lives than previous generations, and because of the huge rise in living standards which we had enjoyed.

In particular the mid-60s had been a golden time for entertainment in Britain, with magnificent films like the early Bonds, the Clouseau farces with Peter Sellers, and *Doctor Zhivago*, starring everybody's dream actress Julie Christie. The greatest luck of all was being in the thick of the pop revolution, 1964 having seen the Beatles in full swing and the Stones appearing in the Top 10 for the first time, along with a host of other individuals and groups. And the music was just as good in 1965, 1966 and 1967.

We raised a glass of the magnificent wine the College had provided for us to those who couldn't be with us, either because of ill health or poor holiday planning or, sadly, because they had passed on. In that context I particularly noted **Tony Braime**, our JCR President, and my close friend the poet **John Whitworth**. **Bruce Jerrett** read one of John's slightly dark but witty sonnets and I recited a much shorter work, all of two words long.

We were all very pleased to find that the College's catering was still as excellent and generous as it had been two generations ago, and special thanks were given to the cooking and waiting staff.

Those present were: Nick Ansell, John Borgars, Richard Burns, Mark Carter, John Cole, Eric Colvin, David Ireland, Steve James, Bruce Jerrett, Paul Mahoney, Mark Price, Nick Price, Lester Pritchard, Mike Robson, David Rogers, Bob

Spears, Chris Sykes, Keith Thomas, Colin Tyrell, Tony Webster, David Whiteley and Brian Worth.

I received apologies for non-attendance from **Andy Curtis**, **Richard Peel** and **Peter Scott**.

In response to my April email, **Mike Stepan** reported that his family mediation work continues, albeit in a new role as a member of the Family Mediation Service's complaints panel. He says: 'Adjudicating other people's efforts is fascinating work,' and notes that the demand for mediation services has greatly increased because of the austerity cuts to the Justice Department and the backlog arising from Covid.

**Tony Webster** had a pacemaker fitted last summer but this has not stopped him playing his saxophone with several different bands and visiting his beloved Normandy.

So life goes on as the end of our eighth decade looms on the horizon — increasingly slowly and stiffly perhaps, but nonetheless there remains much to be cheerful about. For me at least, remembering my time at Merton always brings a smile to my face and a warm feeling within.

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## 1965

*Peter Robinson has retired and there is currently no Year Representative for 1965. Please contact [development@merton.ox.ac.uk](mailto:development@merton.ox.ac.uk) if you are interested.*

**John Qualtrough**, **Nigel Barraclough**, **Dave Sinclair** and **Pete Hartman** were close friends at Merton and have remained so ever since. John's daughter Katherine instigated a surprise and very merry weekend reunion in Oxford earlier this year (which Pete was unfortunately unable to attend, being challenged geographically).

John writes: 'We were pleased to see Merton in good trim, and also our old haunt The Bear little changed (but shocked at the exorbitant increase in the price of beer from 1/11d a pint). Many cheerful recollections were shared — such as JR Lucas, then Principal of the Postmasters, I believe, with eyes fixed on the horizon, stepping Basil Fawlty-like over Nigel's

prone body lying under the arch towards Grove, John having rested him there on a difficult journey back from The Bear. Or the Eastgate manager hiding in the kitchen after being asked to calm Dave's enjoyment of a victorious rugby celebration. Or Pete running into a tree while chasing a squirrel (which he denies). Or all hiding in the creepers after John knocked an alcoholic croquet ball through a window (and hoping there's not still a bill outstanding). And many more merry adventures. It's amazing how we found any time to work.'

**Jerome Ripp** reports: 'I retired from teaching mathematics for the International Baccalaureate after 33 years in the same school. Having given up one career, I have replaced it with a variety of three different careers. In the morning I am a student of Greek literature and assistant to my wife Kyoko who has just completed her translation of a modern Japanese novel *Sensei no Kaban* into Greek. In the afternoon I become a gardener cultivating shrubs in my garden and growing my own fruit and vegetables on my allotment. In the evening I revert to my teacher role as an online mathematics tutor. Every Saturday I do a 20-mile walk somewhere in the southeast, very often leading a group. This was a habit that I started in 1965 when I arrived at Merton. From my room in Rose Lane, I could leave by the back gate and walk for miles beside the river. Long-distance walking is a lifelong passion and this Easter I celebrated with a 75-mile walk over four days leading a group of 20 from the Thames at Kingston where I live across Surrey and Sussex to the south coast at the hamlet of Kingston Gorse.'

**Paul Everson** writes: 'Last year, I looked forward to two significant publications coming to fruition. All rather different but each marking my third and final contribution to a major series. One — with my long-standing co-author, David Stocker — was our third volume in the British Academy's multi-authored series of the Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Stone Sculpture, reporting on the material from *Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire* and published by Oxford University Press. We launched that book last December with a party at St John's College, Cambridge, since the college had generously given us research residency through two summers as a local base for fieldwork.

'Secondly, May 2024 has seen the publication of the second, much revised edition of *Staffordshire* in the well-

known and much-respected county-by-county series of Pevsner architectural guides to the buildings of England. My contribution, as previously for *Cheshire* (2011) and for *Derbyshire* (2016), has been an introductory chapter on the county's archaeology and entries in individual parishes on significant monuments. *Staffordshire* was the final volume in the first-edition coverage by Sir Nikolaus Pevsner in 1974 and is again the final volume in the revised second edition, published precisely 50 years later by Yale University Press. Its appearance marks the end of an era. I shall arrange to deposit copies of these two items, along with some less showy research publications, in Merton College Library when I can organise that practically. Something else I had not anticipated but which gives me particular pleasure is the award, from the beginning of 2024, of a visiting professorship at Durham University. I went on to Durham from Merton for postgraduate studies that acted as a transition to the stimulating career I have enjoyed in archaeology. I therefore owe that institution a debt of gratitude and affection similar to that we all owe to Merton.'

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## 1966

**Year Representative:** David Holmes

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**John Dainton** writes: 'Since I decoupled from Liverpool University as an emeritus professor in 2017 I've been on the books of the University of Lancaster Physics Department who have kindly given me an affiliation (and a little more!) to support what's left of my research activities. Suffice it to say, the university was pleased to also appoint an STFC Rutherford Fellow to a faculty position so that now, with another Lancaster faculty member, the group is able to continue to pursue its roles in the NA62 experiment at CERN. There we are engaged in the last part of the data-taking phase aimed at measuring with a few percent precision the very rare decays of kaons (for aficionados, decays with a branching fraction of a few  $\times 10^{-11}$ ). Such measurements test the Standard Model of sub-nuclear physics in a unique way.

'The work was affected of course by Covid, but now the end

of data-taking is in sight and the few such decays already observed for the first time ever will, if the Standard Model is right, become a few hundred or so when the data analysis is completed. And I will be in touch immediately and excitedly as soon as the number observed does NOT agree with the Standard Model predictions!

'I also benefit from being given an office at the Daresbury Laboratory in the Cockcroft Institute with whose foundation I was centrally involved 20 years ago and of which I was the first director. The vision at foundation of an internationally recognised national centre for R&D in sub-nuclear particle acceleration and beam delivery is now well established and is manifest in the Institute's many contributions to and roles in such systems operating at international labs and in industrial (security imaging) and societal enterprises (beam oncology) since foundation. I am very proud to be able to say so.

'So like most in science, my life in my eighth decade remains my obsession, physics. So why bore you with all this? Because I owe it to the two Merton Fellows who revealed my obsession to myself, the two Michaels, Baker and Bowler. I was thus very pleased when the College created the Michael Baker Fellowship in Physics and also remain pleased still to be in touch with Michael Bowler by email. There are many others from Merton who read physics guided by the two Michaels and whom I have met and collaborated with over the years, not least the third Director of the Cockcroft Institute, Peter Ratoff (1974), who went so far as to organise a fest for me in July 2023.

'So, as also Editor-in-Chief of the oldest scientific journal ever, *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society A* (if it was good enough for Isaac Newton, it's good enough for me!), I am fortunate to still feel able to influence things – and to get the opportunity to put into text my appreciation of those memorable years at Merton so long ago.'

**Jack Frazier** writes: 'For several years I have been editor, funder, revisor, part translator etc., of the multi-author Spanish-language book *Tortugas marinas como especie bandera* published in 2022 in Quito, Ecuador, by Abya Yala. It contains 12 chapters and has 423 pages and is available on my Academia.edu page.

'At the end of 2022 the multi-author book *Galapagos Giant Tortoises* was published by Elsevier/Academic Press. My first two overview chapters are: "Island home to giant tortoises" and "Galapagos tortoises: Protagonists in the spectacle of life on Earth". Other varied publications have come out over the years. I now live in Ithaca, New York.'

**Michael Hebbert** reports that after 45 years as a Londoner living in Limehouse, he has divorced, remarried and moved back to Oxford. He is gradually running down his academic commitments while continuing as emeritus professor at UCL and the University of Manchester.

**Anthony Holden** sadly passed away in October 2023 and an obituary for him appears in the *In Memoriam* pages, written by Denis MacShane.

**Lawrence James'** book *The Lion and the Dragon. Britain and China: A History of Conflict* (Weidenfeld & Nicolson) was published in August 2023. The paperback will appear this August.

**Denis MacShane** has revealed that he kept a daily diary every day of his 18 years as an MP and Minister. "I studied history and wrote political books and biographies and a personal letter or a diary entry was like a little jewel in the middle of narrative based on documents. So I decided I would try and keep a diary as it become clear after I was elected a Labour MP in 1994 that Labour would form a government. I worked as a Parliamentary Private Secretary at the Foreign Office. Because of my contacts in European politics, Tony Blair called me often to Downing Street when he was working out what to do next on relations with European governments headed by left leaders like Lionel Jospin in France or Gerhard Schröder in Germany. I saw the tensions between Tony Blair and Gordon Brown close up, the dynamism Robin Cook brought to the Foreign Office and noted Clare Short's brutally frank opinions of her colleagues." His book *Labour Takes Power: The Denis MacShane Diaries 1997-2001* is published by Biteback.

He adds that in January he had had the pleasure of skiing with Merton's only prime minister so far, Liz Truss, back in 2010 when she joined the annual UK-Swiss parliamentary ski race meeting in Davos. "I used to chair the British parliamentary

ski group and when Liz was elected as MP in 2010, organised a dinner of Merton MPs in the House of Commons. She was always easy to talk to, but I had no idea back then she would end up as PM relatively soon."

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## 1967

**Year Representative:** Rhoderick E. Khilkoff-Boulding

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## 1968

**Year Representative:** Ian McBrayne

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Thank you to all of my contemporaries who sent in news and sometimes photographs. **David Bell** wonders whether some enterprising soul could set up a webpage that could serve as a repository for the photographs; something for your Year Rep to pursue.

First, the sad news that **Stuart Ferguson** died on 22 April 2024. He had not been well for some time and had recently suffered a series of strokes. **Steve Powell** reports that **Peter Warry** and his wife Rosemary, **David Gadian**, **Alec Jeffreys** and he attended Stuart's memorial service in Steeple Aston church, where tributes were given by Stuart's widow Tina and by Professor Michael Mings, former Principal of St Edmund Hall, where Stuart was an emeritus fellow.

Meanwhile, Steve's long-running case as a patent attorney about the patentability of inventions by an artificial intelligence machine ended in December with a unanimous ruling by the Supreme Court that the machine is not an inventor. United States courts have taken a similar view, so if the law is to develop in this area international discussions will be needed.

Stuart's demise is the third 1968 death in consecutive years, a sad reminder that we are all now well past our three score years and ten. It is delightful that so many of my contemporaries still report very active lives, with or without powered assistance.

In the power-assisted category comes **Kelvin Roberts**. When he wrote to me, he was riding a Harley Triglide Trike on a guided motorcycle trip through five US national parks. But he mainly wanted to share that he has published an article in the general aviation magazine *Pilot* about a flight he and a friend did with the French Rallye Toulouse to Saint Louis in Senegal and back. This is claimed to be the world's longest trip of its kind for single-engine aircraft. Kelvin, who has long held a private pilot's licence, took a full airways instrument rating after retirement in 2016, the highest rating available to private pilots for single-engine aircraft.

**Alan Harland** and Jude have also spent much time in US national parks, continuing their campervan adventures. Following the mantra 'Go north when it's hot, go south when it's not,' they spent five glorious weeks in March and April visiting desert parks in the south-west states and the mountains of Nevada, Utah and Colorado, amid stunning beauty, mind-boggling geological history and majestically ugly giant condors soaring on their nine-foot wingspans. Alan reports on other trips, too numerous to report in full here, including to the Colorado National Monument where his daughter is a park ranger and 'an excellent, if somewhat demanding hiking guide' and 'below, above and sometimes underneath a staggering assortment of waterfalls' on trails in Pennsylvania.

Alan also lists 'countless side-trips to famous and obscure musical history sites', including the Lorraine Motel in Memphis where black musicians could stay during segregation, countless classic songs were written and Martin Luther King was killed; Buddy Holly's recording studio where Alan was allowed to play his rendition of 'Peggy Sue' on one of the guitars; and the Los Angeles end of Chuck Berry's Route 66 odyssey. Unquestionably, Alan says, the site which best captures both spectacular scenery and musical history is Red Rocks Amphitheatre in Colorado, built between two massive sandstone monoliths and site of early concerts by Jimi Hendrix, the Supremes and the Beatles. During the summer Alan and Jude were planning to overcome their post-Covid fear of flying and meet up with some Mertonians during a visit to the UK.

Another fast man with an engine is **Simon Orebi Gann**. Between board meetings of the water market operator, he managed to fit in a few motor races, mainly in mainland

Europe. His red Morgan SLR, one of three made in the early 1960s, was the first accepted to race at Le Mans in the Classic 24. Despite an early setback in a very wet night practice, Simon was delighted to win his class, which is what the car was intended to do 60 years earlier. This was followed by a class win with two friends in the famous Spa six-hour race, this time in his traditional 1960 Morgan +4 SS.



Simon Orebi Gann racing his Morgan SLR at Le Mans, 2024

I have the pleasure of lunching periodically with Simon, **Paul Engeham** and a couple of friends from other Oxford colleges. Paul has continued to represent the Grand Lodge of English Freemasonry as Grand Chancellor or 'Foreign Secretary' to the now 235, and increasing number, of recognised foreign jurisdictions. Travel requires mobility and in November his hip gave out, reducing him to a wheelchair in aerodromes. Fortunately, a rapid hip replacement just before Christmas changed all that and he is back to long walks. It was three weeks of residential rehabilitation after the operation, and competent physioterrorists, which made the difference. 'Highly recommended,' says Paul.

**Kit Heasman** is one of those who remains very active under his own steam. He reports that for many years he has enjoyed mountaineering and climbing in France and Italy, with French and Italian conversation classes to further his pleasure. Now as limbs and heart begin to weaken he has moved towards trekking and discovered some unusual and interesting paths. In 2023 he walked the Tour du Volcan in the Cantal area of France, around the largest stratovolcano in Europe, and the

Sentiero dell'Inglese in Calabria, named after the passage of Edward Lear across what was then the wilderness of southern Italy. This year Kit was planning to tackle the Sentier Cathar in southern France, among the legends and strongholds of the Cathar rebellion, and La Grande Traversata Elbana, through Napoleon country on the island of Elba. He says the treks are straightforward, but all imbued with history, culture and geology. He looks forward to continuing his crusade for Europeanism for many years to come.



Kit's love of activity in the great outdoors is matched by **Steve Drinkwater**, who reports that he walks an average of four miles a day and engages in yoga, swimming and the exercise routines given him by his physio. He is still participating in two creative writing groups and studying French on Duolingo every day (with a 642-day streak at the time of writing). A new venture is working as a volunteer in a local primary school, hearing children read one-to-one, which he says is very interesting and worthwhile. The class teacher claims the children enjoy Steve's inputs and have scored highly in reading assessments. He sometimes reads his own children's stories, so the children can develop their skills in constructive criticism and he can then improve the stories.

Steve reports walking in the Chilterns, the Cotswolds and the Thames Valley, in the Dolgellau and Keswick areas, on Dartmoor and in Scotland. He still does expedition training

and assessments for the Duke of Edinburgh's Award. He has stood down after seven years as Chair of the Friends of the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park, but remains a trustee, and has been co-opted onto the committee of the local National Trust group.

**Martin Wainwright** has been active too. He and his wife Penny ran a mile for the first time since the age of 16 in Oxford's community run to mark 70 years since Sir Roger Bannister's triumph. They failed to threaten his record: Martin finished two minutes behind Penny and six minutes behind the Vice-Chancellor. Martin has also been involved in the creation and maintenance of a tribute to the tenure of Merton's only prime minister, which takes the form of a hand-crafted pottery lettuce. Its first six months in situ at its secluded site were celebrated by an afternoon tea in May, to be followed by a musical soirée in July.



**Nicholas Richardson's** physical activity takes the form of real tennis at the Merton court, which 'continues rather gently', with a weekly four whose oldest member is in his late eighties. In the last two years, Nicholas has been kept busy,

in the mornings at least, by helping a small group of scholars to write and edit a commentary on the Latin hymns in the Roman Breviary. The first volume is in the press, they are working on the second and five are planned in all. Nicholas also started piano lessons again a few years ago, though he reports that learning a piece seems to take so much longer than it used to do. His wife Jenny continues to enjoy putting together her memories of life in Oxford, with help from former pupils. As one who was taught, briefly but inspiringly, by Jenny, I look forward to the final product.

When most of us have long been savouring retirement, actively or otherwise, **Alan Taylor** has a significant new part-time job. In March he was appointed as the independent chair of the Teachers' Pension Scheme, the second largest public service scheme in the UK. This promises to be both interesting and challenging, at a time when the scheme is starting a transition to a new administration provider for the first time in over 20 years. Apart from that, Alan says that he is still enjoying life in sunny Yorkshire, with regular trips back to Hong Kong.

**Scirard Lancelyn Green** reports that his elder son's forthcoming marriage has reminded him of his mortality, and some succession planning is afoot. The lighting business that he ran for 45 years accumulated various property, which to him looks like income, to the College like a fundraising opportunity and to the taxman like a massive inheritance tax bill. 'Time to move the ownership gently towards the next generation' and moderate the expectations of HM Revenue & Customs. Meanwhile, Scirard has continued to install photovoltaic systems, with a plan for a total of eight such systems on their shopping precinct. He and his wife Caroline visited India last autumn, doing the tourist route from Delhi to Agra. 'Fascinating, but it's a ticked box!' he says. Ice dance in Switzerland in January and skiing in February both suffered slightly from melting. At the time of writing, they were into the garden opening season.

**Chris Simmons** says that the musical high point of the last year was hearing the Gesualdo Six perform in Hexham Abbey, beginning about half a metre from where he was sitting in the north transept, then using the various spaces of the building to maximum and magical effect. In April, Chris and his wife

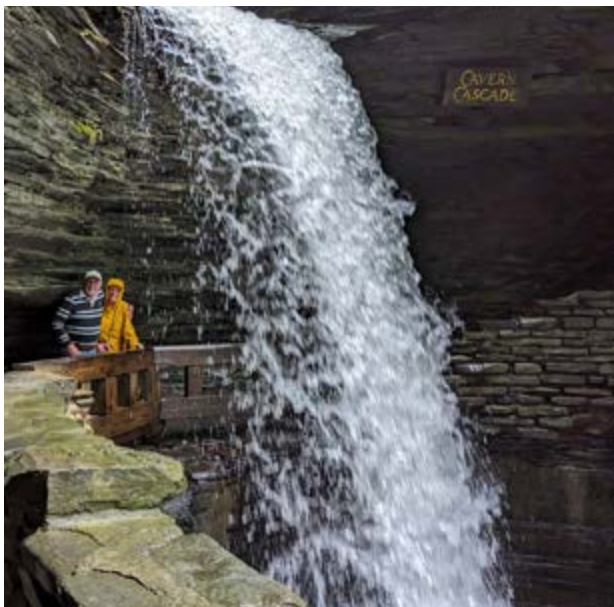
Dorothy spent a week in a transformed miner's cottage in Rosedale, braving the icy blast which blew relentlessly down the dale until the final morning, when the sun came out and all was calm. Running two U3A cryptic crossword groups has kept the brain engaged. He observes that living in Hexham puts them (in)conveniently equidistant from their son in Brighton and their daughter on the Isle of Lewis.

**Alan Sked** has started a blog on Substack, his first three articles being on Lincoln, Talleyrand and the British Conservatives. He was recently surprised to receive a photograph of his very youthful self at Niagara Falls in 1977 from our contemporary **David Pelteret**.

'I am still alive and kicking,' reports **Nicol Webster**, adding that the kicking part is reserved for watching football from the sofa. His tally of grandchildren has increased to eight, and he thinks he may need to repurpose his family history database to track birthday and Christmas lists. He says he maintains a quiet and sober life, 'well, quiet anyway'.

A similarly contented picture is painted by **Danny Lawrence**, who says that his life in Manchester continues to please in a simple and routine way. He goes to the Etihad Stadium and shouts himself hoarse, sees 'challenging' movies at an arts centre which he loves, and does deliveries for a local foodbank once a week. Occasionally, he leaps on a bus that stops outside his apartment and goes to the airport, to take a flight to France. 'It works for me,' he says; who could ask for more?

As for me, my life is fulfilling, though more static than it probably should be. I am too often deflected from the frequent healthy walks I ought to be taking by the more sedentary demands of church finances, as treasurer, and church magazine, as editor, not to mention indolence. Add a fair mix of family and friends, lunches and grandchildren, and it's a good life. I look forward to sharing everyone's news again next year.



## 1969

**Year Representative:** John Symes

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I am delighted to report that this year the number of correspondents has increased, and it is particularly pleasurable to welcome contributions from several for whom it is their first entry in this illustrious journal. In the now customary 'no news is good news' section, I can record **Will Barton**, **Jonty Boyce** (who has resumed travelling to China), **Mike Garton Sprenger**, **Martin McNeill** (still getting in to the swing of retirement), **Chris Moore** (retired from Airbus about ten years ago and recently moved back to Normandy), **Will Pedder**, **Patrick Traill** (happily retired in Germany), and myself, **John Symes** (happily retired in Hampshire).

**Duncan Campbell Smith** reports that he has taken on a commission from the Royal Bank of Scotland to write its tricentenary history, hopefully to appear in the shops in time for RBS's 300th birthday in 2027.

**Jeremy Cook** is still making music and struggling to get all the notes right in about 25 concerts a year (violin and viola). If any Mertonian knows of a young and highly talented string quartet that is on borrowed time with borrowed instruments, they might wish to be in touch with Jeremy and Rosemary. They have recently taken ownership of a tonally matched quartet of instruments (two violins, viola, cello) made in 2005/6 by Nigel Harris for a music-lover in New Zealand named Christopher Marshall. After he died in 2022, Jeremy and Rosemary took on the challenge of preventing this matched set (labelled as such) from being irretrievably broken up by individual sales, so they are encouraging further enquiries for the instruments' next ideal foster-home.

**Howard Davies** stepped down from the chair of NatWest in April at the end of his nine-year maximum term. He remains chair of Inigo Insurance, and a professor at Sciences Po, and notes one of his achievements as City's fourth premier league title after a lifetime of his support. (Well it certainly looked a long shot in 1969! Ed.)

**Robert Elam** is still working as a volunteer Countryside Access Warden with Kent County Council, and studying French with Kent Adult Education, which is useful when visiting Marseilles and walking *dans les collines de Pagnol*.

**Alec Emmerson** lives in Dubai where he enjoys life as a very busy commercial arbitrator, and is regarded by the directories as one of the most popular arbitrators based in the UAE. He was a founder member of Arbitra, an arbitrator management company in London, Washington and now Abu Dhabi. As a native Yorkshireman he acquired a house in Skipton last year and his children will be attending Giggleswick School from September. The family will be based in Skipton but he will continue as a resident of Dubai with homes in Spain and the Philippines.

**Peter Forster** is enjoying life in the Scottish Borders. He is happily received as a Roman Catholic, after long years of gradual discernment. Peter reminded me of our first chemistry tutorial with Courtenay Phillips, when he speculated that physicists generally became accountants, but chemists could do anything. After Peter became Bishop of Chester

he was asked to preach in Chapel, and was able to present Courtenay with the evidence of what he had said.

**David Freud** is taking an active part in looking after six grandchildren under the age of ten. The experience has reinforced the importance of this relationship for both sets of participants, and has led to his 'Grandmentors' initiative – through which 'older volunteers' mentor care-leavers who are trying to make their way in the world without family support systems. Grandmentors is run by the organisation Volunteering Matters (of which David is president), and operates in 17 local authorities.

In 2023, **Tony Hansen** hosted two postdoctoral students from Europe, participating in an academic exchange at UC Berkeley; and he is happy to offer his two-bedroom apartment to any Mertonian who might be passing through the San Francisco Bay Area. In January he engaged in an unplanned test of the validity of Newton's concept of gravity, resulting in falling from a ladder and breaking his leg. He now sports a replacement hip joint and a new awareness of his age.

After retiring from his job as a fraud defence solicitor in late 2020, **Anthony Harris** has been learning grandparenthood and working full time, weather permitting, maintaining and developing his 3.5 acre garden on a North Wales hillside.

**Bill Hedley** was re-elected as President of the Federation of European Philatelic Associations for another four-year term. His main achievement so far has been to bring Lebanon into the fold and he was present in Nicosia last year for a joint Lebanese-Cypriot meeting that sealed their arrival in the organisation. He would like to bring postal historians and academic historians closer together. There is a multidisciplinary approach to research waiting to be tapped, and if anyone would like to follow this up, please get in touch. At their best the postal historians can bring a real insight to bear.

We are delighted to hear for the first time from **Frank Keefe**. Frank has long retired from a life of public service and private consulting to advance the goal of urban revitalisation in the old industrial city of Lowell, across the state of Massachusetts,

and indeed assisting the efforts of King Charles through his Business in the Community organisation to advance these goals in Halifax, Newcastle and Liverpool.

After two years of memorable interactions with brilliant dons (Lucas, Joshi and Pelcynski) and fellow students (Kurt Schork, Dave Roe, Gary Stevens, Rick Levin, Pete Schenckan, Mike Prather), Merton remained the vital core of Frank's life. He married the Australian philosopher Jennifer Radden, with whom he has three children, all of whom attended British universities: Patrick, the writer; Beatrice, a medieval art historian; and Tristram, an urban farmer in Boston. Jennifer and Frank have returned to Merton many times through these past five decades, and enjoyed reunions with old friends (Ron Scott and Ric Harris, both 1967), wandering once again through its star-dusted streets, and remembering fellow rugby players: Neil George Dailey, Robert Peel, Price-Jones and Roger Powell.

Frank has just received a CitizenCard and passport from the Republic of Ireland, so if things go badly this fall in the US election ...

For **Tony Millns** the last eight months have been occupied with repairs to half his house after subsidence caused by trees in the neighbours' garden, part of their fashion for 'rewilding'. Fortunately they moved and have been succeeded by someone whose ideal landscape is 18th-century English parkland. He hopes to get back to a more balanced life once he has had radiotherapy – meanwhile he is re-reading Sheridan Le Fanu late at night.

**Michael Prather** came to Merton in 1969 and then returned to Yale in 1971 for a PhD in Astrophysics. No jobs opened in his area of stellar evolution, so he followed his wife Charlotte to her faculty job at Wellesley, and 'bummed' a research position at Harvard. He spent ten years as a postdoc there with a great team studying atmospheric chemistry and ozone depletion, then jumped to NASA's Goddard Institute for Space Studies in New York to work on climate change issues, and then in 1992 to the University of California, Irvine, where his first faculty appointment was in a new department of Earth System Science. UC Irvine stuck. Michael has recently retired from teaching but retained participation in governance and

research. He has three major publications coming out in 2024 (summarised on Google Scholar). While at UCL, he became active in the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and led several climate change assessments from 1992 to 2014. He appreciates his experiences of Merton and Yale which prepared him to enjoy life and family, and to be productive in the many opportunities offered over the last 50 years.

Seven years into retirement **Martin Roland** has time for golf, two sets of grandchildren and taking people on tours of the Women's Art Collection at Murray Edwards College in Cambridge, where he is Emeritus Fellow of Health Services Research. To keep the brain ticking over, he is also a visiting professor at Hong Kong University which means spending a week with friends old and new in Hong Kong a couple of times a year.

**Richard Underwood** retired from full-time clinical practice in 2020 and is now Emeritus Professor of Cardiac Imaging at Imperial College. He maintains a private practice at the Cromwell Hospital in London and also has a part-time appointment at Castle Hill Hospital in East Yorkshire. He spends leisure time in the glorious Yorkshire countryside with frequent forays on bicycle or motorcycle.

