

POSTMASTER

AND THE MERTON RECORD



2025



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OXFORD

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FROM THE WARDEN

The last twelve months have brought many global challenges, political, environmental and technological. Much of the time College feels like a haven and the year I'll describe below has the rhythm and quality that (Covid years apart) will feel very familiar. Global issues inevitably have an impact, but our priority is to respond in ways that protect our community and uphold the excellence at the heart of everything we do.

It is always a pleasure to welcome our new freshers at the start of Michaelmas term and I am impressed by how quickly and seamlessly they are integrated into the Merton community. Formally inducting them into College, watching them write their names in the College Register and sitting with them at their matriculation dinner as they start to make friends that will stay with them for life, is a pleasure and a privilege. When I talk to those returning to the Jubilee Lunches we hold for those who matriculated in the 1960s and 70s, it is the friendships made, often in those Freshers' Week meetings and events, that consistently feature highest in people's treasured memories of College.

The Choir and Girl Choristers have had a busy year once again. They recorded Gabriel Jackson's *The Christmas Story* in Michaelmas term (the first of two choir CDs recorded this year), and of course there were the usual beautiful Advent

and Christmas carol services. There was a Choral Evensong broadcast on BBC Radio 3 in Hilary term, which marked the start of a collaboration with the Britten Sinfonia. There was a wonderful Passiontide series of concerts culminating in the St John Passion at the University Church. There have been tours to the Netherlands for the Choir, and to Windsor and Westminster Abbey for the Girl Choristers, with more to come. In December there will be a ten-day choir tour to Japan, via Hong Kong, including concerts in Tokyo, Hiroshima and Osaka. Each time I think the talents of our Choir and Girl Choristers cannot get any better, they prove me wrong – and I couldn't be happier about it. We owe a huge debt of gratitude to Ben Nicholas, Reed Rubin Organist and Director of Music, and to the Chapel team. There is an interview with Lizzie Casey, our Chapel and Choir Manager, on page 96 where you can read more about the work that goes into planning and running these events.

In November I travelled to New York with our Development Director, Mark Coote, to take part in the MC3 reunion weekend and to catch up with our North American alumni. This was the first of two trips to the US this year, as we were back there in May for Merton in Manhattan, which coincided with the University's alumni weekend attended by the Vice-Chancellor, Professor Irene Tracey (1985). Mertonians were



The Girl Choristers at Westminster Abbey, August 2025

able to see two Wardens for the price of one at a wonderful evening hosted by Amna Nasser (1997). It is always a pleasure to meet alumni whether in Oxford or elsewhere. I am touched by the genuine warmth and affection for the College and the enduring sense of community that exists.

One of the final events of Michaelmas term is the Rent Audit lunch, when we host the tenants on the College's estates for lunch in College. The function of this gathering has changed over the centuries. Today it is an opportunity to get together and celebrate a different section of our Merton community, some of whom have been farming the College's estates for generations. This is a counterpoint to Warden's Progress in July each year when a small number of us travel from Oxford to the College's estates (recently to Surrey and Suffolk on some very hot days in early July). This year's Rent Audit lunch was particularly special because it was an opportunity for us to thank John Gloag who has retired after 32 years of service to the College. John has been a magnificent Estates Bursar and Land Agent and we will miss him.

In Hilary term we welcomed to College our new Chaplain, The Revd Canon Justin White. Justin read Engineering at Oxford, and had a career in management consultancy, before reading Theology at Trinity College, Cambridge and training



MC3 Reception hosted by Amna Nasser

for ministry at Westcott House. He has held a number of posts, including as Dean of Chapel at Winchester College, and came to us from the Woodard Corporation where he was Senior Provost. He has settled into College life very quickly and anyone who has had the opportunity to visit the Chapel this year or listen to the livestreamed services will have seen that it is thriving. While The Revd Canon Dr Simon Jones acted as both Chaplain and Head of Welfare in College, these roles grew substantially during the 22 years of Simon's tenure, particularly that of welfare. With Simon's departure we took the opportunity to recognise this development, splitting the two roles and appointing a new Head of Welfare in College (Dr Helen Webster) alongside our new Chaplain. In January we also welcomed our new Land Agent, Sophie Tidy.

We held this year's Equality Conversation in College in March. Dr Janaki Srinivasan's topic was 'Inclusions and Exclusions in the Digital Age'. Her research examines the political economy of information technology-based development initiatives, focusing on how gender, caste and class shape the use of such technologies. The rapid rise of AI and technological developments are reshaping all areas of life, including higher education, and conversations around how this is happening, what the effects may be, and crucially whether this can be done in a way that is fair and inclusive of all members



On Warden's Progress



Merton and Mansfield Rugby team 2024-25

of society, are vital. It is good that the Merton Equality Conversations can play a part in this process.

Trinity term inevitably has an exam focus. There was plenty of academic success in College again this year. In November 2024 the decision was taken to discontinue the Norrington Table (pleasingly we therefore finished at the top of the table), so I can't record our position in this year's Norrington Table. I can report, however, that our students continue to thrive academically, both in their degrees and beyond. Our academics have also had another outstanding year. Professor Sir Andrew Wiles was awarded the Basic Science Lifetime Award, honouring his proof of Fermat's Last Theorem; Professor Simon Hooker was elected to the fellowship of the American Physical Society; Professor James Binney was awarded the Royal Astronomical Society's Gold Medal; Professor Matt Higgins was elected as a new Fellow by the Academy of Medical Sciences and as a member of the European Molecular Biology Organization; and Professor Daniel Grimley was elected a Fellow of the British Academy. We are blessed with a wealth of talent in both our student body and among our fellowship, and it is always sad to say farewell to our student cohorts that graduate each year, who then join the ranks of our alumni community. This year we also said farewell to Professor John Geddes, who retired

as WA Handley Professor of Psychiatry; to Dr Nathan Lane, Economics Tutor, who moved to a post at LSE; and to our cohort of Early Career Researchers, who bring such richness to the College.

In Trinity term we were delighted to host two more scholars as part of the Africa Oxford initiative (AfOx): Dr Marie Korsaga, an astrophysicist from Burkina Faso who studies dark matter (she is the first female Burkinabe astrophysicist); and Dr Rachel Titus, based at Obafemi Awolowo University, Nigeria, who specialises in public health and health advocacy. We are very pleased to support this programme, which is designed to provide exceptional African researchers with an opportunity to build international networks and focus on a project of their choice, away from teaching and administrative duties at their home institutions.

One of the great pleasures of being Warden is being able to celebrate the success of our students. One way we do this is via the Sports Recognition dinner in Trinity term each year. This is an opportunity to recognise the sporting talents of our students across a range of disciplines and includes those who represent the University, including this year Oliver Douglas (tennis), Christopher Sneddon (rackets), Teresa Habib Meriggi (boxing), Grace Beglan (real tennis), Miranda



The Gold Status Green Impact Award received in June

Bate (lacrosse), Lucy Williams (competitive dance) and Daniel Orton (who coxed the Oxford women's Blue Boat in The Boat Race). There is always much to celebrate at a College level too. This year the Merton and Mansfield rugby team won the plate for Cuppers, and the women's football team (a Merton-Mansfield-Wadham combo) reached the Cuppers final for the first time.

There was success on the river too, with the Women's 1st VIII getting their blades in Torpids, and the Women's 2nd VIII repeating this success in Summer Vllls. The Men's 1st VIII finished seventh on the river in Torpids (their best position since 1966) and moved into the first division in Summer Vllls. One of the particular markers of esteem at the Sports Recognition dinner is the award of a small number of ties and pins which have previously been known as Haigh Awards, but which were renamed the Lisle Awards this year in recognition of the important and integral role in sport at Merton played by James Lisle, our wonderful groundsman for 36 years, who sadly passed away in January.

I wrote in last year's *Postmaster* about the College's commitment to sustainability via the creation of a sustainability working group, whose role was to recommend to Governing Body a set of sustainability goals (which were agreed in 2024) and a



The Merton Floats cast of *Helen* gathering before the show

sustainability policy to underpin those goals. I am delighted to report that the working group's recommendations have been accepted by Governing Body and the College's first Sustainability Strategy document is available on the College's website. Having completed its remit, the working group has disbanded, but we now have a Sustainability Forum which meets regularly, and consists of Fellows, staff, students and alumni who are tasked with keeping this strategy under review. In our sustainability endeavours we are supported by Jilly Mowbray, a new Colleges Sustainability Officer, who we share with a number of other colleges. As a measure of the College's success in this field, the College was awarded Gold Status in the University's Green Impact Awards in June.

One of the other developments this year has been the establishment of a Strategic Space review group in College. Unfortunately, the new library building that had been planned for Rose Lane will not be possible in that location, due to planning difficulties raised by the Council as a result of the proximity of the proposed building to the medieval city wall and the medieval ditch alongside it. The requirement for more library space and more flexible study spaces within College remains a recognised need. We are continuing to look for ways to fulfil our ambition to expand and improve library provision for our students, as well as meeting the

The farewell to Dame Philippa Whipple as Merton Society President, at the Merton Society Garden Party in June



other strategic space needs of the College for the next 760 years. The delay in the new library project has given us an opportunity to reset our fundraising priorities. There are increasing demands for graduate funding particularly affecting (but not limited to) the Humanities, and the protection of the tutorial model remains core to our mission. The political and financial pressures facing the higher education sector make this even more pressing than it was when we launched the 750th campaign. Fundraising for these priorities, as well as for a number of capital projects, will be our focus for the coming years. I am very grateful to the principal donors of the library project. They have engaged thoughtfully in discussions around repurposing their original gifts, not only demonstrating their close affiliation and affection for Merton, but also recognising other key fundraising priorities for the College. Their support aligns closely with our overall strategic goal of fostering an outstanding and vibrant community in which individuals from all backgrounds can thrive and excel. There will be more information about our fundraising plans to come.

The blazing sunshine in June provided the perfect conditions for a host of garden parties and events in Fellows' Garden, including the Merton Floats production which this year was Euripides' *Helen*, and the Merton Society Garden Party. It was wonderful to see so many alumni returning for this event and catching up with old friends. The Merton Society held a number of other events during the year, including a Christmas concert in Temple Church, the Merton Society lecture (this year delivered by Professor Steven Gunn on the topic 'An Accidental History of Tudor England'), and a London dinner with Andy Cato (1991) as the guest speaker. The Merton Society is very active and successful and we owe a huge debt to Dame Philippa Whipple (1984) who has been its President for the last six years. She steered the Society through Covid, ensuring that the alumni community continued to feel connected even while we were all physically isolated, and under her leadership the organisation has gone from strength to strength. We are particularly grateful to Philippa and her husband Sam Whipple (1983) for their work in establishing a mentoring scheme for recent undergraduate



leavers. The Garden Party was Philippa's final event in the role as she has now handed over the presidency to John Booth (1976). John already has exciting plans for next year's events, so do look out for those and attend if you can.

Sadly, there are members of the Merton community who have passed away in the course of the year. Their names are included in the *In Memoriam* pages. I would like to mark in particular the loss of Professor Sir George Radda, who was a chemistry student at the College before later becoming a Fellow. He had a distinguished career, receiving numerous prestigious honours and awards, and is very fondly remembered in College. Sadly, we also saw the passing of Professor Béla Novák, the College's Professor of Integrative Systems Biology, who was a brilliant scientist, a passionate researcher, and a cherished mentor and colleague. He had been a member of the fellowship since 2007 and was known for his kindness, generosity and warmth. This year also saw the loss of The Revd Mark Everitt who served as Chaplain and Tutor in Russian from 1963 until his retirement in 2002. Our thoughts are with their families.

This has been another busy year in College with many successes to celebrate and lots of opportunities for the

Merton community to come together, but, as I mentioned above, there are political, financial and AI-related challenges that will have a potential impact on universities around the world. It is important to value and actively sustain what we do in College, which is exceptional and which enables our students and our wider community to thrive. We cannot be complacent. It has been a year of changes and milestones, such as our first Sustainability Strategy. We have also embarked on a significant programme of maintenance to our buildings and those visiting the College will see scaffolding in Front Quad as we undertake maintenance and repairs to Front 4 and 5, as well as on the side of the College facing Christ Church Meadows as we carry out stonework repairs. Change is necessary if we want things to stay as they are, as Lampedusa famously tells us. We will continue to strive to ensure that things change, in order to ensure that the things we value, excellence and a strong sense of community, continue to be at the heart of the College experience for students, staff, Fellows and alumni.

Professor Jennifer Payne
Warden



JCR NEWS

It has been an incredible honour and privilege to serve as JCR President over a year that has been filled with such exciting initiatives, events and achievements that all deserve recognition. While I can't capture all the achievements of the JCR community in this year's edition of *Postmaster*, I hope that those that I am able to detail below give an insight into how wonderful the past year has been and how much I've loved every moment of it.

I'm so grateful to everyone who has made this experience so rewarding, and I'd like to extend a special thank you to my fantastic JCR Executive Committee for their dedication, energy and hard work in building such a strong and vibrant community.