It was good to hear from **Brian Witherden** who has sent his first update. Following the passing of his dear wife Ruth in 2021, Brian remains well and living in Bangor, County Down, with one of his daughters and two grandchildren close by.

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## 1970

**Year Representative: Nick Skinner**

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Many thanks to all who sent greetings and news; it is always good to hear from you.

**Richard Horton** writes that he is now fully retired and enjoying an active but leisurely life in Warwickshire. He is learning to fly at the Coventry Flying School, and a second grandchild (to son Ben and his partner Katie) is due in June.

**Richard Hayward** sends his best wishes from Sweden to all 1970 Mertonians, and is imminently due to 'arrive in Uganda, together with some Swedish students, who will be helping to build a school (literally!) in a remote village in the countryside. It will be my first visit to Africa, and I'll be taking plenty of malaria tablets.'

**Edward Lambert** (Kodaly Choir director 1971–73) is alive and well and divides his time between Wiltshire and London. He continues to compose and produce chamber operas which generally seem to be well received. Recently, he has set works by Oxonians Thomas Middleton and Oscar Wilde among others and has been delighted to greet **Dr Jeremy Cook** and **Andrew Perrins** (both 1969) in the audiences. 'With a wife who's a GP cum side-saddle champion and three daughters in academia, journalism and teaching, life has never been so busy.'

There have been few changes for **Les Hewitt** who continues to enjoy regular walks and fair-weather cycle rides, although he hasn't been running for quite a while now. A short daily Tai Chi session helps keep the balance. Les continues to support Warrington Town, a local non-league football team who have just finished their most successful season in their history, finishing mid table in National League North. He is a regular visitor to the local cinema multiplex, watching a couple of films a week. In any remaining spare time, he bakes his own bread.

**John Crabtree** published his book, co-authored with Francisco Durand and Jones Wolff: *Business Power and the State in the Central Andes: Bolivia, Ecuador and Peru in Comparison* (University of Pittsburgh Press) at the end of 2023. He has since published a Spanish translation of the book which he helped launch in Lima (Peru) and La Paz (Bolivia) during the first quarter of 2024. He is planning a new project on mining and society in Peru with the Universidad del Pacifico in Lima. He continues to teach a course on Andean Politics at the Latin American Centre at Oxford. He also has a chapter on Peru in *Innovation, Competitiveness and Development in Latin America* edited by Ed Amann and Paulo Figueiredo (Oxford University Press).

A rural class of 320 nine-year-olds in Uganda, consisting of one teacher, a mango tree and a blackboard propped against a wall



The Woodruff family enjoying breakfast in Queen Elizabeth National Park, Uganda



**Tony Woodruff** reports that 'I continue to travel to Uganda twice each year to facilitate rural development in 12 districts across that beautiful country. In February, we completed our first solar-powered mini electrical grid on Bussi Island in

Lake Victoria, which brings grid power to 20,000 people. The "flagging off ceremony" was a grand affair with thousands of people, politicians, soldiers, police, dancers and music. My A-level physics struggled to grasp all the complexities of the power distribution grid. Land prices have risen, and businesses are now pouring into the island – food processing, petrol stations, hotels, etc. Our Ugandan partners own the for-profit, social enterprise grid which will generate funds to support the water, sanitation and hygiene work we do in other areas. This means that the work will be sustained beyond the reaches of "donor fatigue". In February, Peggy and I took our son, Peter, and his family to Uganda. They went from -30° in the Yukon to +30° in Entebbe! It was a big success, and the three grandchildren got to spend time in a rural school with village kids their own ages. And of course we saw lots of animals. The children really want to return – the food is so good!

Nigel Haigh and Tony Woodruff



Tony also had a visit from **Nigel Haigh** (1971), who caught the float plane from Vancouver on his North American tour last August.

As for me, **Nick Skinner**, retired life continues to be busy on the South Coast. Lesley and I manage a church café and try to maintain a vestige of fitness via tennis and badminton. We now have four grandchildren.

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## 1971

**Year Representative:** Paul Le Druillenec

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*Allin Cotrell has resigned, and Paul Le Druillenec has taken up the role of Year Representative for 1971*

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## 1972

**Year Representative:** Mark Signy

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I hope everyone is well. The years roll on. Most of our group will have turned 70 this year and have plunged into the dark web of retirement, or are at least thinking of doing so: many have scarcely seen each other since Finals in 1975 (although we had good turnouts at the 50 years lunch and Gaudy) so it is strange to be discussing what at that time must have seemed ridiculously far into the future. Thank you for the contributions and keep them coming.

**John Millard** follows up from last year's contribution. 'You mention retirement. I retired from paid work just over eight years ago — how time flies — and recently celebrated my 70th birthday, although whether you can "celebrate" birthdays at our age is dubious. I suppose you could regard it as an achievement. Anyway, the best bit was a surprise party that Sue arranged. All our grandchildren, children, partners, siblings (and even my father) came. I was totally unaware that it was going to happen until I turned up expecting something else! I suppose there are some compensations for getting older.'

**Stephen Cole** has been retired for several years from his long stint as headmaster of Woodbridge School. [Ed: very strongly recommended: two nephews and a niece of mine attended while he was HM.] In retirement he has become a very active inspector of schools around the world. He writes: 'Stephen Cole continues to inspect schools in England and around the world. Most recently he found himself conducting an interview about a school's health and safety arrangements from under a table during a sizable earthquake in Kazakhstan.'

**Alan Giles** says: 'Where did those years go? I have finally decided to retire. I fear boardroom colleagues, or students in the lecture theatre, are quietly thinking "who is this dinosaur?" so have decided to wind down my commitments by the end of the year before they start articulating that view more forcibly. So from 2025 Gill and I are planning to spend even more time travelling, watching our football team lose around the country (often a glorious weekend of eating and drinking punctuated by 90 minutes of suffering on the Saturday afternoon), and seeing our grandchildren while they are still young enough to enjoy that. But the one "work" commitment I am not giving up is chairing Merton's Stipends and Allowances Committee, which allows an occasional welcome return to old haunts.' [Ed: Alan's choice of businesses to run and develop has clearly, and fortunately, been consistently massively better than his choice of football and speedway teams.]

**Mark Signy** (your highly biased correspondent) also finally took the retirement plunge after some years of being too frightened by the prospect of his own company. He's been very pleasantly surprised that he's not missing all-night angioplasty/stenting on-call sessions much at all. Those of you who recall his dulcet singing voice from the bar or sports ground showers will be astonished that he is now a stalwart of the wonderful Sussex Gruffs Male Voice Choir. If you suspend your disbelief you may be able to imagine his basso profundo propping up the bass section (obviously mixed in with a bit of miming during public performances). Tickets are very hard to obtain.

**Hervé Gouraige** reports: 'On 23 March at the Colony Hotel in Palm Beach, our daughter, Sophia, married Connell McGill Jr. It was a beautiful occasion on a beautiful day. Carla and I are delighted and happy. Our next major move will likely be to go near where Sophia and Connell decide to reside. My next personal move will certainly be to join Carla in retirement. If all goes as I would like, I hope to spend time reading, thinking, writing, and trying to play golf. I will certainly spend time helping my older brother complete a family history that traces our roots from Bordeaux, France to Mauritius, to Cuba, and finally to Haiti. We will leave to the next generation the story of our migration from Haiti to the United States. If conditions in Haiti should improve soon, and we are able to get access to the records, we just might tackle that migration as well.'

**Andy Trotter** and **Dave Riddiford** have been contributing to **Nigel Haigh's** reincarnation of the Old Mertonian Golf society. The next meeting is Thursday 19 September at the Oxford Golf Club followed by dinner in College. Apparently we are limited to 22 for dinner (but numbers have been much smaller, so a good turnout from our vintage would be terrific).

Congratulations to **John Heaton** (our JCR President in 1974) who doesn't really seem to be slowing down much. 'I have just been elected to be the new President of the Chartered Governance Institute starting on 1 July for two years. I had previously held a similar position in the part of the Institute based in London but this is the global organisation. Interesting role, not least because examples of poor governance abound – the Post Office, PPE procurement etc with its impact on individuals and public trust – so promoting good governance across the world and educating and qualifying those involved across a range of organisations from charities, through sporting bodies, health and companies, is increasingly important.

'One of my first jobs will be to recruit and settle in a new Director General to replace the incumbent who has been with us for nine years and this on top of being a churchwarden in a busy parish church (St Margaret's, Angmering), and golf of course, will mean plenty to keep me busy.'

Additionally, we noted the following paragraph in the recent Development Office circular (note to Julia – we do read it):

*'Another M&M rugby success came when the M&Ms Rugby 7s featured in the Plate Cuppers Final where, with a squad of eight led by M&M Captains Luke Newland (Mansfield, 2023) and Victor Angelov (Mansfield, 2023), they had a fantastic win.'*

**Stephen Cole** responded: 'Our vintage were delighted to read that M&M won the College's rugby sevens plate, exactly 50 years after we won the same competition in 1974. We struggled to recall all the team, but know that it was captained by **Stephen Cole** at fly half, and the brains and brawn were supplied by **Mark Signy** and **John Davidson**. Mark remembers Stephen creating an overlap for him to run in a try from about 80 yards against Univ, a pass which

after 60 yards he was finding hard to forgive.' (Stephen has asked us to spare readers from a recall of the subsequent language.) In 1974 the prize was keg of beer, which had to be rolled from the presentation at Keble back to the Merton bar where we drank free for quite a long evening (once we had found a way to open it).

Keep sending in the anecdotes, and have a great year.

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## 1973

**Year Representative: Gary Backler**

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The 50th anniversary celebrations of matriculation for 1973 Mertonians – a Golden Jubilee Lunch in October 2023 and a Gaudy in March 2024 – enabled a number of Mertonians to meet again in person. Thanks to the Development Office for making these very enjoyable occasions possible.

**Graham Andrews** reports that in the Maths & Medics group, the four mathematicians – **Rob Lewis**, **Bill Souster**, **Roger Urwin** and himself – were in Oxford for the memorial service for their tutor, Dominic Welsh: a magnificent service in the Chapel and a fitting commemoration of a man whom they all agreed had had a huge impact on their lives. Afterwards, they retired to The Bear, which some Mertonians may possibly have heard of! Sadly, two days later, it was the funeral service for Catriona, the wife of Rob Lewis, who lost her five-year battle with cancer. She remained active until almost the end, taking the greatest pleasure from the time spent with family and friends and especially with her young granddaughter. For the rest of the group, life continues: Bill Souster is working in London several days a week, Roger Urwin is still working with pension funds and sovereign wealth funds, David Melville is still working part time in the NHS, and Graham is still busy as a director but now of only six companies.

Stimulated by the Golden Jubilee Lunch, a subset of the 1973 historians met for their own second reunion lunch in London. This comprised **Mark Atherton**, **Gary Backler**, **Ned Holt**, **Andrew Lean**, **Ted Powell** and **Denis Thorn**, and conformed to 1973 historians' norms of length and liquidity.



Roger Urwin, Rob Lewis, Janet Evans (St Hilda's, wife of Bill Souster) and Bill Souster, in The Bear after the memorial service for Dominic Welsh.  
Photo: Graham Ross-Andrews

**John Bowers** published two novels during the past year. *To the Boathouse* is a 9/11 novel that is also a sequel to EM Forster's *Maurice*. The second in the trilogy, *Legion of the Daggerstone*, has as its hero a 21st-century JRR Tolkien, only teaching at the University of Virginia, not Oxford. This fictional work therefore complements John's newest scholarly book *Tolkien on Chaucer, 1913–1959* (to be published in April 2025 by Oxford University Press). John continues teaching and researching at University of Nevada, Las Vegas. Double bypass surgery in January 2024 promises to give him several more healthy years to continue his professional life – and life in general.

**Simon Pallett** reports that, nearly five years into retirement, life continues much as before, with trustee commitments and regular trips to see his family in Norwich taking up a lot of the time. He and his wife now have two grandchildren, with grandson Leo born in April 2023. Simon is also still busy attending classes, concerts and public lectures, as well as reading both fiction and non-fiction. He was sorry to miss the Jubilee Lunch, but the weather that day stopped train travel from Newcastle to Oxford and he had to turn back at Leeds: increasingly the pattern, he feels, in a world of warming climate.

At the Golden Jubilee Lunch, **Steve Williams** enjoyed being reunited with two others from the back four of Merton's 1974/75 Football First XI (Gary Backler and **Dave Adamson**) and learning of the treasure trove of memorabilia that **Phil Hudson** has from our time at Merton. Fellow chemist **Gordon Vint** didn't recognise Steve at first, but then they hadn't met since finishing Part II. Family Williams now has three PhDs as both son and daughter have doctorates, though neither of

them darkened the dreaming spires in their education. Steve continues with academic research in a pro bono capacity and enjoys the stimulation of working with colleagues in the early stages of their careers.

Having this year given up his commitments as chair (three years) and trustee (13 years) of local environmental charity Friends of the River Crane Environment, **Gary Backler** is finally able to devote time to work on a number of personal creative and research projects which he's put off for far too long. After many rejections over many years, he finally had a poem accepted for publication by an established poetry magazine. He enjoyed (?) running the Town & Gown with his daughter (Trinity College), and considers this an appropriate point at which to end his 10k career.

A positive nil return was very welcome from **Peter Ghosh**. Nil returns will always be welcome, from any 1973 Mertonian who feels they have no specific news to share.

## 1974

**Year Representative: Mike Hawkins**

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This year is a momentous one for us 1974 matriculants. Our Gaudy in March was a much enjoyed opportunity for me to catch up with many of you. Perhaps the more significant though is our 50th anniversary lunch in College in October. I am looking forward to seeing everyone again, particularly those who could not be at the Gaudy.

I imagined that the Gaudy would have exhausted the desire to pass on news: but not so.

**Nick Allard** provides his news in his inimitable and infectious style. 'Although we are not yet old, or at least not quite ready to concede our dotage in this 50th year since arriving at Merton, we can see our winter years from here. A wise, somewhat older Oxford-educated man wrote recently: "When I get together with old friends, our first ritual is an 'organ recital': how's your back, knee, heart, hip, shoulder, eyesight, hearing, prostate, haemorrhoids, digestion?"

Well, 2024 is a year of many organ recitals including our 1974 Merton Gaudy celebration, the half-century milestone with 800 Princeton classmates followed by Oxford Rhodes gatherings in Bermuda and Oxford, our Golden Anniversary Lunch in College in October, followed by our Yale Law 45th reunion in New Haven and our Merton College Chartable Corporation reunion graced by the Warden's presence in New York City just before the pivotal US election.

'Our oldest grandchild Teddy (12), aka King Theodore I, dubs this march through milestones 'the Geezer gauntlet'. Rubbish! For the defence I need only point to the lively, vibrant time well spent before, during and after our Gaudy. The many highlights included reconnecting with **Nick Hollins** at a lunch hosted by **Andrew Chowns** and his bride Suzanne at the BAFTA on Piccadilly and a long boisterous tea afterwards at the Oxford and Cambridge Club in London, a warm-up dinner with **Rob Mitchell** and **Dave Hamer** at a bistro in Summertown, a Sunday dinner catch-up with the ever exuberant and fun Crispin and Anne Drummond, and, as usual, enjoying every moment with **Ronnie Kent**, **Simon Tross Youle**, **Mike Hawkins** and all the rest of the chums. It seems as if, whenever we meet, the years fall away quickly and we pick up conversations where we left off. That certainly is the case whenever we have a cup of coffee, or share something much stronger with Philip Waller, Vijay Joshi, and with the Reverend Canon Dr Simon Jones who, with bittersweet pride, Merton is graciously donating to Lincoln Cathedral to serve as its dean. It was also a privilege and pleasure to engage with Lord David Pannick KC about the Psychology of Legal Advocacy at a Merton Lawyer's Association programme in London, ably organised by our dear friend Daniel Schaffer.

'Alongside what is becoming an unexpected, unsought but richly satisfying second career as a serial alumnus, making us wonder if a fire has destroyed all my academic records, this also has been an eventful year serving as the founding Randall C Berg Jr Dean of the new Jacksonville University College of Law in Florida. While at times during this new adventure in America's south, Marla and I feel like Mona Lisa Vito and Vincent Gambini from the film *My Cousin Vinny*, we are enormously grateful for the kindness, support and encouragement we have received since arriving to launch a new, much needed law school in the largest US city without

one. In truth, my entire life I have been searching restlessly for the meaning of success. Finally I discovered it when, in record time, we were able to congratulate our existing students for attending a newly American Bar Association-accredited law school. Oddly, now that I have discovered the meaning of success, I have no words to describe it. But much work remains to be done and that is why at present, despite all the ongoing organ recitals, joyfully my only retirement plan is death.'

**Paul Bate** is 'still involved in physics at one of the world's great departments through the university's Physics Development Board. Daughter Claire is reading physics at Edinburgh. Once it is in the DNA ... Son James has his place at Sandhurst as soon as he finishes studying real estate at Oxford Brookes University.' Meanwhile: 'Wife Nicola's influence in life sciences continues to grow in her roles as Chair of Oxford University Innovation, Genomics England and as a supervisory board member of BioNTech.' Paul concludes by saying that much fun was had by all catching up at the Gaudy and provides a picture to prove it.



From left: Ronnie Kent, Paul Bate, Peter Ratoff and John Davies

**David Brock** tells us that he 'still works for Historic England, because perhaps they've lost the papers saying how old I am, and am still trying to get Parliament to come to terms with how to renovate itself: the Palace, not the institution. The work may have its frustrations but remains almost endlessly fascinating.' He adds that he has 'grandchildren to fall back on if it palls'.

**John Davies** writes that 'it was good to see fellow 1974 lawyers **Ronnie Kent** and **Martin O'Dwyer** at the Gaudy and particularly good to see our tutor Sir Jack Beatson in fine form.' John has also been in touch with **Philip Brewer** and there is a plan to meet up soon. He saw **Richard Thomas** at the previous Gaudy when he was over in this country on a visit from Indonesia. Unfortunately, of the sixth member of the 1974 intake **Bernard Lofthouse**, he has had no news for a very long time.

**Neil Downie** and wife Diane 'continue to enjoy Northumbria. Hexham has some interesting amateur science groups in geology and space, *inter alia*. We entertain ourselves and visitors with trips to nearby Hadrian's Wall. We've met many of the archaeologists now and got up to date with the latest findings, like the extraordinary objects that don't normally survive from 2,000 years ago, such as shoes, wooden combs and postcards home. We continue to do things with the Exovent charity, with the Canadian offshoot group now government-funded to research negative pressure breathing assistance using artificial muscles on the torso. And I continue with schools, getting teenage students to invent, build and test their own physics and engineering projects. Some, like the ultrasonic washing scanner or the "football rattle generator" for emergency power, could go in a future *Saturday Science* book.'

**David Hamer** and wife Jane have come through a tough time and are looking forward to better times in 2024. David reports: 'In personal terms the deaths of two close family members cast long shadows over the year. On the bright side, the Hamers had two terrific early summer weeks in London and in Oxford for the 125th Rhodes Reunion, where **Mr Allard's** 'Long and Winding Rhodes' session did not disappoint. Late summer took us to New Brunswick to visit family in Sackville, where Rhodes classmate **Sandy MacIver** won his Rhodes Scholarship at Mount Allison University. Autumn took Jane and me to Budapest, Vienna and Prague on a tour curated by the Royal Ontario Museum. Jane continues to mastermind the rejuvenation of the Toronto University Women's Club, while spoiling her grandchildren at every turn. All four of them are talented in four unique ways, the eldest being a high-scoring hockey player, fine golfer, avid basketball player, and slugger baseball player; the next

being a budding thespian with stage and screen good looks; the third aged eight having announced his future as a civil engineer; and the youngest and only girl keeping all amused with her precocious stand-up comedy.'

David maintains his low-level involvement in Liberal politics at the federal and provincial levels, having attended the annual general meetings of both branches of the party in Ottawa and Hamilton, Ontario, respectively. Who knew that second-tier Canada might end up being one of the last truly liberal democracies in a world in which 'liberal' has become a dirty word? David succeeds in warding off the gloom on his bicycle, obsessively logging and recording thousands of kilometres on the back streets and trails of Toronto and the flat roads of Huron County near their place overlooking the majestic waters of that Great Lake. He assures us that 'none of those figures will be published'.

**Graham Kemp** sets straight last year's prediction by reporting that 'I didn't in fact retire from the University of Liverpool at the end of last year. Instead I went part-time. I've given up some of my roles, but remain the slightly odd combination of Professor of Metabolic and Physiological Imaging and Honorary Consultant in Chemical Pathology.'

**Rob Mitchell** reports: 'Grayce and I are in decent health, for which I am very thankful, and we enjoy having our children and grandchildren so close. My principal concern is the world they will inherit. Our beleaguered planet requires urgent attention; our politics are ugly, our system of government no longer appears enviable and too few seem willing to sacrifice for the benefit of others. Then there's the world stage, with war having erupted again in the Middle East and continuing in Ukraine. May we have the courage to take action and at least a modicum of wisdom to guide the actions we take.'

**Jeremy Warren** has been 'writing a new book, *The Beauty of Bronze*, to be published in October 2024. It is a celebration of some of the finest European bronze sculptures in the Ashmolean Museum, which has one of the world's best collections of small bronzes from the Renaissance period. In my role as Sculpture Research Curator for the National Trust, I have been working at Kingston Lacy in Dorset, the former home of the Bankes family, bequeathed to the National Trust

in 1981. I am now preparing my next publication, on a 19th-century owner of the house, William Bankes (1786–1855), and his extraordinary contributions to the sculptures to be seen at Kingston Lacy today.’

**Guy Johnson** and **Simon Lord** made contact to say that they enjoyed the Gaudy but otherwise have no news. Perhaps something in October at the lunch?

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## 1975

**Year Representative: Robert Peberdy**

Tel: 01865 798107 Email: r.peberdy.I23@btinternet.com

A major event of the last year for 1975 Mertonians was the Gaudy on Saturday 16 March 2024 when 25 (38 per cent) of our year’s former undergraduates returned to College. We were fortunate to fall in the middle of the returning ‘cohort’ (1973–7); it meant that we could re-meet both older and younger near-contemporaries with whom we overlapped. As usual, the Gaudy was a bitter-sweet experience. Old friends were delighted to be reunited, albeit briefly, and there was an atmosphere of great cheer. For a few hours, something of the College we had originally known was reconstituted. But it was far from complete. We could only experience the companionship of **Rex Richards** and **John Roberts** through the presence of their portraits in Hall, and Merton seemed strange without such characters as **Mr Barton**, **Tom Braun**, **Mr Burgass**, **Bill Dawkins**, **Pat Goodwin**, **Barney Henderson**, **Mr Lucas**, **Mr McRostie**, **Ted Nethercleft**, **Edward Olleson**, and **Mr Tippet**.

It was also disconcerting to observe how so many of the fresh-faced, enthusiastic teenagers of 1975 had now — seemingly so quickly — turned into grey-haired, plump grandfathers and pensioners. Varying comments were made about this transition. One 1975 Mertonian suggested that our generation had reached its glorious prime, in that contemporaries have now achieved the best in their working lives, and have created families of one or two new generations; and so far the Grim Reaper has seized only a few of our year. But another contemporary looked around and said dismissively: ‘What a lot of old men.’

Retirement has certainly been a theme of recent times. In September 2023 **Arif Ahsan**, long based at the Trent Cardiac Centre in Nottingham, ceased doing procedures as an interventional cardiologist. He now works one day a week for the NHS on providing an outpatient clinic, and also participates in specialist meetings on complex patient care. This 1975 Mertonian must now have contributed to the well-being of thousands of East Midlanders. Against the trend to retirement, **Glenn Bacal** shows no sign of easing up. His law firm in Arizona remains busy, and the work continues to be enjoyable. The firm has even recently achieved ‘one feather in its cap’ which it had long sought, namely a top placing by Chambers and Partners, a London-based business which ranks the world’s best lawyers and law firms by in-depth research. (The placing had previously been unavailable because Chambers did not produce rankings for intellectual property firms in Arizona.) Glenn has also acquired a new cockapoo who has been named ‘Winston’ in honour of Winston Churchill, whose biography was written by Glenn’s former Merton tutor Sir **Martin Gilbert**.

It is sad to report that **Alan Dolton** has been compelled, for medical reasons, to give up his involvement in competitive athletics. He is now fitted with a heart pacemaker. As a concession, the medical authorities have allowed him to continue jogging, and accordingly have programmed the pacemaker to allow a maximum of 140 beats per minute (rather than the usual 120). He continues to coach athletics at the Croydon Arena. **Ian Doolittle** (Harmsworth Senior Scholar, 1975–7) claims to be making good progress with his three history projects, concerned with the City of London Corporation, the City Bridge Foundation, and the Fire Court decrees. He also continues as a trustee of the Crown and Manor Club in Hackney (a youth club) and of Midhurst Palliative Care (a fundraising organisation).

**Stephen Gardiner** recently happened to meet the Merton historian and philatelist **Bill Hedley** (1969), and was surprised to learn from him that Merton once issued postage stamps. Merton was the second Oxford college to do this, starting in 1876, five years after Keble. They were a means of paying for local delivery of letters. The last Merton stamps were issued in 1883, about three years before the Post Office stopped the use of college stamps (28 January 1886). Stephen also fears

that the quarter-hour chimes produced by the Merton chapel clock mechanism have become uneven. The observation brought to mind words once uttered by his former tutor Dr **Edward Olleson**: 'Just exactly what is going on here?'

**John Harrison** has declared that he has no plans 'just yet' to retire from teaching history at Eton College. In October 2023 'our' former President of the Oxford Union supervised the Eton Schools' Debating Competition, involving over 60 schools. It was won by The Tiffin Girls' School, a maintained school at Kingston upon Thames. John has continued to visit historic places in southern Europe, including recently the Palazzo Farnese in Rome, the Royal Palace at Portici near Naples, and the Msida Bastion Cemetery at Valletta on Malta. Classicist **Vic Le Grand**, however, has been retired since the end of 2022. His life after Merton, which he characterises as 'occupational wanderings', comprised various posts concerned with sport (perhaps he studied the original Olympic Games with **Tom Braun**). He worked as a project manager for Sport England, as a lecturer at the University of Bedford, and as a Senior Leisure Services Officer for East Cambridgeshire District Council. He continues to serve as an external examiner for a postgraduate course, and is 'keeping an open mind about what comes next'.

**Chris Lewis** continues to produce works of originality on medieval history. At the time of writing he was preparing a paper about terms for peasants used in Domesday Book. Back in 2022 he presented a paper to a conference of the Haskins Society, at the University of Richmond, VA, about 'Numeracy in the Central Middle Ages'. He is now a patriarch of that society, not just by age and seniority but also through sporting a splendid 'Old Testament' beard.

The great 1975 Mertonian actor **Chris Mann** has recently found fame with young people worldwide. In 2022 he played a former Everton goalkeeper in the humorous video 'Guess the Footballer', made by the Beta Squad collective. (The video also features, alongside Chris, someone called Trent Alexander-Arnold, reportedly a Liverpool FC and England footballer.) Available freely on 'YouTube', the video has been seen by millions of viewers, and has even been noticed in North Wales. One evening when Chris was walking to a pub in that part of the world, one of a group of lads suddenly

said to him: 'Weren't you in that Beta Squad video?'

**Steve Marsh**, also retired, can now be found in Shropshire, where his activities are a gentle contrast to his earlier life. He joined the Civil Service in 1987 and during the 1990s became increasingly involved in computer security. He then developed government cybersecurity strategy in the Cabinet Office, but left in 2011. He subsequently taught at Royal Holloway, held a visiting professorship at Cranfield University, and chaired the external advisory board of Oxford University's Centre for Doctoral Training in Cyber Security. As a 'Shropshire Lad', he is restoring a house and also reinstating wildlife habitats on land along the Severn.

Having supposedly retired in January 2022, **Edward Martley** remains as busy as ever, undertaking work for the Rootes Archive Centre at Wroxton (Oxon), chairing the Thames Valley branch of the Chartered Institute of Management Accountants, playing links golf in England and Scotland, and restoring a 1973 Simca 1301S saloon. Professor **Nicholas Mays** intends soon to start a phased retirement though for the moment he remains in harness at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine. He continues to study such diverse subjects as the effectiveness of mental health support teams in schools and colleges, community pharmacists prescribing antibiotics for common ailments, and the views of the general public concerning the potential use of animal organs for human transplantation. Professor **Stephen Oppenheimer** made a heroic journey to the March Gaudy from his base in Baltimore (in the only US state named after a former resident at Merton). When back at home, he maintains a superintending eye on Merton chapel through the live-streaming of services.