My first thanks must go to Lucia Ross (2023) and Moli Birkinshaw (2023) for their unwavering commitment as Vice-President and Treasurer, and for all the support that they've given me over the year. My heartfelt thanks go to Emilia Mason (2023) as Academic Affairs Representative for working with the Subject Presidents to foster strong academic communities, and to Emma Heagney (2023) as Access and Equal Opportunities Representative for championing access, outreach and equality across College. I'm also deeply grateful to the brilliant Welfare Officers, Alex Philips (2023), Noah Yudkin (2023) and Liam Purchase (2023), who kept the JCR

well fed and faring well, with their fantastic welfare teas and exciting events like Welfare Alpacas and Bouldering Trips. And last but not least, a huge thank you to the Entertainment Representatives, Perrine Beckley (2023) and Lilirose Kent (2023), who through their amazing bar nights and Wine and Cheese events, proved this year that Merton is where fun goes to thrive!

This Trinity saw the exciting revival of the Merton Arts Festival, thanks to Zhaniya Abaidildinova (2023) and Moli Birkinshaw, where we had performances from various student bands, poetry readings and embroidery workshops. Other standout events organised by the JCR Committee 2024–25 include the second-hand clothing swap, led by Jonathan Berry (2024) and Theo Hawkins (2023), the Alumni Careers Insight Formal, organised by Jonathan Mountford (2023), and a magical Diwali Sparklers Night, hosted by Luke Liang (2023).

It has also been fantastic to see the revival of the Neave Society – well done to Dylan Turner (2023) and the committee for bringing it back to life and providing a space in College to discuss current affairs and important political topics. I hope that ongoing efforts like the JCR Society Proposal will help build on this momentum, providing even more support for student-led projects and societies.



Merton matriculates 2025. This photograph has been reproduced by kind permission of Gillman & Soame photographers and can be ordered online at gimagebank.co.uk/merton/t/qatlrj2025

After a successful formal swap with Peterhouse, where 28 members of Merton JCR visited Cambridge, I am very excited to see our connection with them grow further and look forward to all future events with our sister college, including hosting them at Merton for a Formal swap in Michaelmas 2025.

I would also like to express my gratitude to the MCR Presidents Taisiia Sazonova (2022) and Marcell Szakaly (2018) for all their advice and friendship this year. Over the last year, we have worked closely together on the Time Ceremony, and I'm so pleased to have seen an increase in JCR–MCR collaboration between both committees and students.

As the year comes to an end, I'm looking forward to dedicating myself to the final year of my degree, alongside serving as a Student Trustee on the Oxford University Student Union Trustee Board and joining the Winter Ball 2025 Committee.

Best of luck to Cesca Kent (2024), the incoming JCR President, and the rest of the JCR Executive Committee 2025–26 for what will be a demanding but incredibly rewarding year. I know that they will all do an amazing job, and I'm looking forward to supporting the JCR from the other side.

Lucy Chen (2023)
JCR President (2024–25)



MCR NEWS

The past year has been very successful for the MCR, seeing the completion of major projects and the beginning of others. Throughout the year, we enjoyed a diverse and outstanding selection of events to build and grow our community. We worked hard to make our events welcoming for first-time attendees and regulars alike, and to showcase Merton's excellence to all guests.

The largest construction project this year was the comprehensive damp-proofing and painting throughout the basement of the graduate accommodation, including the kitchens.

We are grateful to the Head of Accommodation Sally Hague; the Domestic Bursar Tim Lightfoot and the Clerk of Works Jane Reid for arranging and financing this project.

As part of these works, the MCR refurbished the Kristofferson Common Room (KCR), our social space on Holywell Street. As President, I oversaw the project together with student members of the KCR Furnishing Committee, who selected suitable and futureproof equipment for this space.

This year's MCR committee has worked hard to outdo their predecessors. Our three Social Secretaries, Gabrielle Davies,

Zoé Lienard and Chiara Theimer, introduced fun new events, including Halloween and Valentine's Day socials and pole dancing taster sessions.

They continued the long-standing tradition of Second Desserts, improving the MCR's selection of cheeses and cakes. They also expanded the selection of nonalcoholic cocktails and allergen-free snacks, making the MCR ever more accessible. To help the MCR really get into the mood for BOPs, they refreshed the themes, and offered some amazing prizes for the best costumes.

Our Welfare Reps Adrija Gosh and Jonas Hertel looked after our wellbeing by organising wholesome events, as well as via quick chats. Among others, they continued the beloved Pizza and Massage nights, and took advantage of the good summer weather by organising a picnic.

In addition to taking excellent care of the MCR's finances, Treasurer Kerry Sun greatly improved the MCR's tea and biscuit provisions based on the very popular biscuit tasting session.

As President, I oversaw a successful exchange with our sister college Peterhouse in Cambridge, fostering connections well

beyond Oxford. I also organised Freshers' Week, ensuring that one of the largest incoming cohorts in recent history felt welcome and well prepared for their time here. Each term, I organised the President's Black Tie Dinner, featuring an increasingly lavish array of Second Desserts. We are thankful to Head Steward Margo Skalik, Head Chef Simon Crawshaw, and their entire teams for making the Formal Dinner possible, and for helping me share delicious Eastern European culture (mainly Ukrainian) with us through the menu.

We were lucky to have a highly motivated and active cohort, who volunteered for many other important committee positions. They worked hard behind the scenes to make sure that all groups were represented, and that the MCR best supported its members.

Our Freshers', Gender and LGBTQ+ officers, among others, organised plentiful fun, competitive, and informative events.

Our Vice-President, Marcell Szakály organised the yearly room ballot, and General Meetings.

In a quest to provide entertainment in addition to this bureaucracy, I hosted fun and relaxed board game and poker night events.

I am happy that Marcell Szakály have been elected as the incoming MCR President, following on from mine and James Hua's two-year presidency. I am sure that Marcell will do a great job as the President, as he was a member of the MCR and JCR committees for many years.

I am proud of our vibrant MCR community, and of all the traditions that all our predecessors have built, and I am deeply thankful for everything that the MCR has given me. It is with these in mind that we will work hard to maintain and further improve the MCR that we all love, and ensure that Merton is known as the place where 'fun goes to Live'.

Taisiia Sazonova (2022)
MCR President 2024-2025



Merton Sport



Merton's ultimate frisbee team in action



Merton players. From left: Lucie, Hermione and Pippa.

Women's Football

Women's football reached great heights this season. Merton and Mansfield combined with Wadham for another season after last season's success, and our sights were set on a long Cuppers campaign. Following plenty of losses through graduations and year abroads, Wertonfield had what was essentially an overhauled squad.

We started the season with a league match against Worcester, and a 6–0 victory proved encouraging and the start of what was to be a highly successful season. Our Cuppers run went all the way to the final after an extremely tense semi-final (a last-minute winner scored with 10 seconds to go by Merton's captain). The atmosphere at Iffley was electric, with an incredible crowd turnout to cheer on Wertonfield. However, the result was not in our favour and our Cuppers campaign ended in Glorious Defeat (4–2 loss against Hertble).

Wertonfield also had a great run in Futsal Cuppers, reaching the semi-final, unable to defeat a strong Worcester team.



This season was the most successful season Wertonfield has ever had, building upon the foundations laid in the last few years. From numerous socials to regular training sessions, the team formed an amazing team spirit that has carried us not just on the pitch but off the pitch as well. We hosted our first of hopefully many alumni matches at Mansfield College (credit to Mansfield captain Mika), an amazing opportunity for previous players and current students to form bonds.

This team has been the essence of what college sport is all about, and I am very proud of what we have achieved. I want to thank Mika Chen (Mansfield) and Mia Lockyer (Wadham) for being incredible co-captains. I will miss it very much! However, I have full confidence that Pippa will be an excellent captain for Merton next season.

Hermione Chammings (2022)
Women's Football Captain 2024–25



Rugby

After a gutting loss in the Iffley bowl final last year, the combined might of Merton, Mansfield, Corpus Christi, Somerville, St Catherine's, Regent's Park and Linacre stormed to spectacular victory over Keble this Trinity term. Merton College, represented by Eddie Bolland and Ben Hayes (both 2023), put in splendid shots and carries for the full 80 minutes to take home the plate against Keble.

It was a long road to the sunny 10 May celebration under the posts. Still sore from the double casualties of last year's defeat and the graduation of star scrum-half Myles Kelly (2020) the year before, the boys nevertheless marched to an unexpected victory in the first match of Michaelmas, a friendly against future plate rival Keble. Joined for the first time by the game-changing talents of Leeds-native Bolland, a seasoned veteran of University Rugby League, the squad took home a win after an early two-try setback. This early boost was followed by bloody glory over St Peter's in the rain and mud of the Merton sports ground to conclude a solid first term.

Hilary would prove more difficult. CCSMM was knocked out of contention for the cup by a girthy squad of Teddy Hall's finest, notwithstanding the growing Rugby League skills of Hayes and Bolland both, the proud American having honed his craft alongside the seasoned second row with University victories against Brunel, Brighton and the Tabs. Licking their wounds, the boys nevertheless continued the push towards the Iffley plate under the direction of Merton neighbour and Corpus captain Freddie Spence, who through unprecedented

recruitment efforts signed on a 20-strong squad to meet the challenges of Trinity.

Bolstered by these developments, the boys braved the scorching English sun to put up a crushing six tries against Balliol-Hertford in the dusty semi-final at University Parks. Not a week later, the crowds gathered at Iffley to watch what loyal fans of Merton rugby know was certain to be a brutal rematch: the plate final against Keble. The pitch was a battlefield from the start — spectacular broken noses, savage scrums, and fury increased to repeated yellow-card heights. CCSMM inched forward with a series of hard-won tries, but it was not until Mansfield prop Victor Angelov's historic breakaway try that the stubborn Keble squad, watching the man of the match bound across the pitch unhindered, were finally broken in spirit. Victory at Iffley had been won.

Triumph secured, the team paused to capture it for posterity in full view of the Bannister track. It was an apt sight for a victory so resounding it might well be compared to that record-breaking run which Bannister's fellow Mertonians of today serendipitously followed 71 years and four days later.

As Bolland and Hayes enter their third year, Merton rugby continues in studly glory. Next year could be, for the first time in the College's storied history, the year of the cup.

Proudly,

Ben Hayes (2023)

Rugby Captain 2024–25



Hockey

The 2024–25 season of Merton–Mansfield hockey was characterised by a small group of players, who worked exceptionally hard against opposition which often outnumbered us, and played some great hockey in the process. A particular highlight was a 5–4 win over Hertford to cap off the league season in Hilary. Sadly, we fell at the first hurdle in Cuppers, despite having combined with Univ & Balliol for the competition, losing in the first round.

We are looking forward to another fun season of college hockey next academic year and hope to replicate the form we have in the last three years, which were defined by a Cuppers triumph in 2022–23 and a semi-final finish in 2023–24, as well as the outstanding teamwork throughout.

Peter Aitken (2022) and Erin Sage (Mansfield, 2023)
Hockey Co-Captains 2024–25



Men's Rowing

MI with the final bump of Summer Eights 2025, just in front of the boathouse

The 2024-2025 season has been one of many challenges, including dealing with a complete rearrangement of the boathouse, the constant battle with the flag system, and of course the weather. Despite these challenges, both our senior men and our new seniors have made huge progress throughout the year, which culminated in the great successes of both Torpids and Summer Eights. My vice-captain Michael Chen (2023), my novice captain Liam Purchase (2023) and I are extremely proud of the entire squad for their commitment and development shown this year.

Michaelmas unfortunately started with a chunk of red flag and no rowing, leading to the cancellation of our annual novice taster day but our keen novices turned up to the erg room instead, learning technique from our seniors and laying down the watts. Later in the term, more bad weather

led to the cancellation of the Michaelmas Novice Regatta, but this was replaced by a men's side 2k erg test where some very fast times were posted by our novices and also many personal records were beaten by our seniors.

While our novices spent a lot of time on the ergs, our seniors also joined in (after managing to squeeze three sessions out of the limited water availability). This joint erg training, which occasionally was also with the women's side, really allowed the entire squad to develop their ability, ready for when they got in a boat for Hilary. This included our charity ergathon, a 24-hour row in the Games Room in College to raise money for Homeless Oxfordshire.

Hilary included a fair few sessions being cancelled but, with a trip to Dorney Lake, our new seniors got to experience



The 1st Eight at Summer Eights Dinner

rowing outside Oxford. This trip led to successes in various Isis Winter Leagues (IWLs). Fortunately, the weather suddenly improved, and with a chance to finally get out on the water, all boats were getting out as much as they could, excited for Torpids. Again, the improvements made by both the 1st and 2nd Torpids was massive as we were finally on the water. The 1st Torpid also raced Hammersmith Head, three days before Torpids started as the final race prep for bumps, setting times similar to those around us in Torpids.

With confidence from Hammersmith Head, Torpids then rolled round. Our M2 crew rowed on, for the first time in two years, meaning they are now on the bumps chart. Our 1st Torpid went on to become seventh on the river, a place not held since 1966 — 59 years ago — as well as equalling the roughly 100-year-old record of not being bumped for 26 days consecutively. A shoutout of course to Lukas Krone (2020) for racing 22 of these days!

Post Hilary term saw a crew race at the iconic Head of the River Race in London, managing to pull alongside another Oxford college but not quite managing to overtake them. This was followed by our training camp, this year in Reading, and saw the return of last year's coach Jess Foster to help train our new seniors.