In 2023 a dramatic incident which made national headlines in Britain irrupted into the neighbourhood of **Crispin Poyser** in London. On Saturday 9 September Daniel Khalife, who had escaped three days earlier from Wandsworth Prison, fastened under a lorry, was arrested on the towpath of the Paddington Arm of the Grand Union Canal for which Crispin, in retirement, is a 'Canal Ranger'. It so happened that on the previous day he had cleared the area where the arrest was made. On another occasion he was delighted to find himself planting shrubs alongside **Robert Wendt** (1974).

Up in Yorkshire, back in 2021, **Malcolm Price** moved from Knaresborough to a new home near Pateley Bridge. On 9 December 2023 he represented 1975 Mertonians at a memorial service at Arncliffe Church for the late Professor **Nick Hitchon**. Organised by Nick's brother **Andrew Hitchon** (1981), and attended by about 50 people, the service featured an emphasis on science in its hymns and eulogies. Professor **Chris Wickham**, FBA (Lecturer in Medieval History 1975–6), has achieved, in retirement, one of life's greatest accolades: his recently published book *The Donkey and the Boat: Reinterpreting the Mediterranean Economy, 950–1180* was discussed at the 2024 Merton Historians' Reading Party.

Commentators on affairs of State have failed to notice a significant feature in recent history: that the reign of Her Late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II was 'framed' by Mertonians. Her Majesty's first prime minister, Sir **Winston Churchill**, was an Honorary Fellow of Merton (and son of the Mertonian Lord **Randolph Churchill**), and her final prime minister was a Mertonian. Perhaps future examiners in the Oxford Honour School of History will invite candidates to 'compare and contrast'.

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## 1976

**Year Representative:** John Gardner

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**Nigel Metcalfe** (astrophysicist at Durham University): 'Now getting used to being 80% retired and enjoying the bus pass. Which leaves time for astrophotography, cricket, steam railways and real ale. The last three often in the company of **Ralph Ashton**. This idyll was marred recently by the failure of Doncaster Rovers to make it past the penultimate stage of the League 2 playoffs.'

**Peter Bernie** (finance director at Standard Club): 'Still with NorthStandard Limited (marine insurer) so travelling between Chester, Dublin, London and Newcastle. Still happily married to Shani. Recent developments include the arrival of the fourth grandchild, along with a bus pass.'

**Richard Dendy** (physics professor at Warwick University):

'I'm hoping to graduate another two PhD students this year. The Gaudy was good, despite having to lip read in the JCR bar afterwards when its famous acoustic took hold.'

**David Humphrey** (submariner, banker, now back at school): 'Training to be a counsellor is nearly done. I should qualify soon for a diploma at SACAP (South African College of Applied Psychology), then a BA Hons in Psychology next year, both in Johannesburg. Still doing a bit of project financial advisory in Africa but mostly focusing on my next career as a counsellor in South Africa. Time is split between UK and SA. It's nice to be a swallow and follow the sun.'

**Mike Taylor** (Penicuik, Midlothian): 'Still grinding down the research backlog (apart from a week in John Fowles' former villa, now Landmark Trust, in Lyme Regis). Professor Ralph O'Connor of the University of Aberdeen and I completed the double volume *A Critical Study of Hugh Miller's The Old Red Sandstone, 1838–1920* and the accompanying critical edition of *The Old Red Sandstone* (National Museums Scotland Enterprises: Publishing). This project cut across multiple disciplines, from fossil-collecting through folklore and self-help to Tennyson's eschatology: all the more gratifying when it was awarded the prize for Scottish Research Book of the Year 2023 by the Saltire Society (the major independent Scottish cultural society) in partnership with the National Library of Scotland.'

**Antony Townsend** (serial regulator): 'I continue to live in Leamington Spa, from where I pursue my interests in singing, parent- and grandparenthood, and the regulation of a variety of professions and sectors. The current selection is Members of Parliament, pension providers, landfill operators, barristers and Channel Island financial services, though I still hope to regulate funeral service providers before I come to need their services. Four chickens and a dog, but only one grandchild. I feel aggrieved about this, since I have six children, all of whom have reached puberty, four over 25.'

**Andrew Pettegree** (history professor at St Andrews University) [This entry was sent by another 76er]: 'Andrew might remember a Merton reunion at Fortnum's Crypt in 2016 to celebrate the Brexit result. Someone there said that *Postmaster* was missing updates from alumni too modest to blow their own trumpet. So this is to say that, already a

Fellow of the British Academy. Andrew was this year appointed Commander of the British Empire for services to literature.'

**Philip Cooper** (University of Bath): 'Finished a six-year stint as Associate Dean for Education in the School of Management here last year, drawing a bit of a short straw as this covered the Covid period, but have since returned to my normal duties as Professor of Accounting. I'm still concerned with the economics of sustainability in my teaching and research, but retirement is beckoning later this year.'

**Tim Matthews** (Halifax, Nova Scotia): 'I continue to practise law and to hone my golf game, with occasional travels to enliven the mix, fortunate that both children reside in Halifax, are gainfully employed, own their own homes, have delightful partners, and entertain their father from time to time. I enjoy weekly lunches with **Rob Hain** who now lives and works in Halifax, having departed London after many years. At the recent Gaudy I was delighted to reconnect with my moral tutor Rt Hon Sir Jack Beatson, who guided me through the BCL 46 years ago. As I continue with choral singing in Halifax, an especial highlight of the Gaudy was a performance by the Merton Girls' Choir and then evensong in Chapel with the girls joined by singers from the Chapel Choir.'

**Rob Hain** (Halifax, Nova Scotia): 'Frustratingly, I missed the Gaudy, having intended to come along with my friend **Tim Matthews**. Unfortunately, business travel got in the way but Tim has given me an excellent report. I now live in Nova Scotia, where I plan to retire, but in the meantime remain a director of companies in the UK, Canada and the United States, and Chief Executive of Sound Diplomacy, a tourism, entertainment, leisure economics and social impact research consultancy.'

**Ken Fleming** (pathologist, Oxford, 'retired'): 'Off to Geneva to attend a couple of meetings about a World Health Assembly resolution on diagnostics which I'm pushing. There has been some progress in implementing the recommendations, but of course lots more is always needed. Children and grandchildren (eight) all OK. Still going back and forward to Fife to keep an eye on my mother-in-law who was 102 recently.'

**Peter Truesdale** (London): 'I was always intolerant of people saying "I'm retired, but I'm so busy now I don't know how

I ever found the time to go to work." I retired in March. I repent of my past intolerance. I have tested the statement and found it to be true.'

**Charles Manby** (London): 'In my fifth year chairing Motability Foundation, where we help disabled people with their transport needs. We have 750,000 vehicles in the UK, an endowment of £1.7bn, and a charitable spend of £130m. In summer, Nicky and I can be found in dinghies in Aldeburgh teaching local primary school children to sail. Four grandchildren, a fifth on the way and Alfie, our fox red Labrador, keep us busy and active.'

**Robert Cotton**: 'Recent retirement from a lifetime's service in Church of England parishes took us to Bristol, picking up duties of caring for Alfie (18-month-old grandson) on a weekly basis. Installing solar panels, volunteering at the local library and chairing Young Carers Development Trust fills the time, replacing church councils and sermon writing. We've walked the 45 bridges of Bristol, each one in one direction, without repetition and deviation (but maybe occasional hesitation) though it took a few weeks to complete. The second year of retirement beckons.'

**Robert Hannah** (Otago, New Zealand): 'I noticed recently that one of my teachers at Oxford and a former Fellow of Merton, Sir John Boardman, had passed away, at the fine age of 96. I remember him as a warm and generous man, especially in retirement when we would pop into the Ashmolean whenever we were in town and have a chat. I particularly recall talking with him in his study in the Cast Gallery about the merits of drawing objects so as to understand them better, and he showed me his latest sketch (of a Gorgon, I think) from a Greek object in the museum. It was a practice I had followed before I went to Oxford, but I had never met anyone else who engaged in it and I was delighted to have that link with John. Couldn't make it to the Gaudy recently but we did some shorter-haul travelling, notably to the Gold Coast to catch up with my wife's family, and may be back to Brisbane again later this year.'

**Ian McVeigh** (London): 'The highlight of the year was the arrival of second grandchild George Albert in March. As we visit Italy frequently the main achievement of the year

was reading **Andrew Pettegree's** *The Invention of News* in its Italian translation. Which brought back memories of our contemporary and Italy expert the late and great historian **Christopher Duggan**.'

**Jeremy Richardson** (Wellington, New Zealand): 'Still working at the Reserve Bank four days a week, but managed a long trip in November to some of the must-see parts of NZ that we hadn't been to before, from the Bay of Islands to Milford Sound, so I'm looking forward to retiring within the year.'

**Laurence Ormerod** (energy sector non-exec, Levens, Cumbria): 'I am trying to retire but have some customers still hanging on. Was sorry to miss the Gaudy, but was away on a ski trip. This year we are also sailing round the UK, including Orkney and Shetland, taking us to some out-of-the-way places. Still running, albeit each year it gets slower. But glad to be able to carry on with it rather than worry about the pace!'



At the Gaudy. From left: Neil Craggs, Peter Truesdale, John Gardner, Philip Waller, David Owen, Ralph Ashton (thanks to Rod Dear behind the camera)

**John Gardner** (New Zealand, long retired): 'We completed a house renovation recently. Stern instructions from the builder about maintaining a sagging structure saw me book a health MOT, resulting in a new hip, eye lens replacement, hearing aids and dental implants. Like bionic Steve Austin in the *Six Million Dollar Man* of the 1970s. But now minus six million dollars. Spent March in England seeing friends and family and also down memory lane visiting every house

(12) I'd lived in. Made it to the Gaudy where I noticed a few changes from our day, although the bedroom was still as cold. A good turnout from our year, with 30 of us punching our weight among the 115 from the four years attending. Was great to see six of the 1976 historians there and especially **Philip Waller** (1971), who taught us in the 70s and hasn't disowned us yet. A good night.'

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## 1977

**Year Representative:** Edmund Wright  
Email: edmund.wright.07@gmail.com

**Pete Hutchinson** describes himself as a 'slowly retiring medic'. He says it feels strange not being responsible for patients anymore, having retired from clinical practice at the end of May 2024; however, he will continue doing some bedside teaching and appraisal work until he is finally put out to grass. Pete adds: 'I took up playing real tennis just over a year ago at Moreton Morrell. It would have been much easier if I had done this at Merton when I was 18! However, it is a great game that I am really enjoying playing badly. I must arrange to come and play in Oxford sometime.'

**David Ball** retired from the Ministry of Defence in 2018 after 35 years, since when he has been enjoying home, family, garden and singing. He also carries out workplace investigations into misconduct, bullying complaints, etc. when an independent view is wanted.

Finally for this year, **Adam Southwell** says he does not have much to report, but he continues to work with vulnerable children at Red Balloon in Cambridge.

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## 1978

**Year Representative:** Paul Curtis Hayward  
Email: paulch@guybutler.co.uk

My request for news suggested that some of us might be thinking of retiring as many of us are in our mid-sixties. How wrong I was in the case of **Victor Mallet**:

'Ha... retiring?!

'I'm a senior editor on the *Financial Times* world desk, having been a foreign correspondent for the FT and for Reuters for the past 40 years or so (okay, 43). My previous job was as Paris bureau chief, and prior to that I've worked in Asia, Europe, the Middle East and Africa and written two books, the latest one about the Ganges (*River of Life, River of Death: The Ganges and India's Future*, OUP). With wars now in Ukraine, Gaza and Sudan, the climate going haywire worldwide and crises erupting everywhere from the South China Sea to the United States and Europe, the news shows no sign of quietening down in the months and years ahead – rather the opposite. So I plan to carry on doing one of the best jobs in the world.'

No editorial vacancies on the FT world desk then!

**Mark Davidson** was more in line with my thoughts though: 'Major changes to report here since Covid. Turning 65 I have stepped back from working full time although am definitely not yet retired full time either. Annie and I sold our house in London during lockdown and downsized to a flat there, as the children have now (more or less) left home. In a leap into the complete unknown we then bought a house on a beach in Virginia which we originally discovered online. This year we are spending the whole summer here. It has been a steep learning curve on becoming American, including having to take a driving test for the first time in almost 50 years. I am still chairing the Merton Society, and have very much enjoyed my visits back to Oxford and mentoring younger Mertonians.'

**Marcus Scott** has some exciting news, but it will have to wait until next year:

'I'll have an update for you in late July. Don't want to jinx it by sending you news in advance, although I've already talked about it on Facebook. I'll give you the full update after the event. I'm basically retired now. Been living in the USA since 1988, and spent 20 years in San Diego, CA. Now in Florida closer to family in Chicago and the UK.

'I have attended a couple of Merton events, at one of which

I was seated next to Professor **John Dainton** (1966). I'm sure that he wondered how our conversation would go, a particle physicist next to a PPE-ist. We ditched politics and economics quickly and had a fascinating conversation (at least for me) about religion and the outer realms of physics. A shame **Paul Mills** wasn't there, although I probably wouldn't have got a word in.'

**Paul Mills** writes: 'My TwitterX channel is going well, with over 1,000 posts in many subjects, @paulmills1203. First, I attended the funeral service of a fellow Postmaster, Mertonian maths teacher, Ralph Thornton (1942) of Warwick School. He had reached the venerable age of 100. Over 200 Old Warwickians attended his service in St Mary's Church, Warwick. Second, I have completed some ground-breaking research in quantum geometry with Norman Wildberger, a professor of math in Sydney, Australia, and we have some good news. Your mobile phone communicates not only by electric and magnetic waves, but also quantum (i.e. small, thankfully) effects in the ether and gravity fields. It all adds up though, as the earth's gravity field is changing slowly because of the increase in mobile activity. So now you know. Use text messages when necessary.'

**Robert Waller** (Senior Scholar 1978) contributed the 'Walter Ulbricht' chapter to *The Dictators: Lessons from History* (Hodder & Stoughton, September 2024) and the 'Ashfield 1977' chapter to the forthcoming *By-Election: 75 Electoral Contests That Shook British Politics* (March 2025), both edited by Iain Dale.

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## 1979

**Year Representative:** Noel Privett

Email: noelprivett@yahoo.co.uk

First off, a very sad thing to share. **Mike (Mikey) Eaton** died in January of complications after contracting Covid. Those of us who knew him remember him fondly and have paid tribute to him later in this edition of *Postmaster*. Gone too soon but certainly not forgotten.



Mike Eaton, back in the early 1980s, police officer in the background

As far as other news goes, it was looking like we were going to have a lean year with our contributions, but a few old favourites and some newcomers to the *Postmaster* lark came up trumps (an increasingly horrible word, that).

Of the newbies, **David Colledge** says that 'having declined the offer to contribute many times, we (Dave and his wife, **Lynne**, née **Weston**, 1981) feel we have had a suitably exciting year to boast about'.

In the autumn, they travelled to Long Island NY for the wedding of their son, Matthew (born 1989 and, as Dave says, 'perhaps the first pure bred Mertonian?') to Claudia. They spent six weeks in the States, alternating between birdwatching, seeing the sights and explaining how to make sourdough bread in pidgin Italian/Polish.

This spring, they went to the Americas again for another wedding, this time to Chile for the wedding of their goddaughter Eleanore, daughter of **Chris Henderson** (1978), to Miguel. This was followed by a tour around central Chile, which involved a lot of wine-tasting, followed by another visit to Long Island to see their son and daughter-in-law. 'Now back to the sedate, retired, life of crosswords, birdwatching, baking and (very) amateur carpentry,' says Dave. Thank goodness for that; it all sounded a bit too lively.

For **Colin Stone**, 'life continues much as usual'. He resigned from his post at the Royal Northern College of Music, because travelling up and down to Manchester was getting

too much. He still does a couple of days at the Royal Academy of Music as a piano professor and continues to give concerts and make recordings. 'I'm particularly looking forward to performing Brahms' second piano concerto with the Lublin Philharmonic in June,' he writes.

**Noel Privett** (that's me) moved house (still in Whitchurch, Hampshire), went to Penang, took up painting again (in an experimental art class), and generally did lots of family things with Claire and our children and grandchildren.

**Mike Ryan** did a crazy thing and anti-retired. He first stopped working as a teacher almost five years ago and celebrated the first *free 1st September* with a holiday in Greece. 'I remember sending some of my former colleagues a cheeky photograph of the view from the restaurant as I was eating lunch and they'd be on another of those delightful *welcome back* meetings,' he says, rubbing our noses in it, those of us who've yet to retire, even for the first time.

'All went well,' he continues, 'and then I was asked back to cover for some absences for a few odd weeks here and there. It was actually nice to be asked and renew old acquaintances. It happened again in February. My successor had been taken ill — would I go back in to cover his examination classes? Absolutely no problem; it'll help them out for a couple of weeks and earn a few pounds towards a holiday. As I write this mid-May, I have just retired again. Really glad that he is well, but it has been a little longer than expected.' (The holiday, Mike tells me, will be on the Baltic.)

As a second-leaving gift, Mike was given a whisky glass with engravings representing the evolution of atomic theory. 'This was a sobering (sorry!) thought,' says Mike. 'To my mind, quantum theory was formed a long time ago. The glass reminded me that the birthdate of the 79ers is closer to Einstein's work than it is to us today.'

**John Girkin** has reduced his time in work to 20%. 'This will, I hope, mean that I have more time to work in the garden, finish my second book, sing and act as a good grandparent,' he says. (Is that *sing, and act like a good grandparent*, or *sing and act like a good grandparent*?) Anyway, he thinks all of that will keep him busier than before.

Once again this year, two of our number have been a-publishing things. **Jeremy Black**, who's currently Visiting Professor to the Indonesian Staff College and Senior Research Fellow of the British Foreign Policy Group, has recently published *A Brief History of History: In Fielding's Wake; Defoe's Britain; Paid. A Short History of Paris:: Histories of War; The Age of Nightmare; Introduction to Global Military History* (4th edition); *The Atlantic Slave Trade in World History* (2nd edition); *Geopolitics: A History of Britain: 1945 through Brexit*; and *The Holocaust: History & Memory*.

Almost as prolific, **David Chaloner** has once again had a letter published in the *Guardian*. 'Hopefully,' he wrote, 'Emma Joliffe is heartened by the drink of choice of the decidedly masculine "hardest geezer" after his African run ("Hardest Geezer ends African run with strawberry daiquiri", 9 April).' On a less serious note, David tells me that he has recently become a director of Saddleworth Community Hydro, a community benefit society which runs the only high head hydroelectricity operation in England.

His role deals with education and the distribution of grants to environmental projects in Oldham and surrounding areas. 'We currently have a temporary glut of funds,' he says, 'owing to the iniquities of the energy market and 10 months' continuous rain.'

Paul at work on some of his pieces at City & Guilds of London Art School



Meanwhile, **Paul Farmiloe** has completed his BA (Hons) in Historic Carving at City & Guilds of London Art School,

where he learned stone carving, clay modelling, casting, life drawing, objective drawing and letter carving. His degree also included History of Architecture and Decorative Style, and his third-year thesis was on the Greek Carving Revolution. Paul is pictured at work on some of his pieces, which are mostly based on his thesis subject.

Bringing us back down from Mount Olympus with a bump, are two more of our 1979 colleagues. **Mark McBride** confesses: 'I don't have much to report. Slightly older, slightly slower! Still out with my dog as much as I can,' while **Roger Pearse** admits that 'nothing happened except that I paid the bills for another year. Also, I ate a year's worth of scones. Gradually, I should add.'

Scone but not forgotten, assuming you pronounce it /skɒn/ and not /skəʊn/.

## 1980

*There is currently no Year Representative for 1980. Please contact the Development Office if you are interested in this role.*

## 1981

**Year Representative: Graham Dwyer**

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As another 12 months have passed, it was wonderful to hear from Mertonians who contacted me to offer updates for *Postmaster* or offer greetings. It is 40 years since most of us finished our first degrees, putting all of us over 60 years old now. We are inching rapidly towards retirement or in many cases already past this stage, creating some introspection about what's next as well as welcoming in some cases exciting new opportunities.

**Michael Below** retired from active working two years ago at MetaPack. Apart from the usual gardening and housework, he has been keeping busy as treasurer at his local church and continues as tower captain for the church bell ringing band, which participated in ringing fully muffled bells for the death

of the Queen and then ringing for the coronation of the King last May. His daughter is working for Cornwall County Council while his son is in his final year of a chemistry degree at Imperial College London and has spent all this year in Lausanne.

**Jackie Martin** has also been enjoying retirement for the last year, mainly taking up hobbies old and new. One new activity involves taking part in 'citizen science' for the Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust — surveying and recording plant life for habitat surveys.

**Martin John Porter** retired last year after 25 years as a consultant ear, nose and throat surgeon in Worcester. He spends his time skiing, cycling and keeping bees in Malvern and France. His wife, Sarah, retired after a career in teaching and now works for the Samaritans. Their three children are all married with one now deputy head at Radley College. They also have one grandchild.

There is life after retirement also for **Alec Findlater** who completed a PhD at Bayes Business School, London, with a thesis on 'The Annuity Puzzle: Insights from Recent UK Pension Developments'. Since finishing, he has been spending his time with some consulting, gardening, and taking pride in his daughters.

On the subject of academia, **Linda L Emanuel** reports she is Emerita Professor of Medicine at Chicago's Northwestern University, though still with a clinical appointment and working remotely from Boston. After working in palliative medicine she trained in psychoanalysis and now has a general private practice. She lives on a one-acre domestic farm in a wooded area of Lincoln MA, which aspires to be carbon neutral and locally sustainable. Her three daughters all have families of their own, so now she also has three sons-in-law and eight grandchildren.

Preparing to retire is **Valentina (Valya) Dufau-Joel**, after 35 years at the Finance Service of the European Synchrotron Radiation Facility in Grenoble, France. Her daughter Natacha is an equitherapist helping people with difficulties and disabilities, including autistic children and people in wheelchairs, by contact with her horses. 'I took a colleague of mine who is wheelchair-bound, and who was thrilled

about having a trip to the countryside, taking the pony for a walk and giving her a good brushing,' Valya writes.



Valentina Dufau-Joel treats a colleague to some equitherapy

Meanwhile, in the past year, two Mertonians have books out on a Venetian theme. **Andrew Martin**'s new novel, *The Night in Venice*, was published in July by Weidenfeld & Nicolson. This is a psychological thriller, set in Venice and north London in 1911 — one I am definitely going to look out for. **Robin Saikia** produced a book published by Blue Guides: *Drink & Think Venice: The Story of Venice in 26 Bars and Cafés*. Sounds like another must-read for those who love La Serenissima, where Robin is based.

Also busy with the written word is **David Dodds** who tells me that the ancient poet Cynewulf led him to Tolkien at Leeds and now he is working on his contrafacta. Meanwhile he is also looking into his Spanish reading, especially Luis de León, and reviewing books by and about him.

**Jon Cooper** in his capacity as Emeritus Professor of Structural Biology at University College London is still acting as the editor of *Crystallography News*, which comes out four times a year. He also volunteers at the local steam railway.

It is always great to hear from my old tutorial partner **Nicki Paxman** who is still travelling the world with the BBC producing *The Arts Hour on Tour* for World Service Radio. In June she was in Istanbul while the last two years have seen her producing shows as far afield as Jakarta, Tirana, Nairobi,

Athens, Taipei, Buenos Aires and Madrid. When not travelling, she lives in north London still supporting her son through his mechanical engineering degree.

**Graham Tebb** is also continuing to travel widely – in his case looking for birds. A four-week trip to some of the more remote parts of Papua New Guinea, he reports, almost persuaded him to spend future holidays in places where he wouldn't walk up and down steep hills in the rain being pursued by irate locals wielding machetes. He says this flirtation with common sense was short-lived and he spent the first six weeks of the year 'filling in gaps' in Brazil. A similar task awaited him this summer in Madagascar. Between birdwatching trips he is still going to the opera. To make more time for his hobbies he recently reduced his hours at the University of Veterinary Medicine, Vienna – but then 'overcompensated' with a further part-time position at the Medical University of Innsbruck.

Another Mertonian on the move is **Tira Wannamethee**, who since mid-2023 has notched up a good many air miles with three trips to Japan, three to Hong Kong, trips to Indonesia, the United States and France. In 2023 he significantly stepped up his support for wildlife conservation and animal welfare causes, focusing on four animal charities. For example, he contributed to two animal rescue operations by the Wildlife Friends Foundation of Thailand. The sanctuary has a large gibbon and elephant refuge centre to which Tira is a regular donor and sponsor of two elephants. In addition to Thailand, he has also increased his support to overseas animal charities such as the elephant and rhino orphanage programme run by Sheldrick Wildlife Trust in Kenya. He is foster parent to 23 baby/young elephants and two baby endangered rhinos.

As for myself, I continue to be based in Manila at the Asian Development Bank, where I recently moved to Principal Operations Specialist, working on China and Mongolia. Away from work I continue to perform harpsichord continuo in concerts when called upon and maintaining my YouTube channel. I have been back and forth to UK this year tending to my ageing parents and attending the MA and BA graduations in London of my two children. As always, it would be a pleasure to host any Mertonians passing through Manila, so please do call in.

## 1982

**Year Representative: Nick Weller**

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Thank you to everyone who got in touch with their news – it was good to hear from you.

The annual meet-up between **Martin Giles**, **David Holbrook**, **John Holland**, **David Parkinson**, **Richard Ryder**, **James Thickett** and **Stephen Walsh** took place in June.

**Susanna Curtis** has been involved with a number of dance projects. Susanna's company was chosen as one of ten in Germany for the federal TANZLAND programme, so she has been able to present her pieces in partnership with a theatre in Solingen. Susanna directed and organised the 25 years KlinikClowns Gala in autumn 2023. Her EveryBody inclusive dance project won the Nuremberg Inclusion Prize in 2023 and she had a great time choreographing and performing 'Stairways to Heaven?' for it as part of the Special Olympics Host Town Programme. The project had an inclusive dance festival in spring 2024 and has a show planned for later in the summer. In spring 2024 Susanna had the premiere of a new piece 'the woman in me', a duet for her and a woman with Down's Syndrome. In addition to ongoing dance workshops in summer 2024, Susanna has a trip to Seoul in August to perform her 'Exploring Borders' there. Apart from dance, Susanna said goodbye to her family's house in Glasgow, which was an emotional occasion and had a 60th birthday present of a lovely holiday in Crete from her husband, Horst. Susanna very much enjoyed being part of Merton's mentoring scheme.

**Patrick Cleary** has retired and is looking forward to spending more time with family and friends. Do get in touch to arrange a meet-up if you would like to do that.

**Jasper Gaunt** has been appointed as a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries.

**Anthony Halse** joined a small software company in Sydney, just before Covid, which meant he could work part-time from

home. This has continued in the years since, allowing him to spend afternoons playing bridge or completing woodworking projects (this year a picket fence and two beds). Anthony's son Timothy is at university and his daughter Caroline is in her last year at high school. The empty-nester years are beckoning, so Anthony and his wife Desiree are planning the bucket list trips, starting with Scandinavia next year.

**David Holden** has no immediate plans to retire and has been determined to fend off the passage of time. David ran 13 miles on his 60th birthday and a very tough half-marathon around Otmoor in June. David is running 10–12 miles most Saturdays and would have done more cycling in the spring too if only the weather had been better.

Congratulations to **Michael Jary** on his CBE for public service in the 2024 New Year's Honours List.

After being back in the city for four years, **Peter Kessler** is enjoying life in Oxford even more than he did as a student. Peter is involved in student theatre again, now as a reviewer rather than a participant, and runs various outreach and extracurricular activities. These include Magdalen Monday Movies, a free film club open to all, which attracts as many townspeople as it does students. Peter finds that the diversity of the University community is the biggest change from the 1980s, and it is truly wonderful to see it and be part of it.

**Andrzej Kmiecik** is still in Brussels, though keeping half a foot in London.

**Peter Moger** is back in Oxford (38 years after leaving Merton) following his installation as Sub Dean of Christ Church in autumn 2023. After four years in the Outer Hebrides, the move has required some adjustment, but Peter is enjoying the breadth of his role across the cathedral and college.

**Richard Ryder** is due to retire in October 2024. He celebrated the birth of his second and third granddaughters, Eliza and Mabel, in December 2023. Richard and his daughter Alice attended a Royal Garden Party in spring 2024.

**Mark Shuttleworth** is reaching the end of his sixth year in Hong Kong. Up to now Mark has been at Hong Kong Baptist

University, where since autumn 2022 he has been Head of the Department of Translation, Interpreting and Intercultural Studies. However, at the start of September 2024, Mark is due to move to the Hang Seng University of Hong Kong to take up the position of Dean of the School of Translation and Foreign Languages, an exciting role. Mark is accompanied in Hong Kong by his son Andrei, who is finishing his third year of a degree in Materials Science and Engineering at City University of Hong Kong, and his daughter Alex, who is at the end of Year 9 at school. Mark's daughter Maria works as a designer in UX and UI in London. Mark's wife Tanya splits her time between the UK and Hong Kong.