Then, of course, Summer Eights. For our M2, rowing on easily meant a great starting place. With an initial row over



The 2nd Eight at Summer Eights Dinner

followed by two very quick bumps (less than 30 strokes of racing across two races), one would think they didn't need to train for the longer races at all. However, day three brought a tough race with every other crew bumping out, but to finish in Div 4 is huge as they will not have to row on next year. Our 1st Eight, after having an unfortunate race against Pembroke at Bedford Regatta, trained with determination for the next couple of weeks to maximise their speed. Summer Eights started; after bumping on the first day, and twice on the second day, spirits were high. Unfortunately, the Friday had other plans, as the two crews in front of us bumped out, meaning we didn't manage to catch the next crew. However, spirits were high again on Saturday, knowing we needed to catch Wadham. With a race that will long be remembered by the crew, we bumped just outside our boathouse, the final bump of Summer Eights 2025, to finish 11th on the River, the first time in Div 1 for 45 years!

A huge thank you must go to the coaches for this year, Cole Rooney and Lizzie Johnston, who have taken a new and novice squad at the start of the year and helped them achieve some impressive results at the end. I look forward to handing over the role of captain to Will Carey (2024) and to watching the squad develop even further under his leadership.

Joshua Maisuria-Hull (2023)
Men's Rowing Captain 2024–2025



W2 celebrate their Day 2 bump at Summer Vills

Women's Rowing

This has been a year of tremendous progress and success for our Merton ladies. The 2024–25 season for the women's side has seen us racing on the Tideway for Hammersmith Head, soaking in the sunshine at Bedford Regatta, battle-paddling at Reading Rowing Camp, erging for 24 hours straight to raise funds for Homeless Oxfordshire, and bumping several colleges along the way.

Michaelmas term saw a record number of 55 freshers registering to join Merton College Boat Club. Our novice girls quickly took to the water while the conditions stayed sunny and warm. Under the expertise of Tímea Csahók, the girls progressed quickly. Combining water sessions with introductions to the erg, our novice girls became enthusiastic and committed rowers by the end of the term. They completed their first 2km test in Week 8 of Michaelmas term. Entering Hilary, our new cohort of W2 girls competed in the Isis Spring League as an 8+ with impressive results. Due to the restrictions of Torpids this year, no second boats were able to compete. We took this as an opportunity for our W2 girls to spend more time training for their upcoming Summer

Eights campaign. At the end of Trinity, almost all our W2 girls attended our annual training camp at Reading Rowing Club for five days of coached training on the River Thames. Their hard work at camp paid off. When they returned, they enjoyed a successful City Bumps campaign in 0th week of Trinity Term and the fastest 'rowing on' time of all the collegiate women's second boats. This momentum continued for the Summer Eights campaign. I am delighted to announce that W2 were successful in winning blades in Summer Eights 2025. Over the course of their Summer Eights campaign, W2 bumped St Peter's, Balliol, Jesus II and Regent's Park.

Our W1 crew is an entirely new eight from last year, due to many finalists having left. This meant the girls had to train extra hard to match the brilliance of last year's blade-winning eight. Our current W1 is a mix of JCR and MCR, so is a real mix across the whole of the College. The girls have trained very hard this year, with three (and often four) water sessions a week at Godstow and land training interspersed between them. In the head race season, the girls competed successfully at a frosty Hammersmith Head. In the regatta



W2 chasing down Balliol



W1 on the start line, Day 1 of Torpids



W1 enjoying the Torpids sun

season, the girls soaked in the sunshine as they raced against Pembroke College at Bedford Regatta. The W1 girls competed as a 4+ in the Isis Winter League and were the fastest women's four on the Isis that day. Alex Wythe was the W1 coach this year and has trained the girls with brilliant attention to detail and enthusiasm. His genuine commitment to our training and improvement has been integral to the team's success. In Hilary term, the W1 crew enjoyed a successful Torpids campaign. The girls won blades, bumping Linacre, Corpus Christi, St John's, St Catherine's and St Hilda's. In Trinity term, the W1 crew moved up 3+ places and rowed over on the final day, racing past Boathouse Island to the cheers of our boathouse. They bumped St Catherine's, Mansfield and Lady Margaret Hall. It is with great delight that I announce that Merton College sent their first ever Development 4+ to Henley Women's Regatta to compete for the Frank v Harry Cup on 20 June.

It has been a brilliant year for Merton women. The girls were tremendous in their efforts to raise funds for Homeless Oxfordshire in Michaelmas term. With three rowing machines

('ergs') laid out in the Games Room in College, our rowers 'erged' for 24 hours straight. They managed to raise just under £1,000 for Homeless Oxfordshire. It has been wonderful to continue being involved with this local charity.

The girls were delighted with the new boathouse extension this year. It holds our smaller boats and blades. This has meant there has been a much greater uptake of sculling in the Trinity term – I wonder if this enthusiasm will stay when it turns much frostier in Michaelmas. Nonetheless, the uptake in sculling has been wonderful. Despite the occasional capsized, it has allowed the girls to train independently in smaller boats when sweep sessions are not happening. The Merton College sports pavilion continues to be our room of choice for land training and strength conditioning. Our girls are becoming ever more committed to land training. The hard work and diligence of our girls has been exemplary this year and pushes our crews to go from strength to strength.

Cara Treacy (2023)

Women's Captain 2024–25

Tennis

The 2024–25 tennis season at Merton began with the heavy realisation that we had lost the one and only Jack Pickering (2020), who is not only a brilliant tennis player but also a tactical legend who forced the fine tuning of the Cuppers rules. This darkness was quickly eroded by the bright light of Oliver Douglas (2024). A sort of Australian rebirth of Jack, Oliver's skills as a Blues player and top 50 player in Australia helped us reach our second Cuppers semi-final in a row, beaten only by the absolutely stacked Peterhouse side. Partnered with him was the consistent hero of women's tennis at Merton, Eleanor Bogie (2021), as well as incoming JCR President Cesca Kent (2024).

Netball

What a year it's been for the Merton Netball team – a mix of grit, glitter and good times. We kicked things off in style with a *thunderous* victory against Peterhouse, Cambridge, at the Intercollege Sports Day.

We held our own in Division 2 this year in both the Michaelmas and Hilary tournaments, showing consistency, hustle, and just the right amount of chaos. Summer saw us leaping into the Cuppers tournament with characteristic flair, and though we didn't quite scrape our way into the quarterfinals, spirits were sky-high and the sideline banter unmatched.

This year marked the second (and final) year in post for our brilliant co-captains, Eleanor Bogie (2021) and Jemima Freeman (2022). They now pass the torch to two fiery freshers: Kate Burke (2024), a defensive powerhouse with reflexes, and Frankie Forbes (2024), our centre-court dynamo, quicker than a fresher spotting free pizza.

We've been lucky to have a fantastic mix of seasoned legends and fresh-faced recruits. Returning titans Tabatha Burden (2022), Antonia Johnson (2022), Jem Jones (St Cross, 2007), Jemima Barnes (2021), and Jamie Ngo (2022) were nothing short of unstoppable. On the newbie front: Francesca Kent (2024)

The fresher duo of Rohan Crowe and Sophie Neville (both 2024) proved to be a powerful combo and are sure to contribute to continued Merton success for years to come. Cuppers veterans in Shehryar Hasan (2023), Denys Bystrov (2022) and our captains Marc Giroux de Foiard Brown and Dylan Cook (2022) rounded off our strong squad, big enough to run many a session in Trinity. With summer to train, a finals run next year is on the cards.

Marc Giroux de Foiard Brown (2022)
Tennis Captain 2024–25

and Max Stiasny (2024) bossed the goal circle, while Pippa Harkin (2024), Rohan Crowe (2024), and Aisha Warmington (2024) brought the energy and pizzazz to centre court.

This year also saw the inaugural Merton Alumni Netball Match – and what a debut it was! Our alumni returned in full force, dusted off their trainers and stormed the court. With a little help from the current captains, they clinched a well-earned victory. It was a fantastic reminder that the Merton netball spirit doesn't end at graduation. Once a teammate, always a teammate.

Off the court, the fun didn't stop. From wild theme nights at the Merton bar to chaotic crew dates with other colleges, the netball team proved it's just as skilled at socials as it is at shooting. Our community spirit went well beyond the pitch, with theatre trips to support teammates, Formals filled with laughter, and unwavering camaraderie throughout.

Here's to another year of netball shenanigans, electric teamwork, and whatever glorious madness comes next.

Eleanor Bogie (2021)
Netball Co-Captain 2024–25



Squash

With our freshly renovated courts at Merton, this was a great year for squash. Gone are the days where you could expect to get a court without booking or the days where the strings could survive a term without snapping.

And what better way to celebrate the new courts than by storming through Cuppers and winning the whole thing? Shiloh Wu (St Hilda's, 2023) joined our ranks to help bring the team to new heights. Grace Beglan (2022) showed off her

new real tennis volleying skills in aggressive fashion, while Christopher Sneddon (2023) proved himself indomitable. Adding to the depth of the team was Daksh Walia (2023) and myself, Marc Giroux de Foiard Brown, who didn't drop a match during the run of the tournament.

Marc Giroux de Foiard Brown (2022)
Squash Captain 2024–25



Cricket

This season we won four out of six of our competitive matches, continuing on from our good run of form last year. We kicked it off with a dominant bowling performance against Corpus Christi, featuring a hat-trick and five-wicket-haul on debut for Shaheer Asim Gillani that saw them restricted to 40 runs, which was then concluded with a confident chase in our innings. In the next game, thanks to the efforts of Nathaniel Davey (2022)(2-10), Ben Harper (Mansfield, 2023)(3-9), and Ahmed Ittihad Hasib (Mansfield 2020)(3-12), University College were restricted to just 65, allowing our opener Ben Verdin (2022)(38*) to swiftly bring home the victory with a flurry of boundaries. In our third league fixture, a blistering 35 from our opener Christopher Sneddon (2023) brought us to 115, which was closed out by Ben Harper (5-18) to see St Hugh's crumble to 88 in reply.

I speak for the whole team when I say that our favourite fixture of the season was our last game against New College – who ended as champions of both the League and Cuppers. Choosing to bat first on a difficult pitch, our top order collapsed to their opening quick. Then, our number 6, 7, and 8 batters led a vivacious counterattack, turning out 45 runs between them and helping us scramble to 95-6 in our 20 overs. Particularly amusing was a moment during the recovery



when Alex Higson (Mansfield, 2023) hit a check drive straight to mid-wicket, with him and Suryansh Mehta (2019) managing to run 3 due to there being two overthrows! New fought well in reply, but terrific fielding, clinical bowling, and a determined attitude saw them skittled for 88, with 1.2 overs remaining.

The season should be remembered above all for the excellent team spirit that we displayed throughout. In a team of undergraduate and postgraduate students from all corners of the world, whether it was their first or hundredth match, each player gave it their all and showed unwavering support for one another. Special mentions should also go to Akshay Pendyala (2024) for his energetic fast bowling and cracking shots in the middle order; Vishnu Gorthi (2024) for taking wickets consistently when they were needed, including a magnificent partnership-breaking caught and bowled; Alex Higson's excellent half century at the top of the order against Exeter and crucial stumpings against New; and Suryansh Mehta's gritty recoveries with the bat. We ended term with an awards ceremony in Merton bar, which was a lovely way to close out another magnificent season.

Ben Harper (Mansfield, 2023)
Cricket Captain 2024-25



Ultimate Frisbee

The Merton Marshmallows have had a fantastic year, continuing to grow as an established and spirited ultimate frisbee team within the College. With a partially fresh captaincy team – myself, joined by our seasoned co-captains Jake Anderson (2023) and Kevin Miner (2023) – we’ve worked hard to build on the foundations of past years and carry the team forward.

We kicked things off by introducing the sport to the wider MCR community during Freshers’ Week and again at the end of the year, welcoming both experienced players and total newcomers. While we were sad to say goodbye to several graduating teammates, including one of our previous captains, we were thrilled to see many new faces join us. Whether playing for the first time or bringing past experience, everyone brought energy, team spirit, and a good dose of fair play – the very essence of ultimate, much needed in a sport where referees don’t exist, even at the highest levels.

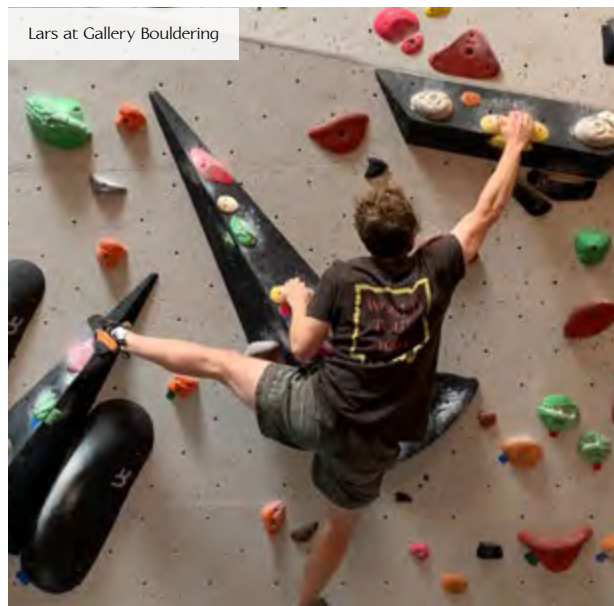
As in previous years, the Marshmallows continued to foster a fun, inclusive and competitive environment where players of all levels can connect through sport. Some of our members joined a University practice session, getting a glimpse of frisbee at a broader level and getting to know players from across Oxford.