I'm still writing and marking professional exams. This year has been overshadowed for me by the death of **Sara Hall**, a much-missed friend, whose funeral was a very moving celebration of her life. There is a tribute to Sara in the *In Memoriam* section of this issue of *Postmaster*.

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## 1983

**Year Representative: Meriel Cowan**

Tel: 01865 762458 Email: meriel.raine@gmail.com

I have seen quite a lot of old Merton friends this year which has been a real pleasure, so I apologise for this entry being full of my own impressions. The Oxford Literary Festival in March provides an enticement for people to visit us and go to a few talks (usually the quirky ones) and have an excuse to eat in cafes in the Covered Market and wander nostalgically in Oxford. **Andrew** and **Pippa Baker** and **Susan** and **Michael Roller** joined us for the first weekend, and **Paul Chavas** with his wife Sonia for the second one. Susan Roller has rejoined Citizens Advice as a volunteer one day a week trying to help people by issuing food vouchers, advising on debts, benefits, housing, employment, probate etc. Michael Roller is now working part time and is enjoying watching more cricket and travelling with the extra time. He met up with **Daniel Seymour** and his wife Adria in New York in October 2023. Pippa is still teaching primary school children and enjoying it, and Andrew is involved in a lengthy tax-based trial. They have bought a house in Cornwall where they and their four boys all enjoy spending time when work allows. Paul is still

working at the Met Office in Exeter; he and Sonia continue to work on their huge and extraordinary Arts and Crafts house on Exmoor, whose garden is a labour of love.

Retirement or refocusing is a continuing theme, particularly in this year when many people are celebrating 'big birthdays'. **Richard Weaver** continues to enjoy book collecting although complains he's rapidly running out of space at home. 'I am also involved in a couple of local charities, one of which in particular tends to put things in perspective.'

**Fraser Dillingham** reports: 'I've been retired now for over nine years so have reached that stage where I comment that I don't know how I ever managed to fit work into my schedule. I've just entered my final year as Chair of the Board of Temple Golf Club, my childhood club, among whose members is the new Head Chef at Merton. That provides a convenient excuse for playing lots of golf around the country, normally badly and recently always in the wet, today in particular. My wife is a very keen cyclist so I'm forced out far too regularly on lengthy, hilly rides: I have however celebrated being 60 by treating myself to an electric bike so I can keep up. Like many, we're taking advantage of being able to travel again, with our next trip being from Munich to Rome (Helen on a bicycle and me on a train!). We have a house in the Lake District where we spend a lot of time and where I've recently joined the parish council – which is great fun and provides a fascinating insight both into our local community and local government. Enough said.'

Fraser tells me he recently enjoyed a return to Merton where he appreciated the Sandy Irvine exhibition. 'It does reinforce how lucky we were – and probably how little we probably really appreciated it.' I would certainly echo that.

Across the pond, **Rupert Vessey** and his wife Laura completed their move from New Jersey to Michigan and now split their time between Kalamazoo and South Haven which is on the Lake Michigan shoreline. Rupert continues as Chief Scientist at Flagship Pioneering as well as serving on the boards of Bio-Techne, Generate: Biomedicines, the Lupus Research Alliance and the International Biomedical Research Alliance. Most recently he joined the Scientific Advisory Board of the Chinese Academy of Medical Sciences Oxford Institute. Laura

continues to lead oncology early development for Janssen. 'Our oldest girl Katelyn was married to her fiancé Mike last October. Sarah, our youngest daughter, moved to Lausanne, Switzerland to continue her career with Nestle. Jonathan continues to study in Los Angeles and Daniel was on the Rutgers basketball team in the Big Ten conference; he will transfer to a new team next year.' Good to hear the sporting tradition continues, Rupert! **John Oetjen** is working as VP Visual Production for Anifie to create metaverse worlds in order to build digital communities which will incorporate AI to connect users with like interests. He's also producing a couple of projects, a feature film to be shot in Somerset and a documentary to focus on the ongoing problem in Tigray.

I thought **Chris Edwards** might have returned to a more settled life in the UK, but it seems not. 'I continue in my role as International Senior Advisor at RSAcademics, and have now added Chief Academic Officer at the Chinese Elite K12 group (that's the name, not my qualitative judgement). So I'm out and about, especially in China where I'm advising and lecturing every six weeks or so. Alas, not quite the rural retirement I'd been envisaging, but my wife Rachel has just bought me a cider-press, so at least there's an angel on each shoulder.'



The Collings' wedding. From left: Meriel Cowan, Simon Cowan, Paul Chavasse, James Collings, Sonia Chavasse, Philippa Baker, Andrew Baker, Susan Roller and Michael Roller

Finally, how wonderful to be invited to the wedding of **James and Kim Collings'** daughter Fran to her fiancé Tim last month, along with several other Merton friends who were at James and Kim's wedding many years ago. It was a really joyful day from start to finish and we felt very lucky to be

part of their celebration. James's sister **Sally Mears** was at Merton (1979), so the College was well represented. James retired last year from being a lawyer in the City, and now has more time to spend with family and on singing with a local choir and learning to play jazz piano. They have three lively dogs to entertain as well.

**Simon Cowan** and I welcomed our first dog, a Labrador puppy called Gioia, last year and she's a playful delight to have around, although she has rather taken over our life. I work two days a week now which suits me extremely well. Simon continues at Worcester as Economics fellow.

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## 1984

**Year Representative: David Clark**  
Email: [david.clark@merton.oxon.org](mailto:david.clark@merton.oxon.org)

It's hard to believe it's now 40 years since our Matriculation, and in this anniversary year it's been lovely to hear from some of you.

Many congratulations to **David Smith** who, on 25 April 2024, was awarded Calvin University's Presidential Award for Exemplary Teaching – the highest teaching honour the university bestows on its faculty. You can read more and see a photo of David here: [calvin.edu/news/archive/creating-a-more-beautiful-space-for-teaching-and-learning](http://calvin.edu/news/archive/creating-a-more-beautiful-space-for-teaching-and-learning)

Congratulations also to **Diane Purkiss** whose *English Food: A People's History* (William Collins, 2022; now out in paperback) was awarded the prize for Best Food Book by the Guild of Food Writers in July 2023. Diane is William F Pollard Fellow and Tutor at Keble College, and Professor of English Literature at the University.

**Ruth Taylor** writes with family news. Her eldest son has moved to London to work in international corporate tax with Ernst Young and her daughter is sitting finals at Exeter University and then plans to go travelling for a year. Ruth is still working as a GP in the NHS, tutoring medical students at Birmingham University, appraising GPs and examining international medical graduates for the GMC, while eyeing the

prospect of retirement more keenly each day. (A sentiment shared by many of us, I'm sure.)

My wife, Barbara, and I greatly enjoying visiting **John Newton** and his wife Catherine earlier in the year in their new home in the Yorkshire Dales, where they find the scenery and attendant dog walking sublime. When not fighting the slugs in the veg patch, John runs a small consultancy called Sursum Solutions. In keeping with his PhD in organisational culture, he does research with companies on how to leverage culture to improve their performance and make work more meaningful for all employees. John is also involved in Christian youth and church work of various kinds. John and Catherine's fourth child, William, finishes at Cardiff University this summer. He hopes to travel before becoming a taxpayer. Their first grandchild was born last year to eldest child Sam, a management consultant. Their second child Eleanor gets married in September. She is the MD of the Trouble Club – an organisation for professional women in London. Their other daughter, Madeline, has stayed in Australia and works as a sales consultant. She has bravely decided to endure the endless summers and unrelenting sunshine for a few more years.

Our visit to the Newtons came at the start of a holiday that turned out to have several other Merton connections. We were staying in the village of Wycliffe (by the River Tees) which is the ancestral home of **John Wycliffe**, the Bible translator, who became a Fellow of Merton in 1356. During the week, we visited Auckland Castle, the historic seat of the Prince Bishops of Durham. On entering the Throne Room, I saw a portrait that looked eerily familiar. A quick Google search revealed why. The portrait was of **Shute Barrington**, who attended Merton as a student in 1752 and became a Fellow in 1755. He pursued a successful ecclesiastical career ultimately becoming Bishop of Durham in 1791. A similar, but not identical, portrait hung in Hall during our years at College, hence the recognition. The portrait was cleaned and rehung on the Fitzjames Staircase in 2018 ([www.merton.ox.ac.uk/news/sir-thomas-lawrences-portrait-shute-barrington-1752-rehung-following-move](http://www.merton.ox.ac.uk/news/sir-thomas-lawrences-portrait-shute-barrington-1752-rehung-following-move)). Another, more recent Mertonian, Honorary Fellow **Tom Wright** (1977), also has his portrait in Auckland Castle, having been Bishop of Durham from 2003 until 2010.



Your Year Rep with the portrait of Shute Barrington at Auckland Castle, County Durham

Please do keep in touch and send any items of news for *Postmaster* at any time – it's always a pleasure to hear from you.

## 1985

**Year Representative:** Madeleine Barrows (née Fontana)

Email: MadeleineFontana@outlook.com

**Cornelius Kavanagh**, RIBA, writes: 'I am an architect based in Henley, despite having studied English. After the pandemic, I left Hives Architects to research how to adapt traditional buildings to the green energy transition. I'm now putting my findings into practice, which mainly consists of making sure not to wreck them in the process. But the big news from me is that my grandson Gabriel was born at the end of last year. My wife Jeni is a barrister, as is Oliver (our son and Gabriel's dad). Our daughter Madi is an artist and teaching assistant and we all live in Oxfordshire.'

**Mark Medish** remains in Washington DC, busy as a strategic consultant, with an office on Haymarket in London. He also runs a boutique law practice called Mosaïq Law Group PLLC and is co-founder of Keep Our Republic, a US non-profit promoting trust in the electoral process. Four children, one spouse. A former Cuppers player, he still hits tennis balls regularly.

For myself, **Madeleine Barrows**, I'm retiring by the end of the year, and looking forward to a different set of activity including more time for holidays and time with family, which seem to get pushed to the margins with full-time work. I've really enjoyed being CEO of the British Academy of Management (the learned society for business and management scholars) for nearly seven years, but it's a big job and time someone else had a go. For the first time this April, we went to Australia to visit our daughter, Becca, who is working in Melbourne for a while. I loved it so much I think I'd have happily stayed. People keep asking me for my retirement plan: some more holidays, more walking and running, more choral singing, and some volunteering, perhaps at Winchester Cathedral – a favourite place of mine, especially because of the fabulous Winchester Bible.

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## 1986

**Year Representatives:** **Simon Male** (undergraduates)

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and **Daniel Schaffer** (graduates)

Tel: 07711 927122 Email: [daniel.schaffer@btinternet.com](mailto:daniel.schaffer@btinternet.com)

### Undergraduates

After 14 years of running his specialist waste consultancy business, **Adrian Judge** decided to 'pursue other interests', which definitely does not mean retirement! For the next year or two he will be spending most of his time with a local charity as it goes through a major program of change, as well as working with a relatively newly formed social enterprise. Last year he and his wife celebrated their 25th wedding anniversary in Italy, and returned to Italy this year to celebrate a significant birthday.

**Nancy Dawrant** is enjoying teaching Maths at Caterham School, and Jake has thrived in Year 8. She has also had another active year exploring and hiking. She completed a series of six ultra hikes last year and has continued to swim – open water when possible. This year she and Jake did a great three-day hike on the South Downs Way as well as a stunning five days on the Cinque Terre in Italy (highly recommended for stunning scenery and local sun, food, wine, pesto and olive oil). The Norwegian fiords, Scotland, Northumberland and the Isle of Wight are lined up for this summer.

**Simon Male** and his family live outside New York City, and Simon can be found every weekday morning crossing the George Washington Bridge on his bike commute into Bloomberg, where he works as an equity market specialist. He would be delighted to host any Mertonians for a coffee and a snack when they are in town.

### Postgraduates

**Ben Alpers**, Associate Professor at the University of Oklahoma: 'This was an eventful year for my family. My daughter Mira graduated from Harvard this spring and is living in Brooklyn, NY, where she's trying to break into the world of

film distribution. In January, I published a book. *Happy Days* explores the way Americans in the 1970s thought about the American past, in part to deal with the then recent changes in American life that we (and they) associate with the 1960s. Finally, I'll be returning to Oxford in July for the first time since 1987. I'm teaching a course on the films of Powell and Pressburger as part of University of Oklahoma's Honors at Oxford summer program.'



**Riccardo Bianconi** is a maths professor at Sao Paulo University, Brazil: 'This year I have continued working within pandemic conditions. I am finishing two books on Geometry. I could have retired in 2020, but I decided to work a little longer (mandatory retirement is 2035). In my spare time I read, cook and listen to music with my wife (27 years married).'



**Gbolahan Elias**: 'The photograph is of my wife and me today taking a break from walking along part of the Atlantic Ocean waterfront in Lagos. We go there often. The past year has been good but largely uneventful for us. Thankfully, there have been no tragedies or nasty surprises.'

'Our favourite charities have kept growing and doing impactful work. The law firm where I work now has 72 lawyers and will be 30 years old at the end of August. Both it and our investments have done well in spite of Nigeria's ongoing economic challenges.'

**Lionel Hogg**, partner at Gadens in Brisbane, Australia: 'I am still working and swimming.'

**Mari Izumi**: 'I am continuing my research on Japanese and European agriculture and environmental conservation. At the same time, I am passionate about practising table tennis!'



**Andrew Jenkins:** 'I am still enjoying retirement. I am away travelling most of the time. I completed a tour of Australia earlier this year. Now I am driving across Canada.'



**Lazza Mathews:** 'I am still working in deserved obscurity as a freelance solicitor in the magistrates' court and police stations. No kids, pets or any other discernible mark made on the world. The photo is of me and my long-suffering fiancée Jenny on a recent holiday in Cornwall.'



**Eric Olson:** 'The last year has been marked by change, adventure, and more than a little angst about our collective future. In December I completed a two-year stint setting up Accenture's Sustainability Services practice in North America. My wife Susan Freiwald and I celebrated

with a trip to South Africa (pictured here at the Cape of Good Hope). I am now working to build a public/private coalition that can scale financing for climate resilience, and Susan is finishing her term as Dean of the University of San Francisco School of Law, after which we will hit the road again (Japan, Mozambique and Bolivia) after years of staying close to home.'

**Daniel Promislow:** 'I have lots of news at my end. It's always hard for academic spouses to solve the "two body problem". Back in 2013, Leslie was recruited to Seattle Children's and the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center, and having grown up in the Pacific Northwest, I was delighted to land a terrific job in Seattle too. It was fantastic both personally and professionally. But in 2018, another amazing opportunity came

along for Leslie - a leadership position at Boston Children's and the Dana Farber Cancer Institute. This time, I was in the midst of launching an initiative in Seattle, and so began flying back and forth between Seattle and Boston. Happily, as of 1 March, I am now a full-time Boston resident, having started a new position as Senior Scientist and Scientific Advisor at the Jean Mayer USDA Human Nutrition Research Center on Aging, at Tufts University. I'm very excited to be there, and what's even better, I get to live with my spouse full time, and the icing on the cake is that our daughter, son-in-law, and new grandson live a three-minute walk from us. It's a joyful time.



'This past year, we received quite a bit of press about the Dog Aging Project when our NIH grant proposal was not funded. There was a bit of an outcry. Not a surprise, really: "People love dogs" is our unofficial motto. We have resubmitted another proposal but are facing a one-year gap in funding for this nationwide study of aging in pet dogs. Fortunately, news of our

death is greatly exaggerated. A couple of philanthropists, a non-profit research foundation, and hundreds of small donations have come into our new non-profit Dog Aging Institute, keeping the boat afloat until we are back to NIH funding. The non-profit is dedicated to supporting research, education, and interesting conversations about dog (and human) aging.

'I stumbled into studying the evolution of aging as a graduate student at Oxford - I can't believe it's almost 40 years ago that we went up. I am still working on aging, but the past few years have underscored the challenges of aging in my own world. My father passed away this year just a few weeks shy of his 90th birthday and having retired just two years earlier. And while my mom and both step-parents are still alive, they are all facing the challenges of aging, and all with tremendous grace. Many of my colleagues in the aging field are working

hard to discover ways to dramatically increase health span and lifespan. I think that part of the “third act” in my career will be to explore what “success” in the search for lifespan extension might look like, from a diversity of perspectives.

‘So life is busy and interesting, and despite my own challenges with aging (did I mention my stumble in a parking lot last summer that led to a metal plate and pins in my elbow, and a year of PT?), I am feeling grateful for challenging and interesting work, and wonderful family and friends.’



**Dan Schaffer**, a partner at Slaughter and May, London: ‘I am now in my 35th year of practice. Pensions law only gets more interesting! I also really enjoy contributing to law student life in Merton College. We sponsor the Halsbury Society Lecture and dinner. I organise and come up to judge

the second-year moot competition and I teach a Trusts law class and the tutorials. The law students are always so impressive. I have also taken on the role as chair of the Merton Lawyers’ Association having organised the last three annual meetings (see the dedicated page on the College website). A real treat this year was attending the Bodley Feast as the personal guest of the Warden.

All three of my sons have now graduated and moved out – leaving me, Marianne (my wife) and Roxy (our 14-year-old labrador, the daughter we never had). Louis graduated on 1 June from the University of Chicago double-majoring in Political Science and Linguistics. We really enjoyed class day and convocation there. He had a fabulous four years there and was very sad to leave. He has now started work in Paris. Vincent, our middle son, works in Manhattan in tech and Antoine, our eldest, works in data analytics in London. He lives near us so we see a lot of him, which is great.

My own news is that I obtained French nationality and I am looking forward to the formal ceremony at the consulate in London in August. I actually enjoyed revising for and sitting the testing TCF language exam. We bought a house

in Dinard, Brittany overlooking the beach. Next year I have a partner’s sabbatical and I am looking forward to spending extended time there – relaxing. My wife has led the two year renovation project. It’s going to be a family home from home for the generations. I still train hard all year round for competitive bike races. I was pleased with the 140km Etape Caledonia @ 34.5 kph that I did in May. I have the Maratona in July. Sixty is just a number.

I have also taken up open-water swimming and went on a 6km a day Swimtrek week’s holiday to Oman with Vincent in February. We loved it. I am planning another one next year with him. Shout out to fellow 1986 BCList **Lionel Hogg** (who was an Australian Commonwealth squad member who gave me excellent technique tips via WhatsApp!). In my spare time I enjoy organising my school leaver (1982) dinner reunions. Reconnecting is brilliant and therapeutic. I have pulled together a WhatsApp group of 70, and 32 came to dinner in March. I have 10 in my primary school reunion group for whom I organise dinners. Can’t believe it’s fast approaching 40 years since we all lived in Holywell Street.

**Lawrence Stanley**: ‘There’s not much new in my routines – interesting but not newsworthy. One exception: I read a paper at the International Society for the Study of Narrative’s annual conference in Newcastle-upon-Tyne in April. Good friend and fellow Mertonian **Tony Trowles** travelled up from London to join us, so we had a pleasant visit catching up and going to museums and cathedrals and restaurants and pubs in Newcastle. Otherwise, and routine-wise, I am still Distinguished Senior Lecturer in English at Brown University and will begin my 32nd year of teaching there.’

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## 1987

**Year Representative: Simon Male**

Tel: 001 845 548 7825 Email: [simon\\_male@yahoo.com](mailto:simon_male@yahoo.com)

**Peter Wilson** has been Director General for Europe in the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office since March 2022, focusing on UK/EU relations, bilateral ties, and UK policy in the Balkans. He lives in London with his wife and three children (two now at university themselves).

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## 1988

**Year Representative:** Tim Gardener

c/o Development Office, Merton College, Oxford, OX1 4JD

Email: publications@merton.ox.ac.uk

**Steve Bosworth** has hopped from one King's School to another since leaving Oxford 29 years ago and has been heading the Physics department in Chester for the last nine of those. With no great ambitions to move further up the career ladder, Steve still loves teaching Physics using an ever-expanding range of media and taking the sixth-formers each year to visit the experiments at CERN in Geneva where he did his DPhil. Steve would be delighted to hear from any Mertonians, especially those working in STEM areas, as he's always on the lookout for potential speakers to inspire the next generation.

This academic year and next **Lewis Ayres** is spending half the year in Rome, as the McDonald Agape Distinguished Chair in Early Christian Theology at the Angelicum, and half the year at Durham University. He recently gave the 54th annual Père Marquette Lecture at Marquette University in Milwaukee. You can, of course, pick up a copy of the published version at all major airports.

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## 1989

**Year Representative:** Matthew Grimley

Merton College, Oxford OX1 4JD

Email: matthew.grimley@merton.ox.ac.uk

Many thanks to those members of the 1989 year group who have been in touch with news. **Jon Mainwaring** got engaged to Emily, who, as well as being lots of other things, is a drummer in an indie band. He received favourable reviews for a karaoke rendition of a well-known Gloria Gaynor song at an improbably high pitch. He makes stained-glass pieces but is starting to run out of places to put them.

**Aidan Eardley** has been appointed a Deputy High Court Judge.

**Charlie Wynn-Evans** has been awarded a PhD by published work by his other alma mater, the University of Bristol, for his doctoral thesis entitled 'Allocating and preserving employer responsibilities'.

**Stephen Walton** is still living on the banks of the Rhine, as chaplain of Christ Church Dusseldorf, leading a growing church with a largely African and Indian congregation. He was in Rwanda last year, and came back with pneumonia and a collapsed lung, but has now recovered. This year, he and Gunilla will celebrate their silver wedding anniversary.



Nici biking across Italy in June

**Nici Audhlam-Gardiner** reports: '2024 is a busy year – in part self-inflicted. Full-on strategy execution in the day job as CEO of Foresters Financial. Two kids in exam-crunch years plus some gratuitous run and bike challenges.' In June she biked across Italy in a day, 280km from sunrise to sunset. She is always delighted to catch up with fellow Mertonians in London.

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## 1990

**Year Representative:** Christine Barrie

Email: Christine.barrie@btinternet.com

**Azeem Azhar** continues to build on his research into the twin themes of artificial intelligence and the energy transition through *Exponential View*, his newsletter. He was recently appointed an Executive Fellow at Harvard Business School

and received an Honorary Doctorate from Hult International Business School. He is working on a second book and continuing to invest in young tech firms.

**Zaid Al-Qassab** moved from Channel 4 this year to become Global CEO of M&C Saatchi plc, the advertising & creative services group. However, far bigger news is that his daughter was a contestant on the BBC show *The Great British Sewing Bee* this year! Zaid and Claudia Drake (1991) were understandably proud parents.

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## 1991

**Year Representative: George Zachariah**

Email: George.Zachariah@merton.oxon.org

After a quiet period, the class of 1991 is back.

**Caroline Bentley-Davies** (née **Davies**), married to Ross Bentley-Davies (1990), is living happily in the countryside in Lincolnshire. She works as an adviser to schools and colleges. She has written seven books for teachers ([www.bentley-davies.co.uk](http://www.bentley-davies.co.uk)). Ross is working as a software developer.

**Cathy** (née **Houlihane**) and **John Bothwell** are still ensconced in Durham, with two sons and three cats. John wrote a book (*Seaweeds of the World*, Princeton University Press, 2023), and is currently decolonising the curriculum, promoting equality, diversity and inclusion, and generally throwing his considerable weight around Durham University's biosciences department. He is even coaching the university rugby team. Cathy continues to teach Latin at Durham Johnston Comprehensive School, single-handedly providing access to Classics, in a region where few state schools offer any Classics teaching. She has been part of efforts to re-establish a Classics PGCE course in Durham, and completed ten years as course secretary of the JACT Greek Summer School. This year the Classical Association recognised her work to make Classics education more inclusive with a Teaching Award. She also very much enjoyed marching and placard-waving on the picket line in the NEU's campaign to improve school funding. When not virtue-signalling, Cathy sings with Durham Choral Society, and John enjoys scaring undergraduates in the gym.

**Mark Bunting** has been 'living in north London since going down from Merton, apart from a brief aberration south of the river in 1995–96. Sam and I have two daughters, born in 2008 and 2011, and Sam has two grown-up children from her first marriage, the eldest of whom has a bouncing one-year-old, making me a step-grandparent (although as you know I don't answer to that description). As Director of Strategy in Ofcom's Online Safety Group, I'm responsible for Ofcom's implementation of the UK's Online Safety Act (2003), establishing regulation of social media, video platforms and search, and pornography services. My job is to set Ofcom's strategic priorities, establish the policy, supervision and enforcement functions needed to achieve better protections for users, and collaborate with other regulators and NGOs in the UK and overseas. The family and a demanding job don't leave much time, but I'm an enthusiastic runner, hiker, cook and wine nerd, and take rare opportunities to get into the hills of Shropshire, Wales and the Peak District when I can.'

**Charlotte Hamilton Clark** has dipped her toe into a second, academic, career. She finished her PhD about dyslexia and stigma in higher education in 2022, and is now a research fellow at UCL's Institute of Education. She is interested in neurodiversity, its classification and identity, and is somewhat amazed to be about to publish a second academic paper this year. She juggles research, writing and some teaching at UCL, with supporting her three teenage offspring and enjoying occasional quiet moments on a smallholding in Hampshire.

**Sarah Fulcher** is 'just living in the Suffolk countryside with my family, and a mad boxer dog, working in GenAI for Cognizant Life Sciences and about to see my son turn 18 (a very scary prospect).'

**Ronit Ghose** said: 'I am] celebrating my 25th wedding anniversary with my wife Alexandra this September. Our eldest son Max just graduated from the University of Cambridge, and I published a book earlier this year (*Future Money: Fintech, AI and Web3*).

**Paul McLoughlin** (Mac) shared that: 'in short, I'm still living in Canada (Vancouver in British Columbia) and my kids are teenagers now (13 and 17) so it is great fun watching them make all the same stupid mistakes that I myself made as a teenager.

The hiking and mountain biking out here on the west coast is amazing, as is the craft beer scene, so I can't see myself ever moving back to the UK. I'm finally half decent on guitar so when not working, hanging out with the kids, drinking beer or playing in the mountains, I'm recording loop cover versions of all the songs I loved when I was younger. Life is good.'

**Caroline Pung** (née Russell) wrote: 'Hans (1995) and I live just outside Cambridge. Besides work (business training/coaching), life is kept pretty full with a 12- and a 16-year-old: essentially, we do a lot of taxiing them around.'

**Andrew Rosengren** observed that 'the last five years have been an exciting journey starting my own strategy advisory business (Guberno) in helping companies navigate their growth journey. This has come after 30 years working in corporate roles across multiple segments (mining, construction materials, construction, property development, logistics, chemical manufacturing) and countries (Australia, USA, UK). So proud of three young adult children that are grabbing life with a strong set of values and vigour. My wife Julie (we met while at Oxford) and I have moved onto a farm in northern New South Wales in Australia where we are sharing a wonderful journey of learning new farming skills (think *Clarkson's Farm*) and building something together. Dominant emotion is one of gratitude for the relative good fortune that life has so far bestowed on us.'

**Mark Trevarthen** let us know that 'I am living in Sydney, Australia working for UBS. I am here with my (Australian) wife Lucinda and our four children who keep us busy with their school and extracurricular activities. We hugely enjoy our trips back to the UK every year, reconnecting with family and friends. We have also paid a few visits to Merton.'

As for me, **George Zachariah**, I have some news since my entry a decade ago, with Merton and Mertonians happily featuring frequently. Susie and I were married by Simon Jones in Merton Chapel in 2015, with many Merton friends in attendance. Simon kindly also christened Zara (now 7) and Sebastian (now 3). We have continued to move posts with the UN: New York, Haiti, and then Mali for over five years. We moved this June for my new post (political process and dialogue) to Cyprus (visitors welcome), where I discovered that two Mertonians from our year live, and met the retired

bishop, an Old Mertonian and Honorary Fellow.

Visiting College, I've been excited to be involved with the new mentoring scheme and Bodley Club, as well as see the choir and meet a former tutor. I felt particularly privileged to hear from people in our lovely year group (the best of years), many of whom, in typically modest Merton fashion, felt they had nothing noteworthy to share (in sharp contradiction with the facts).

Although it breaks alphabetical order, I think it would best to close with **Mark Robertson's** lovely contribution. 'I have been privileged to visit Merton many times in the past year as my daughter Georgina is reading the BCL, following in my footsteps. It brought back wonderful memories. I imagine us all there as we were, and am again happy.'

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## 1992

**Year Representatives: Andrew Davison**

Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, CB2 1RH

Email: apd3l@cam.ac.uk

and **Steve Maxwell**

Email: stevemaxwell99@gmail.com

**Andrew Davison** is back in the UK after a two-year fellowship in Princeton. In September, he will be moving from Cambridge to Oxford, to become the next Regius Professor of Divinity, which also means being a residentiary canon of Christ Church Cathedral.

**James Handscombe** is still busy with two schools and two daughters and is looking forward to fitting in a trip to Buckingham Palace to collect his OBE. He's trying to play it down but is really unbearably full of himself.

**Victoria James'** BBC Two series on 25 years of housing policy was described by the *Guardian* as 'the most nakedly furious documentary of the year'. She is following it with a series on immigration policy. Her contemporary witch novel *Sanctuary* was filmed by AMC, with its sequel, *Bittershore*, to be published this autumn. In the spring, she has two months on a tall ship crossing the South Atlantic via Tristan da Cunha.

**Tom Reusch** was glad to greet the chaplain after one of the Lincoln Cathedral Christmas carol services, and to see **Paul Foot** at the Soho Theatre in February in an achingly funny and thought-provoking show.

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## 1993

**Year Representative: Joanna Cooke**

Email: jvicooke@hotmail.com

It's a short but sweet update from class of 1993 this year – I think a lot of people are quietly reflecting as 50th birthdays come rushing towards them. Luckily, I survived mine although I am still waiting for birthday cards from both Cavendish and Liz Truss.

**Emma Cayley** continues as Head of the School of Languages, Cultures and Societies at the University of Leeds, and loves living 'oop North' in beautiful Yorkshire. She is currently much involved in advocacy work, working with policy makers and others to reverse the concerning trends in HE and defend jobs across the sector. Emma is also getting married later this year – three days before she turns 50. As she says: 'Second time's a charm!'

**Marcos Fernandez** surprisingly has 'absolutely no news' but it was great to hear from him anyway. He asked the question that is on everyone's lips. 'When is the next Gaudy?' I think Covid has impacted the timetabling of these auspicious events, so patience please – but FYI, Marcos is keen.

**Jim Freeman's** house got knocked down and he is now having a three-month sabbatical. 'I am going to the world's most northerly town and then the Outer Hebrides which must be a metaphor for something.' The bit he didn't seem quite as enthusiastic to share is that he is also spending *ages* on a cruise with a number of octogenarians. Surely that deserves top billing.

**Martin Miller's** main news was appearing in Channel 4 adverts for Gogglebox and *The Importance of Being Earnest* at the Mercury Theatre, Colchester in February and March this year.

**Kabir Miah** sent the following update. 'My first year of headship in the east end of London has been very eventful. Meeting up with Jo again in my first term after so many years was a real highlight [lucky Kabir]. Then we had the dreaded Ofsted during my second term, and I am delighted to say that we survived unscathed, actually securing an Outstanding judgement for the school!' Full points to Kabir.

One final big bit of news: **Jamie Inman** got married in June. I know. WHAT?? And his wife, Kate Taylor, is sensational, kind and tolerant. Sometimes dreams really do come true.

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## 1994

**Year Representative: Nick Quin**

Email: nickaquin@yahoo.co.uk

Many '94 Mertonians have been unable to accept the passage of 30 years since *that* misty-eyed photo in Front Quad, despite some claiming to be among the University's best scientists. Certain have speculated that it was instead just a few years ago, but with a significant Heisenberg uncertainty, and others that having participated in the Time ceremony one time too many, 1994 freshers are stuck in a spin-time vortex of their own making, rotating between now and then, each orbit of the Sun.

**Ben Woolley**, who might have been able to explain this duality, now lives in Washington state USA teaching maths although without the 's'. With Cantabrian colleagues, he claims to have published over 30 textbooks, and still dances occasionally, although no longer practises the veterinary medicine he studied at that other place. Meanwhile Professor **James McEvoy's** dog gained fourth prize at the Egham Royal Show for its waggy tail, perhaps content in the knowledge that Dr Woolley was an ocean away.

Long-distance chance meetings though are not as improbable as pure Newtonian considerations suggest. Dr **Anna Mather** (née **Field**) and **Nick Quin** were delighted to be randomly reacquainted in Sheffield recently, watching both their children win medals at the national diving competition held there, having mastered wave theory.

Whether each of you interprets the passage of time in a conventional, classical and deterministic sense or, rather uncertainly, takes a quantum of solace from its relativity, I trust that your news also is waggy, waltzy and winning, and that 1994 seems both yesterday and a three-decade half-life away, rather simultaneously.

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## 1995

**Year Representative: Tom Brown**  
Tel: 0207 827 4008

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## 1996

**Year Representative: Maria Pretzler**  
Email: m.pretzler@swansea.ac.uk

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## 1997

**Year Representatives: Catherine Sangster**  
Oxford University Press, Oxford, OX2 6DP  
Email: catherine.sangster@oup.com  
and **Jill Davies**  
Email: jilldavies1997@yahoo.co.uk

Congratulations to **Tim Taylor** and his wife Merryn who welcomed their daughter Kerenza on 18 March 2023. And best of luck to them with their building project – they are currently halfway through the challenge of renovating their house with a toddler in tow.

**Catherine Sangster** works in Oxford, as Head of Pronunciations for OUP's dictionaries; she does not usually get the chance to visit College while there. In November she had an evening free so decided to spend it at Merton. A beautiful Choral Evensong followed by dining at High Table and (since it was the right day of the week) delicious Second Dessert too. The food was excellent and the company extremely welcoming and interesting, and she hopes not to leave it so long before her next visit.

If you too would like to exercise your alumni dining rights, you just need to let the bursary know. See [www.merton.ox.ac.uk/alumni-and-friends/coming-back-to-college](http://www.merton.ox.ac.uk/alumni-and-friends/coming-back-to-college). The Porters' Lodge will even lend you a gown.

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## 1998

**Year Representative: Alexander J. Edmans**  
Email: aedmans@london.edu

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## 1999

**Year Representative: Andrew Tustian**  
Email: andrewtustian@hotmail.com

In September 2023, **Kieran Fenby-Hulse** (née **Hulse**) took up the position of Associate Dean for Research and Innovation at Teeside University. In this role, Kieran drives forward research on civic engagement, regional inequality and place leadership.

**Sophie Law** and family moved from Oxford to a thatched cottage in the vicinity of Rousham House in north Oxfordshire. She describes it as 'all Helen Allingham and rather idyllic'. She has seen a bit of **Tom Miller** (1997), who is still in Oxford, although she notes that they share very different views on Oxford City Council's traffic management schemes.

**Andrew Tustian** celebrated his 15th year at Regeneron Pharmaceuticals in New York this year. He can't believe how quickly time has passed. Since 2020, he has been leading a group designing industrial manufacturing processes for viral vectors for gene therapy. Fairly recently, he has also discovered the joy of tabletop role-playing games such as 'Dungeons & Dragons', which he would recommend to all and sundry.

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## 2000

**Year Representative: Alexander Perry**  
Email: alexpprey@gmail.com

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## 2001

**Year Representative:** Katherine Millard

Email: Katherine.I.millard@gmail.com

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## 2002

**Year Representative:** Ben Zurawel

Tel: 0207 832 0500 Email: ben.zurawel@gmail.com

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## 2003

**Year Representatives:** Andrew Godfrey-Collins and Helen Nicholas (née Beggs)

c/o Development Office, Merton College, Oxford, OX1 4JD

Email: publications@merton.ox.ac.uk

A mini Merton reunion took place in September last year at the wedding celebration of **Caroline Taylor** and Randy Duensing. **Patrick Butlin**, **Susannah Street**, **Naomi Pollock**, **Charlotte Ravenscroft** (née Gardiner) and husband **Tom** (2004), **Ellen Clarke**, **Eleanor Smith** (née Weber), **Emily Bourgeaud** (née Spence) and your Year Rep **Andrew Godfrey-Collins** gathered at the beautiful Beacon Fell Park near Preston.

Shortly after, in November 2023, Susannah and Patrick welcomed a gorgeous baby boy, Aidan. Susannah is taking maternity leave from her job at the House of Lords, and Patrick is working on the philosophy of AI at the Global Priorities Institute, Oxford.

**Olivia von Wulffen** and husband Rupert's daughter Antigone (Tiggy for short) was born in February this year. Antigone and her equally marvellously named older brother Peregrine even made it into the *Spectator* ('In praise of peculiar names').

**Nat Merry** is thrilled to announce she's marrying Kat Baier in October this year. Before that, she is participating in her first Paralympics this summer in Paris, as coach to the Hungarian para-archery team. This summer also marks eight years that Nat has been in business with **Kirsten Claiden-Yardley** at

Oxford Heritage Partnership (historic building consultants) and they are excited to see some of the trickier projects they have worked on finally reach completion.

With the official announcement of the BBC's *Wolf Hall: The Mirror and the Light*, Kirsten is relieved to be able to say that yes, there is going to be a second season of *Wolf Hall*, and she has been working as a researcher for the production team. She has also decided to venture into the world of historical re-enactment, beginning with a Tudor weekend at Speke Hall. Kirsten continues to live near Oxford with **Andy Jarvis** (2004) and their son, Alex.

**Alan Strickland** was elected as the first ever MP of the new Newton Aycliffe and Spennymoor constituency. Congratulations to Alan on the second biggest election win of his life so far since becoming JCR President back in 2004.

**Veronika Dapunt** is excited to share that her debut novel, *Death and Other Occupational Hazards*, will be published in spring 2025 by Penguin Random House.

As for your Year Reps: **Andrew Godfrey-Collins** was appointed a Fellow of the Institute of Translation and Interpreting in April this year. He's continuing to work as a translator and proofreader in Southampton, and recently also dipped his toes into the world of German tutoring. **Helen Nicholas** (née Beggs) has started teaching Scottish country dancing in Leeds, which has been challenging but rewarding and is giving a new perspective on a hobby she started while in Oxford.

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## 2004

**Year Representatives:** Natasha Beth, Nicola Davis and Gavin Freeguard

Email: merton2004@gmail.com

Another busy and exciting year for the class of 2004, with both professional and personal successes to report.

**Carl Anglim** and his now-wife Tiffany were married on Sunday 15 October at St James's Piccadilly by the Reverend Lucy Winkett. Carl reports that the newlyweds were treated

to a beautiful and crisp blue-sky day. Mertonians Tomas Furlong (2003) and Ania Camilla Dulnik (2010) were among the guests. Carl and Tiffany's planned 12 months of travel escalated into two years, but they have now put down their passports and returned home to London after a month in Venice in the spring. Prior to that, at the start of the year, Carl was awarded an honorary MBE in the King's New Year Honours List for services to young people in recognition of his time as a trustee and then chair of Oxfordshire Youth, of which he remains vice president.



Carl and Tiffany Anglim © Kris Piotrowski piotrowskiphoto.co.uk

Another 2004 Mertonian is also celebrating a prestigious award. **Gabriel Orebi Gann** was awarded the 2024 Instrumentation Early Career Award from the International Committee for Future Accelerators.

**Stewart Pringle** continues to work as a writer and dramaturg across the UK. His latest play *The Bounds*, set at a Northumbrian football match in the 16th century, opened at Live Theatre, Newcastle this summer before transferring to the Royal Court Theatre, London.

**Nussaibah Younis** got in touch to let us know that her debut novel *Fundamentally* will be published in February 2025 by Hachette in the UK and Penguin Random House in the US. It's a dark comedy about attempting to deradicalise ISIS brides, based somewhat on her recent gnarly posting in Baghdad. It will soon be available for pre-order for those who are curious. She is based in north London and can be found on X @nussaibah.

After three incredible and exhilarating (and occasionally stressful) years in Beirut, Lebanon, **Matt Paradis** is Los Angeles-bound. He'll be clocking in at the Consulate General of Canada, swapping the sun, sea, mountains and traffic of Beirut for the sun, sea ... [I see where this is going – Ed.]. Consul Matt will be occupied with all things migratory, but hopes to have enough time for a mid-life crisis, dyeing his hair and zipping around SoCal in a little blue convertible with unreasonably high monthly payments.

**Nicola Davis** and her family are settling in well to their new home, and cracking on with renovations. She is still science correspondent for the *Guardian*, tackling everything from space missions to health scandals. She recently enjoyed giving a keynote lecture on antimicrobial resistance and the media at a conference held at none other than Merton College. Nicola is still shooting (arrows), and embroidering Temari.

And finally, **Tash Beth** (née **Zitcer**) and her family have just about finished the renovations and unpacked the last of their boxes – only 11 months after moving in to their new home. Tash is looking forward to working for her new boss at the Department for Education (in an entirely neutral-civil-service-way, obviously) and is trying and failing to emotionally prepare herself for having a school-aged child from September.

## 2005

**Year Representative: Sara Edris**

Email: saraedris@hotmail.com

After six years living in Boston, **Katrina Price** has returned to London and continues to work for Wellington Management.

**Emma Harris** (née **Allinson**) and her husband Neil welcomed their second child, Ella, in January. Bethany (3) is being a super big sister and says Ella is her best friend. Long may that continue!

Having lived for over 30 years in Oxford, **Sara Edris** has moved to London, where she runs a tutoring company. She is also trying her hand at writing and illustrating children's books – an immensely satisfying yet time-consuming hobby.

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## 2006

**Year Representatives:** **James Dobias** (undergraduates)  
c/o Development Office, Merton College, Oxford, OX1 4JD  
Email: publications@merton.ox.ac.uk  
and **Gregory Lim** (graduates)  
Email: gbslim@gmail.com

### Graduates

**Gregory Lim** edited and published a book to celebrate the 400th anniversary of Sir William Borlase's Grammar School in Marlow, Buckinghamshire, where he was a student and where he is now a trustee and president of the alumni society, the Old Borlasian Club. He remains the secretary of the Merton Society and chief editor of *Nature Reviews Cardiology*.

**Yulia Savikovskaya** has been living in Russia this year but has actively tried to travel around the world, although it has become very challenging in recent years. She spent a month in Malaysia and has been to Spain, France and Germany for a theatre research trip twice, attending the Opéra de Paris, Staatsoper Berlin, Deutsche Oper, Berliner Ensemble, Comédie-Française, Theatre de la Ville, Die Schaubühne and other wonderful theatres. After graduating with an MA in Creative Writing (Moscow, Higher School of Economics) as a writer and translator in June 2023, she started a second PhD in Theatre at GITIS (Russian State Institute of Theatre Art) and is writing a dissertation on the English language versions of Chekhov drama and their productions on the modern British stage in the 21st century. She is also looking into publishing her Oxford DPhil dissertation on Russian highly skilled migration to the UK in Russian at New Literary Review Books.

Yulia visited Tambov (a city in central Russia) for the premiere of her play for children and adults, *The Snails*, in which a precocious boy aged six discovers some snails which he identifies as Martians looking for ways to go back to Mars. The play was produced as a sound drama, and there was a discussion with young children and their parents after the premiere, with the local TV coming to do an interview. Yulia has also had one of her novellas, *Ariadne on Naxos*, published

in the book *The Waiting Room* (Moscow, Higher School of Economics Publishing House, 2024). She is currently sending out her cycle of novellas, *The Renaissance*, to publishing houses in Moscow. She has also pitched her novel *Total Immersion* which, among other locations, features Oxford and is based on a real story that develops in Britain, Europe and the USA; she has had one response from Elena Shubina Publishing House in Moscow.

Yulia has been active as a theatre, opera and book critic and has had around 60 publications in Russian and English in *The Stage* (Moscow), *Strastnoy Bulvar, 10* (Moscow), *St Petersburg Theatre Magazine* (St Petersburg), *Classical Music News*, *Music Life* (Moscow), *Music Review* (Moscow), *Gorky Magazine* (Moscow) and *London Cult* (London) on current theatre and opera productions in Europe and Russia, as well as new fiction published in French and English. She still misses Oxford a lot and, to indulge her nostalgic feelings, is sketching out a mystery novel, *Merton vs Merton*, which will feature an evil professor staging a cruel experiment and a group of Merton Quiz Society students trying to find the truth behind a chain of cancel culture events, with Merton College providing inspiration, historical details and the setting. She hopes that it will become a world bestseller, so that she can proudly bring a copy back to her College one day.

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## 2007

**Year Representative:** **Alistair Haggerty**  
Tel: 07809 357351 Email: alistairjhaggerty@gmail.com

Thank you to those who sent me updates: it was fantastic to hear from you and find out what you have been doing over the last year. It would be great to hear from you again next year, and indeed from others who may not have sent me something in the past – it is never too late to make your *Postmaster* debut!

Starting with those who have been making waves overseas, **Enrico Prodi** is now based in Sardinia, having recently taken up a position as Assistant Professor in Greek Language and Literature at the University of Cagliari. This follows a year as a Research Fellow in Papyrology at UCL.

Since February, **Sarah Hird** has been living in Addis Ababa, after moving from London to Ethiopia. She has been working as the Country Director for Trade and Investment at the British Embassy and leads a team responsible for supporting British businesses seeking to export to, or invest, in the country. She is due to be in Ethiopia for three years and is keen to host visitors.

**Janina Dill** is based much closer to home. She was recently appointed as the inaugural Dame Louise Richardson Chair in Global Security at the Blavatnik School of Government in Oxford. This is a new chair position named in honour of the University's previous Vice-Chancellor.

**John Lee Allen** recently launched a venture capital fund in healthcare called RYSE Asset Management. It has already invested in Braingaze, a new technology which offers a non-invasive digital solution for the early detection, diagnosis and therapy of neuro-cognitive problems.

**Katharine Broadhurst** (née Pates) and Alex celebrated the arrival of baby Rory in March. Two months later, **Katherine Watson** and Stella Dilke welcomed their second child, a son called Jamie, in May.

## 2008

**Year Representative:** Alice Salvage  
Email: Alice.salvage@gmail.com

After 15 years together **Verity Parkinson** and **Rob Day** finally got around to getting married in April. It was very low-key (family-only at Reading Town Hall), but they haven't ruled out an anniversary party next year with actual socialising. The honeymoon in Alnwick involved multiple visits to one of the UK's largest second-hand bookshops. Verity is still working as a librarian at Merton, and Rob is leaving Microsoft to join a healthcare start-up in London in October.

## 2009

**Year Representative:** Stephanie Cadoux-Hudson  
Email: scadouxhudson@gmail.com

## 2010

**Year Representative:** Martin Schmidbaur  
Email: martin.schmidbaur@gmail.com

It's that time of year again, when I write to you all on the goings-on of the 2010 matriculation year of Mertonians far and wide. Coming to you from my new home in Milton, a small town outside of Boston, where my wife Molly and I are expecting our first in November.

Emma, Kit, Molly and Daniel Crowe



Back in the UK, **Emma** and **Dan Crowe** welcomed their second, Kit Henry, in December. Henry's big sister Molly is already a big fan.

**Ruth Mitchell**, who is still in Manchester making her way through pediatric training, also had another baby – George – on 23 May. Hello George!

**Luke Hughes** and his partner Anna had a baby, Phoebe Hughes, born on 27 June 2024. Phoebe's older brother Ted is ready to assume big brother responsibilities.



Proud new dad Andrew O'Flaherty with his son Max

**Andrew O'Flaherty** wrote in as a proud – ‘shamelessly proud’, in his own words – new dad to son Max, born on 3 January 2024. Andrew also launched his own business, Fighting Financials, providing investment ideas in the financial services space. We wish Andrew the best of luck with all his newfound responsibilities.

There are more entrepreneurs in our midst. **Lydia Paris** recently launched her own business and culture change consultancy, The Future Works. She's excited about taking her experience in culture consulting to help her clients embed purpose, belonging and empowerment into their organisations. Lydia says she's ready for the new adventure, and 'learning to trust the process'. You can support Lydia on her entrepreneurial journey by following her on LinkedIn.

**Laura Burnett**, along with her cat and husband, will have moved to North Wales by the time you read this. After ten years of working in tech and living in London, she is looking forward to life by the sea, and starting a Master's programme in Conservation and Land Management at Bangor University.

Laura was also kind enough to report back from **Sara Wehlin's** hen do and wedding, which also featured an appearance by the inimitable **Richard Hill**.

About her wedding, Sara writes: 'We had a great time with lots of great food and dance and I was so happy to be able to have

some of my Merton friends join us. We also had another big change, as this April our little baby girl, Noa, joined our family.' Congratulations to Sara and the growing Wehlin family.



Laura, Richard and bride-to-be Sara

**Jess Odone** moved to Cambridge with her partner Will, where they bought a house they're currently in the process of fixing up and making into a home.

As of writing, **George Lockett** and his fiancée Charlotte were looking to finalise an offer on a new home. We keep our fingers crossed for their new home to come through smoothly.

**Chas Lake** and his partner Sarah were planning to say 'I do' in September 2024, and we hope to share photos of the ceremony in next year's *Postmaster*.

In my time writing this, I've been lucky in getting to share a lot of happy life updates. This year, we are painfully reminded that life comes not just with profound moments of joy, but also with its moments of loss and grief. It's with immense sadness that I'm writing to share that last October, **Catrin** and **Tom Bucknall's** daughter Freya passed away suddenly and unexpectedly in hospital, at 11 months old. Catrin and Tom, who are since expecting and due in December, have asked for friends, family and anyone willing to contribute to make a donation to 2wish, a charity supporting family members following the sudden passing of a child. We couldn't think of a better way of treasuring Freya's memory. The website for this can be found at this shortened link: [tinyurl.com/3n8uhkhk](https://tinyurl.com/3n8uhkhk)

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## 2011

**Year Representative:** Tim Foot  
Email: tim.foot@gmail.com

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## 2012

**Year Representative:** Stephanie Cadoux-Hudson  
Email: scadouxhudson@gmail.com

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## 2013

*There is currently no Year Representative for 2013. Please contact development@merton.ox.ac.uk if you are interested in the role.*

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## 2014

**Year Representative:** Sarah Bosworth  
Email: sarahlboshworth@gmail.com  
Tel: 07540 079711

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## 2015

**Year Representative:** Cuong Quang  
Email: cquangc@gmail.com

**Il-Kweon Sir** is a Leverhulme Trust and Isaac Newton Trust Early Career Fellow at the Faculty of Classics at the University of Cambridge. He reports that he has been appointed Assistant Professor of Classics at the University of Western Ontario. He will leave for Canada in the summertime. He teaches broadly in Greek and Latin languages and literature and his main research interests are in Greek lyric, literary theory and wellbeing.

**Freddie Crowley** reports that he will be releasing a new album with the professional choir that he directs, Corvus Consort.

Congratulations to both Il-Kweon and Freddie with their new ventures, and we wish them both the best.

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## 2016

**Year Representative:** Henry Grub  
Email: henrygrub@outlook.com

**Axel Almet** and **Liisa Veerus** got married on 25 September 2023 and finally returned to Oxford for their post-pandemic DPhil graduations on 11 May 2024, on the seventh anniversary of their first date in Oxford. They're both carrying on their postdocs in the US.

**Tom Fetherstonhaugh's** career goes from strength to strength as he made his BBC Proms debut this summer with Fantasia Orchestra – you may have seen him too, as one of his two performances was televised!

Over in the academic sphere, **Lydia Buckingham** was awarded a PhD in maths from the University of Bath in April 2024, and indeed managed to publish no less than five papers during the course of her studies! She is now working as a teacher at Loughborough University.

**Richard Avadanutei** was awarded a PGCE from Homerton College, Cambridge, and has been teaching chemistry in Hertfordshire. He is soon moving to teach at Eltham College, Bromley. Less academically, but equally impressively, he recently earned a blue belt in Brazilian jiu jitsu.

**Laura Tarkanyi** spent the past year going through a manic poetry phase, and did provide a haiku as evidence!

Excitingly, **Andrew Doyle** is delighted to announce the birth of a baby daughter, Laura. We send our congratulations.

**Lukas Krone** completed a very inspiring 'Sleep Cycle' from Oxford to the International Neuroscience Conference in Vienna, raising funds for Homeless Oxfordshire to provide one homeless person with a safe place to sleep for an entire year. You can still donate to his fundraiser: [gofundme.com/sleep-cycle-2024](https://gofundme.com/sleep-cycle-2024).

**Lucienne Pullen** reports that the medic cohort are about to finish their foundation training, with **Adam Carter** and

**Francesco Dernie** starting internal medicine training in London, **Ibrahim El-Gaby** also heading for internal medicine, **Lucienne Pullen** and **Josh Navarajasegaren** staying around Oxford for psychiatry and paediatrics core training respectively, and **Daniel Adeyoju** working in ENT and ophthalmology in Reading. The best of luck to all six as they begin their specialist training!

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## 2017

**Year Representative: Adrian Burbie**

Email: adrian.burbie@outlook.com

A short but sweet update from the 2017 group this year.

**Wick Willett** is enjoying his new life in the Irish Guards having spent a first year being deployed to places as exotic as Kenya, Nigeria and America. He will begin ceremonial duties in September, much to the delight of selfie-taking tourists due to visit the Palace. Do pop along and look out for the man in red with the big hat.

Meanwhile, **Lieu Zheng Hong** has founded a crypto start-up in New York and is keen to hear from others in, or passing through, the Big Apple. Whether his will be the next meme stock remains to be seen. Either way, watch this space.

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## 2018

**Year Representative: Rebecca Smithson**

Email: rsmithson00@hotmail.com

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## 2019

*There is currently no Year Representative for 2019. Please contact [development@merton.ox.ac.uk](mailto:development@merton.ox.ac.uk) if you are interested.*

**Charlie Lamb** says that she has completed teacher training and that she is now an A-level biology teacher in a local sixth form college.

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## 2020

**Year Representative: Roheena Buckland**

Email: bucklandr@outlook.com

It has been a busy year. Having just graduated, people have been starting jobs, finishing dissertations, and fitting in enough wild adventures to fill a small library.

**Carl Haller**, having finished his MChem degree this summer, is looking forward to starting a Chemistry DPhil with the Rauschenbach and Robinson groups at Oxford in October. Though he is moving to another college, he hopes to maintain close connections with Merton, which he feels will always remain his first home in Oxford.

In the spirit of further study, starting this August **Alex Gattegno** will be attending the University of Minnesota Law School in hopes of earning his JD. He is very much looking forward to the opportunity to study at one of the USA's best public law schools, especially with their emphasis on public interest and international law.

Meanwhile, **George Adams** has just finished his Master's in English (1700–1830) at Harris Manchester College, Oxford, including a dissertation on PB Shelley and philosophy. In September he will be starting a diploma year in Fine and Applied Arts at the King's Foundation in London.

Returning to Merton after an incredible year abroad in Spain (2022–23), **Holly Plater** was pleased to spend June and July 2023 furthering her dissertation research into the Spanish playwright Lope de Vega and his 1625 play *El Brasil restituído*, which details the Spanish-Portuguese recapture of the Brazilian city of Bahia. After four years of hard work, she is thrilled to be graduating with a first-class degree in History and Spanish, alongside having been awarded the Dolores Oria Merino Prize in Written Spanish for the best performance in the year in Spanish prose. She is happy to have improved her language skills, including through online classes throughout her second year, for which she is grateful to the College for the financial support provided. She is currently excited to see what the future will bring, but notes that she will miss Merton very much.

**Jeremi Litarowicz** spent a year reading Italian and French 16th-century art at the Courtauld, having just finished his Master's in Physics. After a year of self-described 'gallivanting' in some of Europe's most beautiful places, he is now working on adapting his thesis on the myth of Jason in Fontainebleau for publication. In his spare time, he helped bring back the Austrian Ball to London, organising the music for the dance at the Austrian Ambassador's residence.

Moving further afield, since graduating in June, **Jessica Hancock** spent six months travelling around Australia and New Zealand. In particular, Jess has lived in Sydney and worked for the university alumni relations office. She has now returned to the UK and is in the process of applying to the Essex Police Degree Holder Entry Programme. Jess is currently hoping to start training as a detective in the next few months.

Meanwhile, **Declan Nelson** has moved to New York. He informs the reader that he is now the proud renter of a diminutive and outrageously expensive flat, where he sleeps each night before going to work in an office building that he has nicknamed 'the Tower of Babel'.

This side of the pond, **Ed Fage's** job offer in London was deferred by a year, and so he is delighted to have been focusing on what he enjoys. In summer 2023, he cycled from Land's End to John O'Groats with Paul Zimmer-Harwood (2019) and hiked the John Muir Trail in California with **Max Risher**. After spending a few months back in the UK learning some coding skills, he moved to Australia in January. He grew a moustache and a mullet to blend in with the locals and got a bartending job in the beachside town of Byron Bay. He spent his free time in Byron surfing and hanging out on the beach, then hiked 250km in the desert mountains of Central Australia. At the time of writing, he has just finished a 10-day canoeing trip with **Max Risher** and **Tim Western** in the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness in the United States. They had an amazing time and Ed looks forward to returning to London and starting work in September.