We competed once again in the college league, enjoying a series of weekly matches during the first two terms that included both victories and some hard-fought losses.

The highlight of our year was the Trinity term Cuppers tournament, where we made a huge leap forward from last year’s performance. With two wins, one draw and two losses, we narrowly missed out on advancing to the play-off stage – a sign of how much the team has developed. The day was made all the more enjoyable by our fantastic turnout, which meant everyone could rotate off for rest and return to the pitch with full energy. The only downside was the absence of our brilliant co-captain Jake, who was sidelined by injury just before the tournament and whose presence was truly missed.

A huge thank you to all our players for their commitment and enthusiasm, and to those who came to support us from the sidelines. We’re taking a well-earned break over summer and already looking forward to an exciting new season full of frisbee starting in Michaelmas. We are hoping to grow our team again with new players from the JCR, MCR, SCR, and even from among our alumni. Here’s to another year of frisbee, friendship and fun!

Natalie Klaudie Koscelanská van Ijcken (2023)
Merton Marshmallows Co-Captain 2024–25



Climbing

Merton continues to be at the centre of a burgeoning climbing community. Rock climbing, and particularly bouldering, is increasingly popular, with Merton climbing attracting more participants this year than ever before. Impressively, Merton climbers have been surmounting climbs across Oxford, the UK, and far beyond. The Merton community has even roped up and helmeted to try their hand at climbing outdoors (despite the best attempts of the weather to deter us).

The younger Merton generations (the 2023 cohort) continue to develop their climbing skills and friendships. As avid climbers, they frequently meet up in groups to climb in the two main Oxford climbing centres: Oxford Brookes Climbing Wall and Gallery Bouldering, off the Cowley Road. Ivan Pulich (2023), Moli Birkinshaw (2023), Matthew Campbell (2023), Eddie Day (2020), and Eloise Partridge (2023) continue to triumph over difficult climbing problems across both Oxford climbing centres, joined this year by Luke Liang (2023). The friendly cheers, morals support, and fist-bumps of these climbers are unavoidable sights in Oxford climbing centres: a huge well done for their continued dedication and friendly, welcoming approach making climbing the wonderful community it is.

The older generations of Merton climbers have not been resting on their laurels either: Ivo Elgueta and Marc Giroux de Foiard Brown (both 2022) and Eddie Day have been joined in raucous fashion by Charlie Hobbs (2022), providing a real nucleus of climbing among the finalists. Ivo and Charlie have dedicated many early mornings, late nights and pairs of climbing shoes to the climbing cause. But even older generations of Merton also deserve a mention: Aryaman Gupta (2019) has been frequently sighted at gyms across Oxford spreading his love of climbing beyond his stay at Merton, while our own Junior Dean for Welfare, Olivia Simpson, has also proved a keen climber.

Over the summer vacation we all go home to train in our local gyms, seeking to improve our technique, acquire new climbing gear and work on our strength. I am sure we will see many of these climbers in Oxford climbing centres at the top of challenging climbs come Michaelmas term.

Lars Hofflin (2022)

Rock Climbing/Bouldering Captain 2024–25

Sports Overview

First place in the sporting news this year goes to Merton's Daniel Orton (2023), who coxed the Oxford women's Blue Boat in the Boat Race. It was a massive achievement for Merton College Boat Club and a lifetime achievement for Daniel – we're immensely proud to have him in our squad. Congratulations also to Tabby Spindler (2021) who was in the Lightweight Women's Eight in the Boat Race Trials on the Tideway in December.

Other achievements from the water include Merton's W1 crew and our W2 crew both winning Blades – in Torpids and Summer Vllls respectively. Also in Torpids, our M1 boat made seventh on the river, for the first time since 1966. And this year was the first time we entered a Development 4+ to compete in Henley Women's Regatta for the Frank v Harry Cup.

Meanwhile, other sports are available, as are other sporting successes. The Merton and Mansfield rugby team achieved victory at Iffley, winning the plate for Cuppers, under the proud captaincy of Ben Hayes (2023). On the subject of Cuppers, the women's football team reached the Cuppers final for the first time and made it to the semi-finals of Futsal Cuppers. They also came third in Division I, newly promoted.

The netball team has had a fun and fabulous year and proudly maintained its position in Division 2. It's had the benefit of more than 20 players this season – an indication of the enthusiasm for sport at Merton.

On the real tennis court, women's captain Grace Beglan (2022) had her own personal success in beating the women's world number 23 and had University success in being the only woman this year to win her Varsity match. Chris Sneddon (2023) was the third string for the Men's Seconds Team at Varsity, and Eleanor Bogie (2021) and her partner won the Cuppers doubles.

In tennis, postgraduate student Oliver Douglas (2024) played for the Oxford Men's Tennis Blues squad, winning bronze at the BUCS Tennis Doubles Championship.

Other sporting Blues for Merton this year came in boxing, where MPhil student Teresa Meriggi (2021) won the gold

medal for Oxford in her weight category; and in lacrosse, where Miranda Bate (2024) got her Blue on Oxford's varsity-winning team.

We were deeply saddened by the death of Merton's groundsman, James Lisle, in January, after 36 years of loyal service. His dedication and professionalism were unfailing, and he made a huge contribution to our sporting activities. The Haigh Ties have been renamed the Lisle Ties in his memory.

Eddie Kingsbury (2023)

JCR Sports Representative

Blues and Half Blues

New Full Blues and Half Blues awarded in 2024–25

Miranda Bate (2024)	Lacrosse
Dylan Cook (2022)	Tennis
Teresa Meriggi (2024)	Boxing
Daniel Orton (2023)	Rowing
Dara Thaker (2021)	Dancesport (Ballroom and Latin dance)
Lucy Williams (2024)	Competition Dance
Bonnie Yeo (2024)	Swimming

Lisle Ties

Cosmin Andrei (2024)
Beatrice Bannister (2022)
Miranda Bate (2024)
Hermione Chamblings (2022)
Dylan Cook (2022)
Marc Giroux de Foiard Brown (2022)
Philippa Harkin (2024)
Josh Maisuria-Hull (2023)
Teresa Meriggi (2024)
Daniel Orton (2023)
Cara Treacy (2023)
Lucy Williams (2024)
Bonnie Yeo (2024)

Clubs & Societies

Garden Play, *Helen*. Note the convincing tomb prop!



Merton Floats

The Garden Play

This year saw another instalment of the annual Merton Garden Play, continuing the long-standing tradition within Merton drama. Departing from Shakespeare, we instead staged a Greek tragedy, specifically Euripides' *Helen*, with a new translation from one of the members of the production team. Heartfelt and thoughtful moments balanced with comic and light-hearted relief; this retelling of Helen's tale was a perfect play for the idyllic backdrop of Fellows' Garden.