Speaking of work and Merton, **Imogen Walsh** took up a one-year job in the Christ Church Development Office as its graduate scheme development associate. She has enjoyed meeting some incredible people and learning a lot about what

goes on behind the scenes of an Oxford college. Imogen is also pleased that being in Oxford meant that she could still row with the Merton College Boat Club and was honoured to stroke the blade winning the Women's 2nd VIII this year. As her time at Christ Church comes to an end she is looking forward to the next adventure: hopefully moving to Zurich, Switzerland.

Over in London, **Sadie Chamberlain** has been working in advertising for the last year at a media agency, which includes buying media space and planning media strategy. It's fun job with lots to get involved in and she feels fortunate to have been part of exciting campaigns and pitches, including building a train in the video game Roblox which has won various awards.

On the artistic side: since graduating, **Anna Stephens** has written and directed plays at the Edinburgh Fringe and at the Bread & Roses Theatre in London. She works freelance for a literary scouting agency and is about to start a three-month internship in the rights department of a publishing company. Anna recently spent three weeks backpacking in France to improve her spoken French, and states (modestly) that she has become moderately proficient behind a bar.

Following her history degree, **Victoria Moon** started the graduate programme at PwC training to become a chartered accountant within its audit department. Starting with little idea of what audit actually was, she's quickly been able to discover more about the industry, working with companies ranging from social media networks to car manufacturers. She has particularly enjoyed working at a large firm and getting involved in the less traditional aspects of work such as organising charity events and continuing her love of netball at university by playing for the PwC netball team. Vicki notes that while the first year of work has been a steep learning curve, including completing eight out of the 15 industry exams she needs, she has enjoyed every moment of it and can't wait to see what the remaining two years of the training programme will hold.

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## 2021 and 2022

*There are currently no Year Representatives for 2021 and 2022. Please contact [development@merton.ox.ac.uk](mailto:development@merton.ox.ac.uk) if you are interested in the role.*

# In Memoriam



# Deaths Notified

We have sadly learned of the following deaths:

|                         |                      |                      |
|-------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| <b>Emeritus Fellows</b> | <b>1952</b>          | <b>1964</b>          |
| George Radda            | David S Law*         | John Randall         |
| Dominic Welsh*          | <b>1953</b>          | <b>1965</b>          |
| <b>Honorary Fellows</b> | John CQ Roberts*     | Paul Woodruff*       |
| John Boardman*          | Wilfred Webber       | <b>1966</b>          |
| Francis Finlay*         | <b>1954</b>          | Anthony Holden*      |
| <b>Former Fellows</b>   | David Jarman         | <b>1968</b>          |
| Jenni Nuttall           | Edwin (Ted) Mullins* | Stuart Ferguson      |
| Ian Granville           | Donald (Mike) Rines* | <b>1974</b>          |
| Thompson                | Gordon Sladen        | Philip Endean        |
| <b>Former Staff</b>     | <b>1955</b>          | <b>1975</b>          |
| <b>Members</b>          | Lionel Jebb*         | Nick Hitchon*        |
| Dave Hedges             | Andrew Maczek*       | Michael Nicholas*    |
| Steve Richards          | <b>1956</b>          | <b>1979</b>          |
| <b>1942</b>             | Mike Edwards*        | Mike Eaton*          |
| Ralph Thornton          | Edward Selig*        | <b>1982</b>          |
| <b>1943</b>             | <b>1957</b>          | Sara Hall*           |
| Philip Holden           | Brian Hands          | <b>1983</b>          |
| <b>1944</b>             | Christopher Phelps   | Vincent Knights      |
| Ron Charlwood*          | Richard Wallace      | <b>1991</b>          |
| <b>1946</b>             | Robert (Robin)       | Nicholas Leigh-Hunt* |
| Michael Franks*         | Wilshaw*             | Rachael Hepburn      |
| <b>1947</b>             | Richard Woollett*    | (née Brookman)*      |
| James Midwood           | <b>1958</b>          | <b>1997</b>          |
| <b>1948</b>             | Peter Scawen Blunt   | Maisie Ooi           |
| James Firth             | Robert Sich          | <b>2003</b>          |
| <b>1949</b>             | David Waterhouse*    | Barry Minton         |
| Hugh Podger             | <b>1959</b>          | <b>2008</b>          |
| <b>1950</b>             | Peter Rycraft        | James Moxness*       |
| John Barber             | John Williams*       |                      |
| Alan Brownjohn          | <b>1961</b>          |                      |
| <b>1951</b>             | Allen Mau            |                      |
| Christopher Cuming      | Phil Moss            |                      |
| Joseph James (Jim)      | <b>1962</b>          |                      |
| Murray*                 | Bernard Price*       |                      |

\* denotes full obituary

## Emeritus Fellow



**Emeritus Fellow Dominic Welsh** sadly passed away on 30 November 2023.

Dominic came up to Merton College in 1957, where he completed his undergraduate degree in 1960. After a brief period in North America, he returned to Oxford as a postgraduate in 1961. In 1962, he was awarded a NATO studentship, and he completed his DPhil under John Hammersley in 1964. Dominic was appointed Junior Lecturer at the Mathematical Institute in 1963 and became a Tutor and Fellow at Merton in 1966.

Within the University, he was promoted to a Readership in 1990 and a personal Chair in 1992, while retaining his Fellowship at Merton. He attained the retirement age of 67 in 2005, becoming Emeritus Fellow and Professor. He died in Oxford on 30 November 2023 after a period of illness. His funeral and Requiem Mass took place in the College Chapel on 16 December 2023, followed on 1 June 2024 by a memorial service.

At Merton, Dominic held numerous leadership positions, serving as Principal of the Postmasters (1970–73), Pro-Proctor (1979–80), Sub-Warden (1982–84) and Wine Steward (1996–2001). Within the University, he served as Chair of the Faculty (1976–78), of the Board of Mathematical Sciences (1984–86), and of the Mathematical Institute (1996–2001).

Dominic was elected to the London Mathematical Society in 1969 and served as Publications Secretary and Member of Council from 1972 to 1976. He was also on the editorial boards of several leading journals and was a sought-after speaker at international conferences.

With regard to scholarly output, Dominic was prolific and influential in the areas of combinatorics, complexity, and probability. The Russo–Seymour–Welsh estimate in percolation theory is partly named after Dominic, whose work in percolation began with his exposition of first-passage percolation in his doctoral thesis, ‘On stochastic processes, with special reference to percolation theory’. This work has had a lasting impact on the field and is a testament to his foundational contributions to mathematical research.

His academic work spanned over 50 years, during which he supervised 28 DPhil students and collaborated with more than 50 academics on numerous papers and books. His contributions to combinatorial theory were particularly significant during the 1960s and 1970s, a golden era for the field. He organised the 1969 Oxford Conference, which became the First British Combinatorial Conference, an event that laid the foundation for the ongoing British Combinatorial Conference series.

Dominic authored several books that are notable for their clear exposition, producing an elementary volume on probability alongside his advanced texts, *Matroid Theory*; *Codes and Cryptography*; *Complexity*; *Knots*; *Colourings and Counting*; and *Complexity and Cryptography* (co-authored with John Talbot). His work was recognised internationally, and in 2006, he was awarded the degree of Doctor of Mathematics, *honoris causa*, by the University of Waterloo for his work in combinatorial mathematics. His friends and colleagues marked his retirement from Oxford in 2005 by the publication of a collection of articles on topics close to his heart.

Dominic was known not only for his academic excellence but also for his dedication to his students. He was a generous and devoted tutor, welcoming students into his family home and engaging them in discussions that often led to collaborative research. His approachability and passion for mathematics made a lasting impression on those he taught and mentored.

Dominic’s legacy lives on through his former students, his extensive body of work, and his influence on the academic community. His contributions to Merton College, the

Mathematical Institute, and the field of mathematics are enduring, and he will be remembered as an eminent scholar, a dedicated tutor, and a cherished colleague. The thoughts of his many friends are with his wife Bridget and his family; he was a devoted father to James, Simon, and John, and grandfather to his four grandchildren.

**Professor Ulrike Tillmann FRS** remembers Dominic: ‘Dominic was a much-loved tutor who inspired his students to do their best. His love for mathematics and problem-solving was infectious. But beyond that he believed in the individual and valued effort more than ability. Many of his students went on to have flourishing careers in academia and beyond. I was fortunate to work alongside Dominic for 13 years as mathematics tutor and learnt a lot from him. He was a respected and valued colleague, loyal to the College of which he was a member for most of his life: first as a student, then as tutor and Fellow. While Principal of Postmasters, his compassionate approach shone through and he and his wife Bridget offered many a student a home away from home. He was highly regarded at Merton and at the Mathematical Institute, which he led as departmental chairman for several years in the 1990s.’

**Professor Sir Andrew Wiles FRS** (1971) writes: ‘I first met Dominic at my undergraduate interview in Merton. I don’t remember much of it except for his genuine warmth. He asked me at one point to explain epsilon/delta arguments and I thought of making a stab at it, but decided it was better not to make a hash of it. In truth I had really never learned it. So after a 30-second silence I just said that I didn’t know – and he brushed over it and put me at my ease. It was the same when I was his student in the first year. He accepted that I had strong tastes in mathematics and did not complain that my performance was much better in some areas than in others. For the rest of his life, he and Bridget would always welcome me back to Oxford in the summers and especially in the years 1988–90. When I finally moved back for good in 2011, I moved into what had been his office and the memories of earlier visits came back with it. Not everything in the all-male Merton world of my undergraduate days would I wish to remember but Dominic’s presence was certainly the best part of it and I will always cherish his friendship and kindness then and afterwards.’

**Professor Colin McDiarmid** (1970) remembers Dominic: 'Before I came to Oxford to start graduate work I had certainly enjoyed mathematics, but with Dominic as supervisor the game changed. Mathematics became very exciting, with a playful side, something to share. From the beginning Dominic and Bridget made me feel very much at home in Merton and in Oxford. He was a great storyteller, always with a smile and a laugh. Often we would meet at his home, with family around. More happy memories are at workshops or conferences where it was always so full of life around Dominic. He was a great supervisor, certainly my model. Before long he was a good friend as well as a mentor, then a much respected and loved colleague, and now much missed.'

**Professor Steve Noble** (New College, 1990) writes: 'In the 1990s the combinatorial group in Oxford was much smaller than now, comprising mainly Dominic and Colin McDiarmid and their graduate students. The Combinatorial Theory seminar was the main event of the week. The highlight of the seminar was the discussion afterwards, when Dominic would interrogate the speaker in a jovial but probing way. A speaker was never allowed to get away with a vague claim, and Dominic was never afraid to ask a question. Some of his questions were deep, and some less so, but there was an important third category that sounded silly at first but somehow pointed to the nub of a topic in a way which no one else had considered, often suggesting connections between apparently unrelated areas. I assumed that it was always like this, but I have never come across anyone who could do whatever it was Dominic did to make the discussion so lively and informative. I learnt a huge amount from Dominic, much of it from these informal discussions.'

*Adapted from an obituary by Geoffrey Grimmett FRS which will be published in the Bulletin of the London Mathematical Society this autumn.*

## Honorary Fellows



**Professor Sir John Boardman (1927–2024)** passed away on 24 May, 2024, aged 96. Sir John was a classical archaeologist of colossal stature who mentored many generations of Oxford graduates.

He was educated at Chigwell School in Essex and Magdalene College Cambridge during and immediately after the Second World War. Following his National Service, he carried out research in Greece and served as Assistant Director of the British School at Athens from 1952 to 1955. In that year he was appointed Assistant Keeper at the Ashmolean Museum. He became Reader in Classical Archaeology at Oxford in 1959 and in 1978 he was appointed Lincoln Professor of Classical Archaeology and Art in succession to Martin Robertson.

John had excavated early in his career at Emporio on Chios and Tocra in Libya, but his interests were principally art-historical. Their thematic and geographical breadth was immense, ranging from vase-painting and engraved gems of all periods to Central Asian sculpture and ancient Chinese bronzes. His global perspective was outlined in *The World of Ancient Art* (2006). But it was his expertise in Archaic and Classical Greek art, and especially Attic pottery, which secured his fame. He received a knighthood in 1989. His 60-year relationship with Thames and Hudson produced more than a dozen books, including seven volumes on Greek vase-painting and sculpture in the World of Arts series, which were translated into several languages. In all he wrote some 45 books, co-authored 17 more, and produced well over 300 articles and book chapters.

John was a leader in the international community of classical

archaeology. He helped to shepherd the Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae to successful completion – a project of monumental scale and complexity – and with Robertson he was closely involved in the formation of the Beazley Archive as a scholarly resource after Sir John Beazley’s death in 1970. Following his retirement in 1994, John continued to be affiliated with the Beazley Archive, later the Classical Art Research Centre, working there virtually every day until the pandemic began in 2020. From this base he completed numerous projects on engraved gems – his most consistent research interest – many in collaboration with Dr Claudia Wagner.

Our condolences go to his children and grandchildren.

By the Classical Art Research Centre

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**David Francis Kerr Finlay, CMG OBE**, died peacefully on 29 September 2023, aged 80, at his home in Pine Plains, New York.

Francis Finlay was a distinguished businessman and significant donor to Merton.

Francis came up to Merton in 1962, where he matriculated in Chemistry and had an active student life, including involvement with the Merton Floats Society.

Early in his career, he held senior investment management positions at Morgan Guaranty Trust in New York and Lazard Frères in Paris and New York, and was a member of the investment committees of both institutions. Later, he was Chairman and CEO of Clay Finlay Inc., a global investment management firm based in New York, which he co-founded in 1982. The firm was acquired in 2000 and Francis stepped

down from an executive role in 2006.

He served as an Adjunct Professor at Columbia University School of Business between 1981 and 1986 and was a governor of the London Business School from 2002 to 2011. He was also a Chartered Financial Analyst.

Francis Finlay’s interests outside the investment world included serving as a trustee of the British Museum, Chairman of the James Martin 21st Century Foundation which funds the Oxford Martin School, and a governor and trustee of the Ditchley Foundation.

In Oxford, he was a member of the Chancellor’s Court of Benefactors, which recognises and celebrates the most outstanding friends and supporters of Oxford University. At Merton, the Finlay Building and the Finlay family crest in Hall are testament to his long-standing and generous support for the College.

By Merton College

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## 1944



**Dr Ronald (Ron) Charlwood, 1926–2024**

Born in 1926 in the London borough of Merton, Ronald (Ron) Charlwood died on 30 April 2024 from nothing in particular other than frailty of old age and a deep sense of contentment that he’d completed a fulfilled and wonderful life.

Growing up in Eastbourne, as a youngster he became an enthusiastic and able aeroplane spotter, making detailed

notes and drawings of all the Second World War planes he'd seen flying over Sussex as well as VI Doodlebugs on their way to London. Among other things he wrote about was seeing a bomb drop from a Messerschmitt 109 near his school and how the windows were blown in when it went off but no one was hurt.

His headmaster at Lewes Grammar School, Neville Bradshaw, was a Mertonian and strongly encouraged Ron to apply to the College so in 1944 he went up to Oxford to read History. In 1945, as part of the war generation, Ron joined the RAF flying solo in a Tiger Moth just before the war ended. He returned to Merton in 1948 after a frustrating period doing administrative work for the MOD in the Aldwych. Back at Oxford he restlessly switched subjects, reading Agriculture for a year before learning that the course overlapped significantly with Medicine, so he switched again and eventually qualified as a doctor. The College asked him, reasonably enough, to fund his own way for a year and he did so from the money he had saved while in the RAF.

As a medic at Oxford, Ron was a keen member of the Tingewick Society, helping to put on two Christmas shows, and he occasionally wore its pink elephant tie in later life. He also played a vigorous and effective game of squash and was the College captain. Qualifying as a GP, he practised in Warboys, Crawley and Bourn in Cambridgeshire, and then Aylesbury before emigrating briefly to Tusket, Nova Scotia in 1966. He returned to the UK in 1967 to be a GP in Chandlers Ford, where he joined forces with a contemporary from Oriel. He then helped build a flourishing practice of patients over a period of 24 years, many of whom got to know him well. He was, and remained to the end, a strong believer in home visits and how the essential nature of being a family doctor was to know the family and for the family to know him. Shortly after he retired, he calculated that he'd performed roughly 250,000 patient consultations.

With his wife Paddy, whom he married in 1950, he travelled extensively before and during retirement, seeing both Mao's and Lenin's mausoleums. Together they also tended the land that they had acquired in Hampshire when they moved to a small hamlet called Hensting. They spent many months planting a wood and had the satisfaction of seeing the trees

reach heights of 60 feet or more as the years passed. They particularly enjoyed entertaining their four grandchildren there by teaching them to drive a small tractor and trailer.

Ron always spoke affectionately of Merton and Oxford and was a frequent returner, making his final visit to the College in 2023. In his last months, spent in Marlborough, he kept up to date by reading the *Economist* and he followed AI developments closely.

Paddy died in 2022 after a marriage that lasted an impressive 72 years. The couple were predeceased by their daughter Janet and are survived by their other children, Deborah and William, four grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.

Two Merton Choir pieces were played at his funeral as well as 'A Spoonful of Sugar'.

**By his son, William Charlwood**

## 1946



**Michael John Alan Franks, 1928–2020**

After attending Epsom College, Michael Franks studied classics and law at Merton as a Postmaster. He was also involved in sailing and rugby. He worked as a barrister in the 1950s, for Shell in the 1960s, and in the 1970s–80s held directorships of several companies.

In retirement Franks happened to live near Walter de Merton's home town of Basingstoke. The connection inspired him to research and produce a biography of the Founder.

*The Clerk of Basingstoke: A Life of Walter de Merton* (2003), which is illustrated with photographs of buildings and places connected with de Merton and also includes an assessment of the Founder's legacy. In undertaking this work, Franks was advised by his close contemporary Geoffrey Martin (1947), by Roger Highfield (1948) and by William Alden (1973). He bequeathed the copyright in the book to the College.

Having caught the 'bug' for historical research, Franks went on to produce two more books: *The Basingstoke Admiral* (2006), about James Lancaster who commanded the first voyage of the East India Company (1601–3), and *The Court, the Atlantic and the City: Sir Walter Raleigh v William Sanderson* (2009), about Walter Raleigh and his nephew, the merchant William Sanderson.

Robert Peberdy (1975)

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## 1951



**Joseph James (Jim) Murray, Jr.** passed away peacefully at his home in Charlottesville on 5 September 2023.

Jim was born on 13 March 1930, in Lexington, Virginia, and he was educated at Davidson College (1947–51) and Merton College, Oxford (Rhodes Scholar, 1951–54). He served in the US Army (1955–56) and then taught for two years at Washington and Lee University in Lexington, before returning to Oxford to earn a DPhil in Zoology. In 1962, he joined the Biology Faculty of the University of Virginia.

Jim's main research interests were ecological genetics and the evolution of animal populations. His research on land

snails took him to the British Isles, Australia, and on many trips to Polynesia, where he studied the native snails of the genus *Partula*. At UVA, Jim chaired the Department of Biology from 1984 to 1987; served as director of the Mountain Lake Biological Station for 13 summers between 1964 and 1990; and mentored several generations of graduate students. He was a fellow and former president of the Virginia Academy of Sciences and a board member of the Virginia Museum of Natural History. He also chaired the university's arboretum committee for over 20 years, often saying that this was his favourite university committee.

Jim was an active mountain climber and lifelong conservationist. He spent many happy days exploring peaks and valleys from the Himalayas to the Alps to the Appalachians of his native Virginia. Throughout his life, he worked tirelessly to preserve wilderness areas on Virginia's public lands. A founding member of the Virginia Wilderness Committee, Jim served as its president in 1970 and again from 1997 to 2007. He helped to shepherd the passage of six wilderness bills through the US Congress (1975–2009), which added over 200,000 acres to the National Wilderness Preservation System.

Jim also loved planting and nurturing trees, woodworking, Scottish dancing, and sustainable farming with his family at Bentivar. He was predeceased by his wife, Elizabeth H (Bess) Murray, and is survived by his three children: Joseph J (Joe) Murray III of Charlottesville, along with his wife Andee and daughters Maggie and Erin; Alison J (Tiki) Murray Levine of Charlottesville, along with her husband Stephen and daughter Sophia; and William L (Will) Murray of Long Beach, California, along with his wife Rhonda. He was proud of his three granddaughters and delighted in their stories and accomplishments.

By his son, Joe Murray

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## 1952



**David Sherwell Law**, 18 June 1932 – 19 January 2024

David was born at the family home in Wellingborough, Northamptonshire. His father worked as a travelling buyer and salesman for Whitworths, which produced flour.

Despite not passing his 11+ exam, David was 'wangled' into Wellingborough Grammar shortly before his tenth birthday. The family lived next door to the school, it was wartime, and his father was ARP Warden for the area. David's academic career didn't have a promising beginning, but, through a combination of hard work and peer pressure, he worked his way up. Staff selected him as head boy for two consecutive years. He was tall and athletic, and showed prowess and leadership at sport, particularly rugby and cricket. He commented that sport kept him sane when struggling with the academic work. He also attributed much of the later success of his working life to his time at school and to the sacrifices that his parents made for him.

David somehow contrived to spend four years in the equivalent of the sixth form, gaining an Exhibition to study Chemistry at Merton College. He chose to defer his place until after two years of National Service with the Royal Signals from 1950, mostly based in Aldershot, where he began his lifelong love of good food.

David took up his place at Oxford in 1952 where he met Pamela Batstone from Lady Margaret Hall who was also studying Chemistry, and whom he married in 1958. His tutor was Dr Courtenay Phillips. He continued to enjoy sport at

Oxford, captaining a successful Merton rugby team in the 1955–56 season and playing once for the University and several times for Northampton Saints. He met many people, forming strong bonds with some of them in the lab or on the rugby field, and remaining friends for many years after.

He retained an active interest in Merton College throughout the remainder of his life and enjoyed reading *Postmaster* and returning for College gaudies.

After graduating in 1956 he started work in the R&D Department at ICI Fibres in Harrogate. He remained with the company for the whole of his working life. He and Pamela moved north where David worked in production at ICI Wilton. Their daughters, Jane and Alison, were born at this time. In 1964 David moved to Northern Ireland to be Plant Manager of the new ICI factory at Kilroot. In 1967 he was seconded to SANS near Cape Town for nine months and then returned to Northern Ireland, later becoming Works Manager. He went back to ICI Wilton as Works Manager in 1981, followed by three years at the helm of both ICI Gloucester and ICI Pontypool. Several of his work colleagues from different periods of his career recall him with great respect and affection, as both a good boss to work for and as a 'proper gentleman'.

In 1989 David retired to wholeheartedly embrace a new chapter of his life in Guisborough, Cleveland. He and Pamela enjoyed walking in that lovely part of the country, as well as tackling long-distance footpaths, visiting far-flung properties, gardens and friends, and holidaying overseas. He worked hard and with great satisfaction to develop his garden. He enjoyed following the fortunes of Northampton Saints and Oxford University XVs. He played bridge and took cookery lessons.

In the early 2000s Pamela sadly developed signs of dementia and she passed away in 2008. David continued to live independently in his beloved home until he was admitted to hospital just a few days before he died peacefully at the age of 91.

**By his elder daughter, Jane Teague**

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## 1953



**John CQ Roberts** died on 10 April 2024.

John Charles Quentin Roberts was born in Ruislip in 1933. He won an open scholarship to King's College, Taunton. For his National Service, Roberts joined the first intake into the Joint Services School for Linguists, the Cold War initiative providing intensive training as Russian translators and interpreters primarily to meet the needs of Britain's intelligence operations.

After then reading Russian at Merton, Roberts was recruited by Shell International and posted to East Africa. While there, he met and, in 1959, married Dinah Webster Williams. Roberts was then transferred to Vienna, only recently de-partitioned following the post-war joint occupation by the Western Allies and the Soviet Union. After his first child was born, Roberts brought his young family back to Britain and, from 1963, taught languages at Marlborough College, greatly enjoying teaching A-level pupils and especially Russian.

What Roberts regarded as his life's work was as Director of the Great Britain–USSR Association, from 1974 to 1993, which had been set up in 1959 on the initiative of Harold Macmillan, then Prime Minister, as a forum for the development of professional and cultural contacts between opinion-formers on each side of the Cold War divide.

John le Carré's first visit behind the Iron Curtain, in search of material for his novel *The Russia House*, took place with Roberts as his guide, an experience which led him to describe Roberts thus:

'On first impression, Mr Convention himself ... But to know and travel with, he was something altogether unusual: a convinced servant of his country, a gifted polyglot, a lover of music, art and life's good things, and above all *kulturny* as the Russians have it, meaning that he was grounded in the arts and sciences and able to hold his own, and more than that, in the self-regarding but impressive company of Russia's home-grown intellectuals. Better still, his convictions were emotional as well as intellectual, which is something the Russians insist on even if they don't know it. John loves Russia: its people, music, literature and genius; its gloom and dottiness and great big heart; its capacity to endure, suffer, laugh and drink ... They knew he loved the same flame that they loved, even while it was hidden away in a stinking cellar. Not even his worst enemies in Communist Russia – and John, never afraid of argument, had his share of them – attempted to deny his right to speak as a believer, some kind of co-religionist. But what he wouldn't do – and I have been there to hear him say he wouldn't – was condone their double-think, their necessary self-deceptions and rather hopeless lies.'

Following the fall of the Soviet Union, Roberts was awarded the Tyutchev Centenary Gold Medal of the International Pushkin Foundation for services to culture. He wrote an account of cultural politics between Britain and Russia from 1973 to 2000: *Speak Clearly into the Chandelier* (Curzon, 2000). He maintained his Russia interests, becoming co-chair of the International Board of Trustees of the All-Russia State Library and holding a similar position at the relaunched *Vestnik Evropy* (Herald of Europe), Russia's oldest journal which had in 1918 been shut down by the Bolsheviks as counter-revolutionary.

After his second marriage, to Elizabeth (née Gough-Cooper), came to an end in 2005, Roberts rediscovered his love of France and for Brigitte Chatenet, the sister of his French exchange partner 50 years earlier. Roberts split his final years between London and Paris, translating French and Russian literature and writing memoirs of his time in Africa: *Just Before the Dawn* (Austin Macauley, 2022).

**By his son, Stephen Roberts**

## 1954

**Edwin (Ted) Mullins (1954)** was born 14 September 1933, and died 22 January 2024, aged 90.

Edwin (Ted) Mullins achieved an international reputation as an art critic, having created an outstanding television series about paintings and authoring 19 books about art and artists, among them, Georges Braque, Salvador Dalí and Vincent van Gogh, and three novels. Ted was raised in Epsom and educated at Midhurst Grammar School. He came to Merton to read English in 1954. He was very well known and admired as Steward and then President of the JCR.

What follows are my personal remembrances. I recommend the excellent obituary (*Daily Telegraph*, 20 March 2024) which is an eloquent summary of Ted's television series, his books about art, his novels, and his stature.

On 5 October 1955, the *SS United States* docked at Southampton. I had been a very lucky fellow. From a small community in Iowa, somehow I won a Rhodes Scholarship and, on the advice of the head of the board, chose Merton College. One day in October 1955 I arrived at the gate to be greeted by Ted Mullins. We became lifelong friends. Who knew I had lucked out so well?

With his engaging smile and easy conversation, he drew people to him. After being with him you always felt better. In the summer of 1956, Ted, Gerard Greene and I travelled in Ted's Ford Anglia across Europe to Greece. Armed with a pop-up tent and sleeping bags, we stopped at suitable spots along the way. One morning in Italy we were awakened by an excited soldier wearing a tricorne. We had camped on a target practice field. From our tent we saw facing us, soldiers with rifles. We got out of there fast! Ted had a wonderful way with the people we met, most of whom did not speak English or French. His warmth and smile quickly reassured them.

Ted and I finished our exams in 1957 and parted company. I returned to the United States to continue my medical education and Ted became an art critic for the *Sunday*

*Telegraph*. His first book, *Braque*, appeared in 1968. It has 160 reproductions by the painter and emphasises Braque's collaboration with Picasso. Ted published *The Pilgrimage to Santiago* in 1974, an account of the historic route taken by pilgrims to the site of the remains of the apostle James. Ted followed most of the route on foot. It became a classic; the book was celebrated by a reissue in 2000.

In 1960 Ted married Gillian Brydone, a fellow student, with whom he had two daughters and a son.

Ted wrote (1980): 'We have been away in Malta and since returning, my big TV series, *100 Great Paintings*, has been launched.' After showings in Germany and the BBC it received international acclaim.

Tragedy struck in 1979. Gillian was discovered to have cancer and she died in 1982. During those years, Ted had the primary role of raising their children, the oldest of whom, Frances, had just enrolled in University College London while Jason and Selina were still at home. Two years later (1984) Ted announced he had fallen in love with Anne Kelleher. 'Anne and I are immensely happy. She is taking a break from her doctorate to write a book which my agent (hers too now) is in raptures about.'

Unfortunately, Ted began to have trouble with his eyesight. He wrote (2006): 'I so enjoyed your story of your keypad and cataract. I have a complaint which is untreatable and I have to compensate with an amazing range of different spectacles, plus my recently acquired magnifying angle-poise reading lamp – a marvellous contraption which I hope will prolong my reading life by a two or more years at least. It all makes me feel that life is rather urgent, and I don't want to waste a moment of it.' Seven years later (2013): 'My own news is that I am now registered as "Blind" but I've been commissioned to write a book about all the artists I've known and worked with. It's amazing what you can contemplate doing with one eye and a magnifying glass.' It is indeed amazing that Ted wrote five more books.

In 2015, Ted received the terrible news that his son, Jason, had been diagnosed with cancer. Sadly, Jason died the following year.

Ted bore his misfortunes with courage and grace as a husband and father, and continued writing, aided by his marriage to a wonderful companion. Through this difficult time, Ted's reputation continued to grow. After the 2016 launch in the V&A Museum of his book of essays, *Swimming with Dali*, he wrote: 'I'm just recuperating after the terrifying experience of being interviewed in front of a large audience. I believe it went well, and I signed lots of copies, then felt like a zombie all yesterday.' He wrote two more books; the last one was published in 2019.

In 2022 he had a pacemaker installed. Otherwise: 'I'm fit as a fiddle, and greatly enjoying life with Anne and my extended family.'

In 2023 when I told Ted I found I had an incurable disease, he replied: 'I am deeply sad to hear your news and our warmest thoughts go out to both of you. You have always been one of my dearest and closest friends ever since the day when I welcomed you off the bus in Oxford.' Later in January 2024 his wife, Anne, wrote: 'My lovely Edwin... died yesterday. He had been ill for several months ... You know how much you meant to him. Much love, Anne.'

He is survived by Anne and by his two daughters. His son predeceased him.

By Rex Jamison (1955)

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Donald (Mike) Rines died on 15 February 2023, aged 89.

A great friend of Mike's, Dick Lloyd (1954), remembers Mike at Merton:

'We read law together under the auspices of Professor John Barton. I have a photograph here of the four of us law students, myself and Mike among them, with John Barton. While we were students together at Merton, Mike was a great cricketer. He also played rugby: I have a picture of us all from 1956-7 as a victorious rugby XV, top of the second division (if my memory serves me right).

'Mike began life after college working for a Yorkshire Imperial Metals, and later he became a freelance journalist and writer.

'I have very fond memories of my time at Merton, all recorded in a memoir, *Three Glorious Years*. This book is available in the MOB Library.'

Mike married (Lucy) Ann Parker in 1958 and the couple moved to Leeds for his work, first of all in Yorkshire Imperial Metals and then as editor of *Marketing* magazine in 1970. His son, Simon, reports in the Guardian on the latter,

'He threw himself into the role and made the magazine much more than a trade publication, regularly breaking stories picked up by national news media, such as his challenge to the tobacco industry over their launch in the 1970s of New Smoking Material, supposedly a safer alternative to cigarettes, which Mike claimed was simply a marketing ploy.'

In retirement, Mike had various projects from sailing, the restoration of the yacht once owned by the author Arthur Ransome, and editing the Woodbridge newsletter and organising its maritime festival. He also arranged for the publication of a novel by his former schoolmaster, Frank Binder: *Their Cemetery Sown with Corn*.

Ann died in 2020. Mike is survived by their three children and one granddaughter.

Dick Lloyd (1954) and Merton Development Office

1955



**Lionel Richard Jebb**, 21 December 1934 – 4 August 2023

Lionel was born in Kolkata (formerly Calcutta), India, on 21 December 1934. His father, Richard, was an engineer managing a railway wagon plant and his mother, Marjorie, was the daughter of a mining engineer, also based in India.

Lionel's sister Jemma was born in 1936, and, in 1938, before the outbreak of the war, the two children were sent home to England to live in Ellesmere with their grandparents. Their parents stayed on in India and they didn't see them again until 1947.

Lionel went to Shrewsbury School where he excelled academically and also at athletics. He did his National Service in Germany with the Royal Army Ordnance Corps at Mönchengladbach.

He went up to Merton College to read Classics (Greats), and while in Oxford he met Corinna Hawkesworth, who was attending secretarial college in the city and who eventually became his wife. Lionel loved his four years at the University and despite focusing on sport (he represented the University at shot put, javelin and discus) and socialising, he did manage to obtain a degree. One of his supervisors, presumably exasperated by his inattention to his studies, described Lionel as a 'model of competent mediocrity', something of which he was quite proud! He was the Secretary of both Vincent's, the club for those representing the University at sport, and the Myrmidons, the Merton College sporting society.

After graduating from Oxford, Lionel got a job as a management trainee with Burmah Oil, based in Assam, India. He came home in 1960 to marry Corinna, and then returned with her to India. In 1961 their first son, Richard, was born. That same year, just when Lionel's parents were planning a big trip to India to see their first grandchild, his father died of a heart attack. As a result, the family had to come home to England and never returned to India. They moved to Birmingham, and Lionel started a new job with Midland Counties Dairy. In 1962 tragedy struck the family again when Lionel's sister died of Hodgkin lymphoma. Not long after the birth of Sophie in 1963, Lionel and Corinna moved to Shropshire to be closer to his mother and to run the family estate at The Lyth. Their third child, Andrew, was born in 1966.

Once settled in Ellesmere, Lionel took on numerous roles and was a vigorous supporter of the local area. He was elected as an Independent to represent Ellesmere on the county council, became Chair of Governors at Adcote School and was a long-standing member of the committees of the Shropshire Conservation Trust, the Shropshire Training and Enterprise Commission and the Country Landowners' Association. In 1991 he was appointed High Sheriff of Shropshire and was later made a Deputy Lieutenant.

Despite being an enthusiastic early adopter of office automation – his first word processor was built for him by Richard in 1981 – he steadfastly refused to have anything to do with smartphones and tablets, and continued to use his fax machine and dot matrix printer long after they had been superseded. Nor was he ever persuaded to go online to replace the wall of reference books kept to hand by his chair and consulted every day when solving the *Telegraph* crossword – although in later years he was not above 'phoning a friend' to get someone else to check Wikipedia for a particularly obscure answer. He loved country sports, and in the winter ran a small shoot at The Lyth for family and friends, which was noted for its generous hospitality rather than an abundance of birds. He also became fascinated with family history and spent a lot of time compiling a detailed family tree and discovered distant cousins as far away as Australia.

His final years were marred by the onset of Alzheimer's but to the end he remained cheerful. He died peacefully on 4 August 2023.

He is survived by Corinna, his three children and five grandchildren.

By his son, Richard Jebb

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#### Andrew Maczek, 1937–2003

Andrew Maczek, CChem, FRSC, died in Sheffield on 16 July 2023 at the age of 86.

Andrej Oswald Stanisław Maczek was born in 1937 in Częstochowa, Poland. He was the son of the war hero General Stanisław Władysław Maczek and Zophia Kuryś. The family left Poland at the start of the war and settled in Scotland, where the children were sent to boarding school to learn English language and culture.

Andrew won a scholarship to Ampleforth College in Yorkshire, where he was educated from 1950 to 1955 before coming up to Oxford to read Chemistry as Postmaster at Merton College, graduating in 1958 with Class II Honours. His Oxford DPhil, awarded in 1963, was supervised by Dr Courtenay Phillips. The thesis was entitled 'Some studies in solubility with particular reference to the use of the gas chromatographic technique'. While he was a doctoral student, he was MCR President.

In 1961 he became a postdoctoral research fellow at the University of Leeds, and then in 1968 he took up the post of Lecturer in Physical Chemistry at the University of Sheffield, where he stayed until his retirement.

Andrew married Eve in 1970. I recall their family home as being welcoming and full of people.

Professor David Dunmur (Christ Church, 1959) remembers Andrew at Sheffield University: 'My introduction to Andrew was as a young academic colleague in physical chemistry. He was an excellent colleague, always maintaining the highest teaching standards but aware of the demands of the more difficult aspects of physical chemistry. Countless students will remember Andrew's approachability and his embodiment of the concept of "duty of care" even before the term was

invented. He created a friendly environment for his teaching, yet his skill and knowledge ensured a continuing respect for the process we casually refer to as education.'

From 1985 until 2004 Andrew was Senior Admissions Tutor in the chemistry department at Sheffield. This was an extremely responsible and arduous position which he performed with panache and enormous success. Chemistry admissions at the outset of this were extremely poor but through brilliant organisation, and with a military eye for detail, he turned failure into success. From around 1985 until 1996 Andrew was the chair of a departmental teaching review committee. The committee oversaw a wholesale revision of teaching, and was instrumental in the great changes occurring nationally during the 1990s, including the restructuring of degrees into modules, and the inception of the four-year undergraduate master's degree, the MChem. Sheffield was one of the first universities to adopt this new degree in 1994, and it has since been the department's principal degree. Andrew was promoted to Senior Lecturer during the 1990s for his contributions as an administrator.

Andrew was a significant actor in external affairs in the chemistry world. He was a part-time counsellor and course tutor in chemistry in the Open University for 20 years from 1969, an A-level chemistry examiner from 1970, and principal examiner for two different examination boards from 1983 until 2001. He served as the university representative on the Council of Management for the Universities Central Council on Admissions (UCCA) from 1989 to 1992. During this period, he was the author of NEAB syllabus support materials for a physical chemistry A-level module, and in 2002 for three AQA A-level chemistry modules. He wrote an Oxford Chemistry Primer *Statistical Thermodynamics* (OUP), which was published in 2001 and then in a second edition with Anthony Meijer in 2017.

Andrew retired from Sheffield University in 2004. His beloved wife, Eve, predeceased him by six years. Andrew lived and worked throughout his life in the United Kingdom. His mode of speech and behaviour were those of a British Gentleman. By his own firm admission, however, he was heart and soul a devoted and committed Polish Gentleman.

Professor Barry Pickup, colleague and friend

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## 1956



**Michael John Edwards, 26 May 1935 – 2 March 2024**

Michael came to Merton to read PPE in October 1956 and graduated with a 2.1 in June 1959. He was a very popular member of the JCR, taking part in many activities, most notably the hockey club. He maintained regular contact with Merton for the rest of his life, never missing a Gaudy, and later was a stalwart of the golfing activities.

Michael was born in Sheffield and attended Rendcomb College near Cirencester. After finishing his schooling, he completed National Service as a radio mechanic with the Royal Signals, an experience which he did not consider particularly educational. He then came to Merton.

After Merton, Michael joined Royal Insurance, starting as one of its early graduate trainees with the overseas department in Liverpool, literally in the basement. He speedily arranged a transfer to the newly formed computer department as an analyst/programmer converting the existing paper and punched-card records to electronic form.

After being involved with the first two generations of computer hardware he transferred to corporate planning and then in his thirties became Underwriting and Product Manager for the company's large private car and home insurance business, where he spent some 23 years.

It was a time when anti-competitive legislation was shaking up the old order of friendly inter-company cooperation, and change was in the air. Michael was able to put his own ideas

into practice, and Royal Insurance was first in the market with a number of fundamental changes in underwriting and pricing which became standardised across the industry. His involvement with committees of the industry association also enabled him to push along some useful changes at the centre.

In the final stages of his career he led a small team to develop a fully computerised underwriting and servicing system which launched as a stand-alone operation within the company and now handles all the company's home and motor insurance under the MORE THAN brand.

Michael spent his whole career with Royal, participating on industry committees and developing innovations that have been adopted across the industry. He always made a point of treating people with respect and kindness. He retired in 1995 as Deputy Managing Director of The Insurance Service – now branded as More Than, part of Royal & Sun Alliance. He said that the greatest satisfaction from his time at Royal was that throughout a long and varied career he was able to earn the respect and trust of almost every person in the departments he managed, and of many of his peers and seniors.

He was a wonderful father to his children, easy to know and excellent company. He always encouraged me, Lawrence, to read and try things out.

In retirement, Michael had too many interests to list. He was a polymath and read widely. Playing golf and participating in the annual conference of the International Society for Contemporary Literature and Theatre with his second wife Alison were close to his heart, as were his family, his Alfa Romeo and his garden.

Michael recently joined the 1745 Association and attended the 2023 Carlisle weekend. At the time his illness was diagnosed he was avidly reading Jacobite history and would have attended future events had that been possible. He loved the company of interesting people such as the 1745 Association membership.

Michael is survived by his wife Alison, four children and three stepchildren.

**By his son, Lawrence Edwards, and Richard Kenyon (1956)**



### Edward I. Selig, 1935–2024

Edward Isaac Selig died on 8 April 2024 in a suburban Boston, Massachusetts hospital, with his wife, Renata, and their children, Colin and Diana, at his side.

Ed was born in central Massachusetts on 25 January 1935 to Mendell and Mae Selig. He joined an elder sister, Ann. After completing his elementary and secondary education, Ed enrolled in Yale University, where he concentrated in English literature. In his fourth year at Yale, as a Scholar of the House, Ed completed a critical study of the work of Thomas Carew, 17th-century British poet and Mertonian, which became a book published by Yale University Press.

Ed's BA was awarded in 1956, the year he was named a Rhodes Scholar from Massachusetts.

I met him on the French liner *Flandre*, when we were both members of the Rhodes Scholar sailing party en route to Oxford. I well remember our first meeting and being frightfully impressed by Ed's intelligence, his sophistication, his store of opinions on a vast array of topics, and his eagerness to share those opinions. It is little wonder that someone in our group dubbed Ed 'The Senator'. Among his American Oxonian friends, that sobriquet stayed with Ed for life, but I don't think many at Merton knew him as that.

Ed and I saw a good deal of each other during our first year at Merton, spent many hours talking in his rooms in Saint Alban's and in mine on Front V-4. But both of us were busy with our studies, his for a BA in PPE and mine for a BA in Chemistry. Naturally, the different disciplines gave us each

many opportunities to make new friends from the UK and elsewhere. I don't recall that Ed was particularly involved in sports or other College activities, but he did sing bass, in a male quartet created by Americans which they named 'The OU Kids'.

When it came time to find digs for our second year at Oxford, Ed and I teamed up with four of our American Rhodes Scholar classmates and we rented rooms in a house in North Oxford. The six of us were a varied group, representing six American states and undergraduate universities, four Oxford colleges and Oxford degree programs. We went on to have diverse careers and continued to be the closest of friends throughout our lives. With Ed's death, only two of us remain.

For Ed Selig and certain others of this multi-talented and broadly interested group, planning a career proved a significant challenge. Oxford had only deepened the dilemma. After going down in 1958, Ed studied for a year at the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York City. His most important discovery in New York, and quite possibly in his life, was Renata Bowman, whom he married in 1960. Ed then enrolled in Harvard Law School. At the same time, my new bride, the former Beverly Beatty, my college sweetheart who had patiently waited for me to compete my Oxford adventures, and I were also living in greater Boston while I was working on a PhD in Chemistry at MIT. Over the years, Bev and I spent many happy hours with Ed and Renata, as the family friendship grew. Together we have visited all the continents except Antarctica, with many trips to the UK and Oxford.

On completing his law degree in 1963, Ed joined the firm of Covington and Burling in Washington, DC, and later joined the Office of Legal Counsel in the US Department of Justice. In 1969 Ed and Renata returned to Boston where he became affiliated with the Council on Law Related Studies at Harvard Law School. This work led to his growing interest and expertise in environmental law, a field to which he made significant contributions as an expert on water and air pollution control. He shared his knowledge by drafting legislation, writing many publications, and teaching at Harvard and Boston University. After retirement from law practice, he served for a time as a mediator.

Ed Selig was a loyal and generous supporter of Merton, serving as an early officer and Life Trustee of the Merton College Charitable Corporation. He never lost his love of literature nor forgot the thousands of lines of Shakespeare, Yeats, Eliot and Frost which he had memorized. He shared these gladly in the courses he later taught to adult learners. He was also known for his witty verses honoring friends and family on their special occasion as well as for bawdy limericks. He took up the piano and struggled mightily with Bach's *Well-tempered Clavier* – well, I don't know how well-tempered.

Selig is the German word for 'blessed', and Ed Selig certainly was blest: blest with a brilliant, creative and disciplined mind; blest with a great capacity for friendship, empathy and concern for his fellow human beings; blest with a passion for justice; blest with a warm sense of humor. But those of us who knew Ed Selig and claimed him as a friend were equally blest. We are grateful and we miss him.

#### Truman Schwartz (1956)

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## 1957



**Robert (Robin) Wilshaw** died peacefully on 7 April 2024, at the age of 87.

Born in Malaya, Robin was educated at Uppingham School before furthering his studies at Merton College, Oxford.

Post-Oxford, he delved into the realms of insurance and reinsurance, initially as a broker before embarking on a distinguished journey as a Lloyd's underwriter. He helped establish the successful RFH Wilshaw and Others syndicate with his characteristic enthusiasm and innovative thinking.

In the early 1970s, Robin settled in Manningtree, in north Essex, where he became a stalwart of the community, fuelled by his passions for sailing and singing. A devoted sailor, he charted the European waters aboard his steel-hulled sailing barge, *Sunlight*, and later aboard a larger Oyster sailing yacht, which allowed him to traverse vast offshore oceans.

Robin will be remembered for his zest for life, and his generous and kind spirit. He outlasted his wife, Hilary, who passed away in 2023, and is survived by his two daughters, Julia and Sarah, as well as his three grandchildren, Sophia, Joshua and Frederick. He will be greatly missed by family and friends.

By his daughter, Julia Hegelstad

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## Richard Woollett, 1938–2024

Richard studied Modern History at Merton and then completed a teaching diploma, gaining Distinction. From 1962 to 1964, he taught history at Woolverstone Hall School in Ipswich. He then tutored at the Department of Education in Oxford, before becoming Head of History at Westminster School (1968–79). He returned to Woolverstone Hall School in 1979 to take up the post of headmaster, where he remained until 1990.

His teaching career encompassed two schools of striking contrast. While Westminster is one of the leading public schools in the country, Woolverstone Hall School was a state boarding school owned by the Inner London Education Authority which catered for an array of boys, including many from difficult home backgrounds. It is a tribute to Richard's remarkable capacity for empathy that he inspired pupils at both schools and set many of them on the path to great success in life.

Richard also gave a great deal to Merton. He sent many of his best historians from Westminster to Merton, thus contributing to Merton's high academic performance from the late 1960s, and from about 1992 to 1996 he served as the College's first Development Officer, having been brought back to Merton for that role by his former tutor, Warden John Roberts. After his wife died in 2008, he became somewhat reclusive, and sadly hadn't been to College for some time.

Mark Davison, Chairman of the Merton Society, is a former pupil of Richard Woollett, and remembers him. 'He was my housemaster at Westminster and instrumental in my applying to Merton, where he had read History and was in later years the first development officer at the College. A wonderful and inspiring teacher.'

**Robert Peberdy (1975)**

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## 1958



## David Waterhouse, 1937–2023

**Adrian Vickers (1958)** writes: I met David on our first day at Merton and we remained friends until the end of his life. His mother was a doctor so he would have liked to have studied medicine, but he couldn't get the hang of biology, so he read History, though his heart wasn't really into studying as he had so many other interests.

He enjoyed practical jokes, and on one occasion he and I and four other fellow imposters drove to Cambridge dressed as University Proctors and proceeded to arrest students, telling them to report to the Proctors' office the next day. David was gifted with great physical strength. I remember that four of us drove a car to Spain, and David at one point walked into the Mediterranean at Lloret de Mar holding me under one arm and Tony Reeve under the other. After Merton, our paths in life diverged and we rarely met until getting together again for lunch at his home in Shrewsbury only a few weeks before his sudden and very unexpected death last October.

**Dr Simon Nightingale** writes: David had a significant career in the British Council and, after retirement to Shrewsbury, was influential in developing local cultural activities. David was a big man and he towered over many of us, but he was big in many other ways too. He was outgoing and confident with a big engaging laugh. He had a big voice and was a good singer. In his youth his big physique contributed to his skill at rugby and shot-putting, he beat the Oxford University Freshman's shot-put record by over 4 feet and was later selected for the England B Athletics team. However, what

most will remember is that he had a big heart with a genuine interest in all whom he met and he enthusiastically embraced so many ideas, cultures and people.

After reading history at Oxford, David rose quickly through the ranks of the British Council and was head of a number of overseas offices, not only in Nepal, but also Nigeria, Zambia, Thailand and Germany. Networking was one of David's great strengths. His interest in others made them feel valued collaborators, which contributed to his success in meeting the British Council's core objective of getting people from diverse backgrounds to mix, spreading British culture and the English language. In all this he was strongly supported by Verena, whom he married in 1966.

On retirement to Shrewsbury in 2000, David became Chair of the Friends of Shrewsbury's Museum and Art Gallery at a crucial time in its development. He also sang in several choirs and became an active and inspiring Chair of Shropshire Music Trust and supported Shropshire Youth Theatre.

He was a Fellow of the Royal Asiatic Society for which he edited a book, *The Origins of Himalayan Studies*. As part of the British Library's oral history project David recorded accounts of British Council staff from around the country, which he greatly enjoyed as talking to people about their lives was what he loved.

Retirement allowed David to pursue his avid collecting of a wide variety of artefacts, including Caughley pottery, as well as Nepalese begging bowls, West African trading beads, textiles from all over the world and numerous books on the distant places where he had worked. Perhaps David's most important collection were the many good and loyal friends during his career and in retirement who, like me, were charmed by his open friendliness, his sense of humour, his inquiring mind and his sincere interest in the lives of others, regardless of their background. Above all he was a loving and much-loved husband to Verena, father to Esther, Tamsin and Ben and grandfather to Samuel, Olivia, David, Toby, Stanley, Penny and Bertie.

And finally, from his children and grandchildren, words spoken at David's funeral:

'We are going to talk about two of the three words which we selected to capture, as far as possible, the essence of Dad. The first word is safe. We guess that many people here will have experienced feeling safe with Dad; whether you were a colleague, a friend or a family member he provided a safe harbour to us all. The second word is harder to find. The word we are looking for is a word which encapsulates mischief and naughtiness but also includes cheeky, impish, optimistic, adventurous and eccentric. We have settled on 'rambunctiousness'. The safety and security we felt was within the context of Dad's rambunctiousness. We were certainly not wrapped in cotton wool. In many ways the opposite is true. We followed Mum and Dad across continents and cultures. We sailed many oceans with them. We were marched up hills and down dales in this country and abroad. In Zambia we had a black mamba in the garden. In Kathmandu we prepared for and experienced many earthquakes. We were in Thailand for a military coup and Nigeria was ...well, Nigeria. The safety we felt with Dad meant that we were able to go on adventures, to explore countries, to have new experiences and to know that somehow, often against the odds, all would be well.'

The funeral address ended with his grandchildren, who talked about the third word, love.

**By friends and family of David Waterhouse**

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## 1959



### John Williams, 1938–2022

When John Williams came up to Merton from Eastbourne College in the autumn of 1959, he stood out from the rest of his fellow Greats undergraduates in several ways. A large pleasant man with a ready smile, he had no airs and graces but a degree of extra maturity, being three years older than the rest of us. He had done National Service, which we had missed, and had done this in the Navy, which was rare. He confided little of his naval experiences, but had served in the Far East and had once fallen off a gangway into the sea, resulting in an accusation of swimming without permission.

At Merton he demonstrated a steady mastery of the Mods and Greats syllabus, always apparently in control and on top of his work. He came up as a commoner but his first-class performance in Mods was recognised in 1961 by an honorary Postmastership, and a year later he was made a full Postmaster.

In the spring of 1962 John accompanied three of us – Nick Fiennes, David Maskell and myself – on a trip to Greece, the total cost (from memory, £60 each?) including a contribution from the College. This was a great experience well outside our comfort zones, initially under the auspices of the NUS and a very pleasant young German ('I am Herr Goebbels, your Gruppenfuhrer' – fortunately no relation). In those days before air travel we travelled for three days by train through Germany and the Balkans to Athens.

This was Greece which still had vivid memories of German

occupation, the Second World War, and bitter civil conflict between communist and non-communist resistance organisations. (I was personally thanked in Athens for the British liberation of Greece by a Greek lady, despite having been four years old at the time and resident in North America.) There was no sign of today's mass tourism, and we visited all the main tourist sites freely. It was an atmospheric experience to stand on a totally deserted bay at Marathon – these days covered in resort hotels. It was however a disappointment to discover that our Greek and the Greeks' Greek were mutually unintelligible.

One hazard we encountered on entering several towns was a cry of 'Hi, boys' – another retired Greek in a three-piece suit and a mouthful of gold teeth eager to display the English he learned in America to his stay-at-home townsfellows. The worst of these was a Local Hero who claimed to have saved Megalopolis from the Germans – unfortunately by persuading them to blow up the next town down the road.

In 1959 the Warden's wife had introduced John to Elizabeth, and following Finals in 1963 they celebrated their marriage on the Isle of Skye. Several of us were invited and experienced an impressive traditional highland wedding, enhanced by not one but two pipers.

After Merton, John's first job was teaching Greek and Latin at William Hulme's Grammar School, Manchester. Five years later he moved into education administration, initially in Ipswich, dealing with the placing of special needs children. He subsequently moved to Devon County Council where he undertook a wide variety of roles in education administration. He retired aged 61 as Deputy Area Education Officer with responsibility for the provision of education for those with special educational needs.

In retirement, Devonshire remained his home, where he immersed himself in village life, enhanced (as he reported in *Postmaster* in 2014) by his six children (Tricia, Peter, Andrew, Sarah, Becky and Michael) and their offspring, and the companionship and support of Elizabeth. In particular he was active in the church. For many years he undertook the organisation of the very popular church fayre. He helped to run the Sunday School and even led services when no clergy

were available. Sadly, his last couple of years were affected by ill health. His wife Elizabeth died in June 2024.

### Richard Nelson (1959)

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## 1962

**Bernard Price**, CBE, died on 28 February 2024, aged 80.

Bernard Price read Modern History at Merton from 1962 to 1965.

He was born in 1944 and educated at Whitchurch Grammar School, Whitchurch, Shropshire, and King's School Rochester. After graduating from Oxford, he entered local government as an articled clerk. He qualified as a solicitor in 1969, winning the Local Government Prize in his final examinations.

After spending a year as an assistant solicitor with Worcestershire County Council, Bernard joined Staffordshire County Council in September 1970 in a similar post. A series of internal promotions followed, and he was appointed county clerk and chief executive of the county council from 1 April 1983. He held the post for 20 years until his retirement on 31 March 2003.

While he was at the county council, he played a prominent part nationally, regionally and locally. Notable roles he undertook include the following.

*Nationally:* Chairman of the Association of County Chief Executives; Advisor to the Policy Committee of the County Councils Association.

*Regionally:* Chief Executive and Secretary of the Midlands Forum of Local Authorities; Regional Chairman of SOLACE (Society of Local Authorities Chief Executives).

*Locally:* Clerk to the Lieutenancy, Clerk to the Staffordshire Police Authority, and to the Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service; Secretary to the County of Stafford Advisory Committee on Justices of the Peace.

He also served as a member of various local bodies including seven years as a governor of Staffordshire University.

He was awarded the CBE in 1997 for services to local government in Staffordshire.

Bernard was awarded an Honorary Doctorate in Laws by the University of Keele in 2001 'in recognition of his outstanding contribution to Staffordshire'. Shortly after his retirement in 2003 he was appointed as a Deputy Lieutenant of the county.

In his retirement he was a member of the Chapter of Lichfield Cathedral, Chairman of the Beth Johnson Housing Association, Chairman of the West Midlands Regional Advisory Committee of the National Trust, and Secretary to the Staffordshire Wildlife Trust.

Bernard passed away peacefully at home on 28 February 2024, after a 20-year battle with Parkinson's disease. Married to Christine since 1966, Bernard leaves three children and six grandchildren. He is remembered with love as a forever positive, forever active man, always keen to get on to the next thing.

By his son, David Price

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## 1965



**Paul Woodruff**, 28 August 1943–23 September 2023

The class of 1965 lost a profound and exemplary soul with the death of Paul Woodruff. Paul trod a distinctive path from

his role as our class's Salutatorian, first as a Marshall Scholar at Oxford and then as an officer advising Vietnamese troops in the field. When Paul returned to Princeton to earn his doctorate in philosophy under Professor Gregory Vlastos, he carried with him an experience of war that would inform his life as scholar, mentor, author, husband, parent and friend.

Paul joined the Philosophy Department at the University of Texas, Austin, in 1973 and for 50 years contributed in multiple ways to its rise as one of the great public universities. His scholarship expanded UT's standing in Classics, notably founded by his older colleague William Arrowsmith. Paul's service to UT extended to his role as director of the Plan II Honors Program from 1991 to 2006 and then as the first Dean of Undergraduate Studies for the following six years. He is remembered with reverent awe by generations of students, especially for his annual 'Famous Last Lecture on the Meaning of Life'.

Paul published both as a philosopher and as a translator. His most recent book, *Living Toward Virtue: Practical Ethics in the Spirit of Socrates* (Oxford University Press, 2023), draws on his direct engagement with the evils of war and on his long immersion in the giants of classical Greek philosophy and tragedy to offer a path forward through persistent self-questioning. His translation of Thucydides integrates the historian of the Peloponnesian War with the political philosopher who drew on that history to explore the tragic dynamics of politics.

Paul's translations of Sophocles and Euripides were animated by his deep love of theatre. This began at Princeton, where he played the eponymous hero of Euripides' *Hippolytus* in ancient Greek, dying on the stage of the McCarter Theatre. His book, *The Necessity of Theater: The Art of Watching and Being Watched* (Oxford University Press, 2008) was matched by the posthumous publication of *Surviving Technology* (Tibidabo Publishing, 2024), which explores how theatre can overcome the alienation that follows technological distancing of people from each other and from the world at large.

Paul's 50 years at UT ran in parallel with his marriage to Lucia Norton Woodruff. Their devoted journey together was slightly strained from time to time by Paul's love of sailing the

Downeast Maine coast, sometimes with a brother or a former student but often single-handedly, until Lucia's prudent influence finally prevailed. Paul is survived by Lucia and their two daughters, Rachel and Kate, and five grandchildren. His essential humanity can be read in the poems through which he responded to the tragic death of Kate's daughter, *The Spring of Love: Poems for Jane*.

Paul was a maker: of ideas and interpretations, of lectures, of books, but also of communities, of family meals, and of constructions made of wood. Especially he made and self-published his own poetry: in parallel with *Poems for Jane* came *Antelope*, a gentle counterpoint to the brutality of Ted Hughes' *Crow*. His last published writings were a series of astonishing op eds in the *Washington Post* on healing one's soul, confronting death, and the blessing conferred by the physical presence of friends and family.

Bill Janeway and Guy English (1963)

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1966



Anthony Holden, 22 May 1947—8 October 2023

A lifelong friend since days at Merton was Tony Holden who died on 8 October 2023. Fifty-seven years earlier we fell into each other's arms on the first day at Merton and it was a friendship that I and others at Merton relished all our lives. Tony came to Merton College from Oundle and was quickly dubbed 'Golden Holden', as everything he turned his hand to won fans from crusty dons to most women stars of OUDS.

He read English but scrambled his school Greek into a

translation of Aeschylus's *Agamemnon* which was put on at Delphi in Greece with a future ambassador, QCs, actors and journalists in the cast.

Holden seduced not just women but older dons and, when he went to Fleet Street, editors who liked his crinkly toothy smile, his always impeccable copy, and his gift of turning any event or meeting with prominenti into a perfectly pitched anecdote.

He got Robert Maxwell, who had bought *Isis*, to make him editor for a year, and charmed the dons at Merton to let him have a year off to edit the world's most famous student journal. A decade later Holden repaid the debt by using his Atticus column in the *Sunday Times* to promote John Jones, his English tutor, into being Oxford's Professor of Poetry.

Harold Evans, the star editor of his generation, hired Tony as a reporter on *The Times*. Holden, still barely 30, bagged the No. 1 foreign correspondent job as the *Observer's* man in Washington.

There he enjoyed life with his fellow Oxford scribblers, Christopher Hitchens, Martin Amis, and other 1968-generation hacks who were made welcome at his house with his first wife Amanda and three sons to whom he was devoted.

Harold Evans brought him back to an executive role at *The Times* with the promise he would be editor. But that was to reckon without Rupert Murdoch. His interference in the paper despite his pledge to maintain editorial independence when he bought *The Times* and *Sunday Times* led to Evans being fired and Holden resigned in solidarity with his editor, one of the very few British journalists ready to stand up to the baleful influence of Murdoch who has done so much damage to British journalism.

He made Pliny's injunction '*Nulla dies sine linea*' his own, and every day produced a solid quota of lines as articles, books including biographies of Shakespeare, Tchaikovsky, Laurence Olivier, Oscar winners, a study of poker that derived from playing the game on the High Roller US circuit, and translations of opera libretti for the English National Opera.

Holden wrote the first biography of Prince Charles and returned to royal writing to expose the 'sham marriage' with Diana. His politics always on the left with a twinkle in his eye became resolutely republican, hosting dinners to denounce the royals who he saw as a 'parasitical succubus' making any modernisation of the British state all but impossible.

He was immensely proud when one of his three sons, Ben, followed in his Merton footsteps and was an undergraduate at the College.

A serious stroke in 2017 barely slowed him down as he typed every day with his one good right hand and hosted lunches where doctors' advice was ignored, and bottles were opened.

The glory days of print journalism now seem long ago. Tony Holden, a National Union of Journalists' card-holder until his death, was a master of late 20th century journalism. But that was in another century.

**Denis MacShane (1966)**

## 1975



**William Nicholas Guy (Nick) Hitchon** died on 23 July 2023 in Madison, Wisconsin, aged 65.

Nick Hitchon came up to Merton in 1975 to read Physics. From a Yorkshire Dales farming family, he became a specialist in nuclear fusion whose dream was to provide the world with relatively cheap and clean power. That dream, sadly, remains unfulfilled to this day, for Nick and for many other scientists.

Nick was probably best known as one of the participants in a ground-breaking TV documentary project, the award-winning *Up* series.

Though he was raised in a remote and rural area, Nick's path was to take him far from the farming life of his forebears. This was perhaps only dimly apparent when he was a pupil at the one-room Arncliffe CE Primary School and was chosen to take part in a Granada TV World in Action programme called *Seven Up!* The story is that a TV researcher was despairing of finding a rural child who would talk to the camera for what was meant to be a one-off programme, in which children aged seven from differing backgrounds were asked their views on a range of subjects. The researcher was told Nick would definitely talk, but he was only six. The researcher said that was close enough, and so it was that Nick appeared on British TV in 1964 to explain that he wanted to learn about the Moon, though he refused to say what he thought about girls.

The TV cameras returned for *14 Up*. By now he was at Ermysted's Grammar School, Skipton. Here his love of science began to flourish, though he was also a keen sportsman, captaining the rugby first XV and playing for a Yorkshire Schools team. From here he went to Merton, where he gained a First in Physics and went on to postgraduate studies. He got his DPhil at the age of 23, and was a Senior Scholar from 1979 to 1981.

The filming of *21 Up* found Nick, now actually aged 19, busy with his postgraduate work. The latest instalment of what was now the *Up* series was timed to coincide with the 21st anniversary of Granada TV, a sign that it was regarded as a prestigious programme. Now it is perhaps more seen as a precursor of reality television, examining the changing lives of real people at seven-yearly intervals.

Nick was about make a major change in his life, as he moved to the University of Wisconsin in the United States in the early 1980s to continue his work in nuclear fusion. He remained at the university's Department of Computer and Electrical Engineering for four decades. Nick became a full professor in 1994 and was department chair from 1999 to 2002. He gained a reputation for excellent teaching and mentorship and was named five times as an outstanding

instructor by undergraduates. He was also was the author of more than 100 articles and three books in his specialist field.

Nick participated in all the films in the *Up* documentary series. Though some of the filming happened in the United States, more often the production team brought him back to the UK to be shown in locations with personal significance for him. This included visits to Merton, as well as to the Yorkshire Dales. The latter gave him an opportunity to see his late parents, Guy and Iona Hitchon, and younger brothers Andrew and Chris, and occasionally to carry out farm-related tasks, something he had not been asked to do for many years.

Nick was diagnosed with cancer several years ago but was determined to live as full a life as possible, and only retired from the university in the spring of 2022.

He leaves his widow, Cryss, and son, Adam.

By his brother, Andrew Hitchon

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**Michael Owen Nicholas, 1957–2023**

Michael Nicholas, who sadly passed away on 24 January 2023, aged 65, after suffering for many years with multiple sclerosis, was a highly regarded member of the Merton community from 1975 to 1981.

Born on 5 May 1957, Michael was the eldest of four brothers and was brought up in Berkshire. He excelled at school, first at Papplewick Preparatory School in Ascot, before gaining a top scholarship to Wellington College. During his time there,

he not only achieved highly impressive academic results across the board, but also represented Wellington in many sports and was captain of the swimming team. His varied interests outside school ranged from wine and beer making to war gaming and travel. He was, in addition, a voracious reader of both fiction and non-fiction, with a particular interest in military history and Greek mythology.

While Michael gained top marks in every subject, it was in mathematics and the sciences where his exceptional ability, and passion, truly came to the fore. As he collected six A-grade A levels, it was clear that he was destined for Oxford. However, undecided as to whether to study maths or physics, he took the Oxbridge entrance exams in both subjects, only to be awarded a Postmastership by Merton in each. He eventually plumped for mathematics and went up to Oxford in September 1975.

Michael loved his time at Oxford. He thrived in the academic environment, surrounded by other brilliant students with similarly inquiring minds, and duly attained a First. But life at Oxford is, of course, about much more than just scholastic achievement and Michael threw himself into the whirl of social opportunities on offer. The chefs at Merton were the stuff of legends and he would take huge pleasure in hosting members of the family for formal dinners there, as well as being a very active member of the JCR.

Sporting prowess was also a key part of Michael's make-up. He rowed for Merton and was a dedicated, top-level judoka. Having regularly competed in the junior national judo championships at Crystal Palace while he was at school, he later gained an Oxford Blue and, as captain, was selected for the European Student Championships.

After graduating, Michael stayed on at Merton, as expected, to undertake a DPhil in Mathematical Modelling and Numerical Analysis. It was during this time, through the church that they both attended, that he met Cornelia, who was to become his soulmate, companion, mother of his two children, Rebecca and Alex, and the love of his life. Their wedding a couple of years later in the historic Merton chapel, followed by a memorable celebration in the College dining room, was a truly magical occasion.

As the newly minted Dr Nicholas, he didn't have to go far to find his first full-time job. He took up a highly responsible post at the world-renowned Atomic Energy Research Establishment at Harwell, where he was involved in projects of vital importance to national security.

Cruelly, it was at this time that he suffered his first episode of what was subsequently diagnosed as multiple sclerosis, which was increasingly to affect his life. Michael was, however, a pragmatist and decided he must take control of his own destiny. To provide him with the working flexibility that he knew he would need later, he moved with his young family to Hove in West Sussex, where he set up a successful consultancy practice and Cornelia established a busy chiropractic clinic.

Despite the challenges thrown up by a physically debilitating chronic condition such as MS, Michael's fierce intellect still burned bright and he was able to live an independent life until the last few years. He took huge pleasure in seeing his children – as well as his young grandson, Edward – flourish, and was immensely proud of their achievements. After the sad passing of Cornelia in 2015, Rebecca took over the chiropractic business, which continues to go from strength to strength. Alex, meanwhile, has carved out a distinguished career in the Army.

**By his brother, David Nicholas**

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1979



**Mike Eaton** died on 17 January 2024.

Mike Eaton (Merton 1979–83) died in La Rochelle, France, on 17 January of complications after contracting Covid. He had only one lung, and his body simply wasn't strong enough to fight it.

Mike (aka Mikey) was a lovely chap, always positive, always laughing, always fun, always kind. He had an MA in Russian and German and went on to have a career as an IT engineer specialising in e-commerce. I only got to know him in his last year at Merton and we became firm friends. I spent many happy hours with Mike, his wife Linda, sister Rachel and other friends, many of them Mertonians, at Rachel's house in Emu Road SW8; and fewer (but still happy) hours at Mike and Linda's house in Berkshire, where they lived with their children, Imo and Marcus. Then they moved to France and our banter was conducted over Facebook.

Mike was eternally kind and joyful, living life to the full. Indeed, Linda noted that he had 'a short life but, I think, well lived', and Armand D'Angour (1979) said: 'Gone too soon: I would have wished to see you once again. Such a lovely man, it is sad to think you are gone. Thank you for your fun and cheer.'

Mike was also very musical; I particularly remember his bass guitar and his singing. He had some curious dance moves. He sang along to Kid Creole and the Coconuts' 'Annie, I'm not your Daddy', and had his own version of a well-known Second World War song, his entitled 'Maybe it's because I'm a lung donor'.



Mike Eaton – one lung's better than none

Some of Mikey's dearest Mertonian friends (all from 1979) have left the following tributes.

Steve Thomas: 'So sad to hear about dear Mikey's passing. Such happy memories of so long ago with him and our Rose Lane "Team". He was a very special and ever generous soul. I was truly fortunate to have Mike as a dear friend during my Merton journey.'

Colin Hammond: 'I always remember him laughing and smiling and intellectually curious in all sorts of ways – one of those people who really deliver the university thing of widening the mind. I remember him telling of a summer job at some food plant in Belgium where they got paid extra for finding mice in the vegetables and sending the same mouse back and forth until it was barely recognisable.'

Colin Stone: 'Although we didn't stay in touch after university I have very vivid memories of his frequent visits to my room for coffee and toast. His conversation was always stimulating: everything from determinism, to trying to convince me of the merits of his latest favourite pop band, interspersed with disarming comments like "My mother says I smell!" (delivered with a broad Kent accent and a massive grin).'

Paul Farmiloe: 'Mikey was the first person I properly spoke with and knew at Merton. When I sat down to my first breakfast in Hall, at the start of Michaelmas 1979, feeling slightly forlorn and knowing no one, we happened to sit down together and immediately fell into the most natural and relaxed conversation, as if we already knew each other. That easy dialogue continued whenever we were together, right up to our last chat, just at the end of last year, where our good-humoured and jocular exchanges had not changed, even though it was evident that he was not at all well.

'We spent a lot of time together in our second year, when we had adjacent sets in St Alban's, and it was here that I really began to appreciate his particular qualities of honour, honesty, integrity and true friendship, with him helping me, when in need, on many occasions. We also had endless discussions and debates, on music, philosophy, the world and everything, with no topic too difficult, and objectivity and dispassionate analysis and dissection being an integral part of our pursuit of the truth.

'He was also great fun, with a witty sense of humour, and a good companion, having taught me to punt, which led to many a summer outing, among other excursions and adventures which we shared. He was a true enthusiast, always supportive and encouraging, as he was in our last conversation for my current pursuit of stone carving, and I feel he's still with me here today, in so many ways.'

In his own words, Mike had 'a blast', and, as Imo said: 'In spite of it all, he'd probably still agree that one lung is still better than none.' Mike/Mikey made the world a better place and left us far too soon. I leave you with this fitting tribute from Armand:

A poem for my old friend Mike Eaton

We hadn't met for forty years, my friend  
from student days, and suddenly, you died.  
Your life now has beginning, middle, end:  
How can that be, when hopes and plans abide?

Translated below into Latin elegiac verse, the standard ancient form for epitaphic memorial:

*Quadrāginta annos priscum non videram amicum  
quocum olim studui: morte repente cadis.  
ortum, tum mediam, nunc finem vita peregit:  
quid? cum praemia adhuc tantaque coepta manent?*

Noel Privett (1979)

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1982



Sara Hall, 1964–2023

Sara's death on 17 September 2023 greatly saddened her family and friends. Sara was intelligent, great fun, determined when she felt strongly something was right, and above all empathetic and caring.

Sara was born on 19 May 1964, the youngest of three children. She loved her family very much and was greatly affected by the deaths of her parents in the 1990s. Sara grew up in Stafford and was always an avid reader. As a teenager, she worked in her brother's interior design business, where she first realised she enjoyed working with, and helping, people. Sara was head girl at King Edward VI High School, Stafford, and caused eyebrows to be raised there when she rode into school on her moped.

At Oxford, Sara leapt into the opportunities that Merton and university life brought her. As well as being active within Merton, including rowing, she had a broader perspective and spent a great deal of time on external activities. Her blue bike was regularly seen heading towards gatherings with friends in Wadham, meetings of the Alembic Club (the chemists' society) and other social activities. Sara was president of the Oxford Rambling Club and secretary and organiser-in-chief of other groups' activities, for example hosting a Madeira party as a change from port drinking. While these activities were part of the joy of her time at Oxford, Sara never let them interrupt her studies. One of her tutors still remembers her keen approach and eagerness to contribute in tutorials.

Sara's resourcefulness was shown during a trip to Europe with schoolfriends Sheila and Louise during her first summer vacation. Sara obtained a travel grant from Merton to write about medieval churches in Germany. The three of them had a great time but, with a week left, Sara remembered that she had not taken any notes when seeing the churches. Undaunted, they spent the next few days obtaining pamphlets about the buildings from tourist offices. Sara used her O-level German to translate them and wrote an eloquent report (sadly no longer in Merton's archives) with full details on the features of each church.

There were, though, some aspects of Sara's Oxford experience that she did not enjoy. Sara had come from an inclusive state school, but found that sexist attitudes still existed and that mixed colleges were not welcomed by some, making Oxford more challenging for her than it need have been. Sara was pleased to see the progress that Merton has made over the last 40 years, but still felt the College and University needed to continue to work towards being more inclusive and with a greater focus on equity.

At the end of her second year, Sara became ill with glandular fever and chronic fatigue syndrome, and had to delay taking Finals and Chemistry Part 2 by a year. Sara was very grateful to Courtney Phillips for the support he gave her in making arrangements for her to drop down a year. The delay changed Sara's life in an unexpected way, as it resulted in her time in the chemistry labs overlapping with Kevin Matthews', and they started going for rambles together. Then Kevin was

badly injured in a lab explosion. Sara visited Kevin in hospital on a daily basis during his recovery, and thus their lifelong partnership began. The next summer Sara and Kevin went to France and had a wonderful time, developing a taste for good food and wine and falling deeply in love; they married in 1993.

After Oxford, Sara went to work in IT for ICI, but soon realised that it wasn't right for her. Her interest in people motivated her to study psychology. First, she did a Master's at Sussex and then a doctorate at Cardiff, researching the long-term behavioural effects of acute and chronic viral illnesses. Sara finally did a clinical psychology doctorate at Birmingham. Sara's concerns about her experiences studying psychology led her to write an article for the *Guardian* on the financial pressures that postgraduates faced. Her sense of fairness resulted in her engineering a strike at Birmingham to secure a salary for the clinical students there that was aligned with other UK courses.

Having completed her studies, Sara started work as a health psychologist at Warwick Hospital. Shortly afterwards, however, she became pregnant with Kate, who was born in 1998, followed by Alex in 1999. Sara found it difficult to work full time and give sufficient time to her family whom she adored. Eventually she decided that she couldn't pass her children to carers and took an extended career break so that she could devote herself to her family. Although Sara continued ad hoc private work, she sacrificed her career for her family, something for which they will always be immensely grateful.

Sara's love for her family and her pride in what Kate and Alex had achieved came through in any communication with her. Many family activities involved walking and being with nature. Often original plans for a family day out would become more adventurous, scaling extra hills or undertaking more challenging climbs, on occasions with crampons and ice axes. They made varied trips abroad, always with a theme, including visiting prehistoric caves in the Dordogne, whale watching in Maine and diving in the Caribbean.

Sara had many friendships and kept up communication with annual letters and other contacts. Sara gave a great deal as a friend — encouragement, reassurance, help and support.

Some years ago, a friend of Sara's moved to the United States and didn't know many people there. Sara regularly emailed her, knowing how important this support would be. Sara's emotional intelligence meant that she could say things that meant a great deal to you and really boosted you. Sara was someone who listened, someone who had a genuine and sincere interest in, and concern for, how her friends were doing.

Sara was a wonderful person — inspiring, kind and compassionate. She brought so much into the lives of her family and friends, and is greatly missed. We'll remember her as a truly lovely friend.

**Nick Weller (1982) and John Holland (1982)**

*With thanks to Kevin and to Sara's friends for their memories.*

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## 1991



**Nicholas Leigh-Hunt, 1972–2023**

Nick was educated at Harrow School, where he was awarded an L.C. Wilson scholarship, before going up to Merton in 1991 to read Medicine. He completed his clinical training at Guy's and St Thomas' Hospitals, where he met Sabrina, who became his wife (Dr Sabrina Leigh-Hunt, Consultant in Psychiatry).

Nick was diagnosed with multiple myeloma in 2003. He carried his illness with great dignity and privacy. Originally, he intended to be a paediatrician. He obtained his Membership of the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health and his Master's degree in Child Health in 2008, at Leeds University.

Nick later embarked on a career in public health and undertook a Master's degree in Public Health in 2011. He worked as a consultant in public health at Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council, where he led on all things to do with public health, developing strong relationships with Rotherham Clinical Commissioning Group and the local NHS providers. His systematic review about the public health consequences of social isolation and loneliness became one of the top cited and most read articles in the journal *Public Health*. Towards the end of his career, he played a vital role in Rotherham's response to the Covid pandemic, providing clinical guidance for health and care settings, supporting schools and workplaces to manage risks. During what was a difficult time for public health and for Nick personally because of his vulnerability to infection, he performed his duties and carried out his role with his usual academic rigour, compassion and diligence. He retired in 2022, owing to a recurrence of his myeloma.

Nick travelled around the world. He loved learning from people about their cultures. He spent time in Africa (including Ethiopia, Mali and South Africa) during his gap year before Merton, and in Sudan during his elective. He was a passionate walker, especially in Yorkshire, Scotland, Wales and the Lake District; an excellent gardener; and an avid reader. He passed these passions on to his daughter Sophia. He was modest, kind and thoughtful to those around him.

Friends remember Nick as frightfully clever but terribly modest; quiet, but with an infectious sense of humour and adventure. His housemaster at school talked of his 'continually honest self-assessment', and his 'care and responsibility' in looking after others, as well as his being well-liked and respected. Nick was interested in others, in being kind, and generous to those in need, quietly and discreetly. A devoted family man with great professional integrity and loyalty to friends, Nick was widely admired and will be greatly missed.

**A tribute from various sources**



**Rachael Hepburn (née Brookman)** passed away in early 2024.

Rachael Brookman was born in 1972, grew up in Kenilworth and attended King Henry VIII School in Coventry, where (much to her own discomfiture) she was head girl, before going up to Merton in 1991 to read History. First impressions of those who met her were dominated by the vast collection of teddy bears with which she shared her college room, ranging from saggy old favourites to some particularly fine Steiff models.

Rachael at once got involved with drama at Oxford, taking part in a successful Cuppers entry and co-directing a memorable production of *Savages* by Christopher Hampton at the Burton Taylor Studio. She then turned to focus on her academic work, which she enjoyed with unpretentious enthusiasm and her typical self-effacing approach – delighting in Leslie Mitchell’s lectures on Charles James Fox, despairing over Historiography. Perhaps the quintessential Mertonian, Rachael combined studiousness with sociability, enjoying bops, balls, Formal Halls, the termly College Mass, films, punting, picnics, and many other social pursuits. Rachael had a wide circle of friends at Merton, to whom she provided a steady stream of tea and biscuits, Golden Age detective fiction, TV boxed sets and sanity. Remembering her, friends remark on her keen intelligence, genuine kindness, warmth, and ‘the best line in self-deprecation I have ever encountered’.

On graduation, Rachael realised that the kind of career she wanted would require more practical skills than an Oxford degree provides, so completed a bilingual secretarial course

at the Mid-Warwickshire College before heading to London to work in recruitment. This led to a period remembered fondly by many of her Merton friends who ended up working or training in London at the same time. Her career then took her to McKinsey & Company, where she worked in a variety of HR roles over many years including recruitment, staffing and career coaching. On leaving the world of management consultancy, she developed the last of these into an independent business for a number of years before returning to McKinsey. Rachael was highly respected by those she worked with, combining perceptive insight with genuine concern for people. Colleagues have commented on the sensitivity and humane approach which characterised her professional life and the impact she had on so many people through her wise guidance.

In 2004, she married Simon Hepburn (1991), a fellow Mertonian, moving first to St Albans, where their son Ivo was born in 2008, and then to Manchester. There they immersed themselves in the community, with Rachael becoming a governor for a local school and making yet more friends. Their home gradually filled up with books, more bears and impressive amounts of Lego, along with photos from their travels around Europe with Ivo.

We remember Rachael as effortlessly stylish, consistently principled and generously supportive of friends and family. She was also unfailingly modest and would be almost as mortified by this encomium as we are bereft by her loss.

**Cathy Bothwell (née Houlihane) and Caroline Pung (née Russell)**

## 2008



**James Gregory Moxness, II, 1985–2023, died aged 38.**

James' CV reflected his unique character and eclectic interests, though not as well as you might gather from him talking to you frankly over a glass of bourbon or with pipe in hand. When it came to Merton, you might be forgiven to think he spent decades there, for all the joyful memories he had to share.

He got his start across the ocean in the United States. Born in Tucson, Arizona, he remained there through his undergraduate years, graduating from the local University of Arizona with bachelor's degrees in Classics, Art History, and Chemical Engineering — all with the highest honors. Ready to get away from home, he applied to law schools across the nation, gaining acceptance into Harvard and Stanford but, at the urging of a mentor, indulged himself with an application to Oxford. When that offer came back, he wrote to Harvard and Stanford, asking them if they would wait for him to finish his time in Oxford first. They would.

James went from Classics, Art History, and Chemical Engineering to passionately studying Classical Archaeology, a subject with which he would sustain passion for the rest of his life. A conversation about current politics could easily devolve into one on the Roman economy or breastplate design of centuries past. Digs (as well as the general life of the College) took him to places he'd never been, and Merton gave him opportunities to meet, study, and experience joy with an array of new friends with whom he could forge lasting relationships.

He did eventually make it back to America. While a student at Harvard Law School, James took a Department of Defense internship in Washington, DC. It was there he met his future husband, Harry 'Max' Hazell, who was, at the time, a business development analyst. James returned to Cambridge and he and Max carried on a long-distance relationship until he graduated from Harvard in 2013.

Forsaking the common temptation for Ivy League law school graduates of the signing bonuses and high salaries for overworked junior associates in one of the prestigious law firms of the coastal metropolises, James instead joined the United States Navy Judge Advocate General Corps. Max moved back to his home in Kentucky, attending seminary, and James and Max sustained their long-distance relationship until marrying in Kentucky in 2015, shortly after the United States Supreme Court case *Obergefell v. Hodges* was decided, overturning bans on same-sex marriage across the country. Max entered the ministry, and they moved to Maryland for James' work within the United States Cyber Command.

In 2019, Max became a Navy Chaplain and was immediately put on back-to-back overseas deployments to the Middle East. James requested the same, and in 2021 got his wish and was deployed to support the Combined Joint Task Force — Horn of Africa, of the United States Africa Command. The day he returned to the United States from his year-long deployment, he was diagnosed with terminal cancer, but still insisted on staying on Active Duty in the service of his country for as long as he could, until his condition made it absolutely impossible. This is the kind of man he was.

He is survived by his husband, Max, and their German Shepherd, Hrothgar.

**By his husband, Max**



# Forthcoming Events 2024-25

Further details of all events are available from the Development Office. We add events to the schedule throughout the year and regularly update the Merton website with information as it becomes available. Chapel and Choir events are also available on the College website.

## October

26 1974 Golden Jubilee Lunch

## November

- 1-3 MC3 North America Reunion Weekend  
Location: Manhattan
- 7 Merton Lawyers' Association Meeting  
In conversation: The Right Hon Lord Sales, Justice of the Supreme Court, and Professor Paul Davies, Professor of Commercial Law at UCL  
Venue: Dechert, 5 Cannon St, London EC4M 5UB
- 21 Michaelmas Drinks  
Venue: The Antelope, 22 Eaton Terrace, London, SW1W 8EZ

## December

6 Merton Society Christmas Concert  
Venue: Temple Church, Temple, London EC4Y 7BB

## January

13 Online Presentation by Dr Rory Gregson  
Fellow and Tutor in Law, Dr Rory Gregson, speaks on: 'The Limits of Implication: When Parties are Silent and Why it Matters'

## February

- 6 Merton College Net Zero Group meeting  
'A blessing or a curse? Why land use is at the heart of tackling climate change'  
Speaker: Patrick Begg, Outdoors and Natural Resources Director at the National Trust
- 13 Merton in Edinburgh



March

22 Gaudy for the years 2000, 2001, 2002 and 2003

April

3 Merton Society Annual Lecture  
Speaker: Professor Steven Gunn  
Venue: Lazard, 50 Stratton Street, London, W1J 8LL

11-13 Passiontide at Merton

24 2024 Returners' Dinner for Undergraduate Leavers

May

3 2025 MCR Leavers' Reception

10 Founder's Society Lunch

11 Merton Team at Bidwells Town and Gown 10K Run  
Followed by brunch in College

15 Merton Society London Dinner  
Venue: Vintners' Hall 68 Upper Thames Street,  
Moorgate, London, EC4V 3BG

31 Merton College Boat Club Dinner

June

28 Merton Society AGM and Garden Party

29 1965 Diamond Jubilee Lunch



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