Alongside the wonderful script, we had a similarly ambitious set design from the translator of the play, with a vision of a full tomb and temple and a multitude of Greek-themed props to help suspend belief and transport the audience to an ancient era. The centrepiece – a life-sized, stylised tomb – suited Fellows' Garden phenomenally; it was as if it had always been there and we were merely lucky enough to need it!

Throughout the production of the play, there were numerous hurdles that had to be overcome: for a start, delays in organising the crew forced delays in casting until the first week of term, which did not leave a large amount of time before the planned performances in 6th Week, so rehearsals began soon after recruitment, with a sense of urgency that ensured everyone was well and truly giving it everything.

With show week fast approaching and with the set not yet delivered, a semi-tech run had to suffice before the first real performance. With the anticipation growing, we went into the first night with gusto. Unfortunately, our gusto was well matched by the windy conditions of the evening, leading to a few mishaps with the set! Despite that, we finished the first performance feeling pleased, but confident the next two nights could go even better. The second night brought the perfect weather and we thought that nothing could top it, especially when looming rainclouds forced us indoors for the final night. But the cast and crew adapted quickly to the TS Eliot Theatre, with the grand piano in place of the tomb! Though it was initially disheartening not to be in the garden,

the excitement of the last night ensured that it became the best performance, with sold out tickets and a fantastic audience full of gasps, laughs and applause.

The whole crew and cast were fantastically talented and brought such life, vigour and passion to the play that it was transformed into something so much better than I could have ever imagined. I am eternally grateful to everyone who made it possible. Beyond just acting, the cast and crew were invaluable in helping with setting up, taking down and generally organising the performances, and I cannot thank them enough.

Liam Purchase (2023)

Merton Floats President (2025–26)

Other productions

The Merton Floats has helped to fund seven student shows this year and a highlight has been that not one but two of these shows were original productions by Merton students. First, in Hilary term, Jemima Freeman (2022) put on her play *Up Styx Creek*, an original musical about Ancient Greek comedy, which brought ancient jokes and lots of laughter into Keble's O'Reilly Theatre. Then, at the start of Trinity, Lily Zhang (MPhil, 2024) debuted *The Final Salome*, a brilliant and haunting play which explored the life story of Robbie Ross, Oscar Wilde's ex-lover and literary executor. This production took place in our own TS Eliot Theatre, directed by Rowena Sears (2024). Both plays were outstanding showcases of the talent, passion and creativity which Merton can produce.

It has also been wonderful to see so many of our freshers getting involved in drama at Oxford, in shows such as *Cyrano de Bergerac*, *Legally Blonde*, and of course the garden play, *Helen*. Theatre remains a vital and thriving way for students to express themselves, whether they are acting, writing or directing, and the Merton Floats are pleased to continue supporting it.

Jemima Freeman (2022)

Merton Floats Treasurer (2024–25)



Halsbury Society

It has been another fantastic year for the Halsbury Society, filled with engaging events, thought-provoking discussions, and opportunities to connect across Merton's law community.

We began the year in Michaelmas term with our first subject tea, designed to offer a warm welcome to incoming freshers and to kickstart a series of termly gatherings. These informal events have continued to provide a relaxed space for students to reconnect and chat over tea and cake. This year, we were especially pleased to be joined at these teas by distinguished guests, including Professor Imogen Gould and Professor Evangelos Kitsakis, who brought fascinating perspectives and were warmly received by attendees.

Later in the term, members of Merton's law community attended the annual Merton Lawyers' Association Meeting, hosted at Dechert LLP's offices in London. The evening featured a compelling conversation between the Right Honourable Lord Sales and Professor Paul Davies, and offered students the opportunity to engage directly with Merton alumni working in legal practice. Also in Michaelmas, we hosted our popular Christmas Drinks event, complete with professional cocktail mixologists and a festive performance by members of Merton College Choir. This cheerful celebration, open to both law and non-law students, was generously sponsored by Sullivan & Cromwell.

Hilary term brought with it one of the highlights of the year: the annual Halsbury Society Lecture. This year's lecture was delivered by Lord Justice Zacaroli and titled 'What do judges do,

and why is it important to know?' His engaging and thoughtful talk challenged popular misconceptions about the judiciary, particularly in an era shaped by social media, and drew on his experience in the widely publicised Ed Sheeran copyright case. His reflections on the nature of legal argument and the role of expert evidence provided students with valuable insights into the realities of judicial decision-making.

In Trinity term, we were honoured to welcome Philippa Hopkins KC (1990) as guest of honour at our annual Halsbury Society Subject Dinner. Her speech, rich in personal insight and professional advice, was particularly appreciated for its honesty and encouragement to embrace uncertainty in planning one's legal career.

To end the year, the society hosted its annual garden party. This was a lovely afternoon that gave us the chance to celebrate our finalists and wish them success in their next chapters, while also reflecting on a year of shared growth and achievement.

It has been a real privilege to serve as president of the Halsbury Society this year. I am incredibly grateful to the committee for their support. I am delighted to pass the presidency on to Lorna Abbott (2024), and I have every confidence that she will lead the society with great energy and vision in the year ahead.

Millie Sandom (2023)

Halsbury Society President (2024–25)



The Frederick Soddy Society Garden Party

Frederick Soddy Society

This year, the Frederick Soddy Society was led by co-presidents Eleanor Bogie and Hannah West, whose leadership was marked by a vibrant calendar of events celebrating Merton College’s community of chemists. Their presidency culminated in the annual Summer Garden Party, a lively and well-attended event bringing together the chemists of Merton in a relaxed setting.

The new academic year began with a warm welcome to our incoming undergraduate and postgraduate freshers through a tea party, setting a collegial tone for the year ahead. In early Hilary term, the society hosted its flagship annual dinner, a highlight of the year. We were delighted to welcome Professor Michael Neidig as our guest speaker, who delivered a fascinating talk on both his research and academic journey, before members from all levels – from first-year

undergraduates to senior Fellows – enjoyed an evening of excellent food and discussion.

The Frederick Soddy Society continues to play a vital role in fostering connections across year groups, promoting collaboration and support between students, and encouraging engagement with alumni. This year, our members also represented the society at Merton’s Biomedical and Life Sciences Symposium, showcasing the strength and diversity of our community.

With strong momentum and growing enthusiasm, the year ahead promises to be just as exciting.

Eleanor Bogie and Hannah West (both 2021)
Frederick Soddy Society Co-Presidents 2024–25

Mathematics Society

The Merton Mathematics Society has had another fantastic year.

Michaelmas began with the annual Mathematics Subject Tea at which returning students were able to catch up with one another and impart lots of advice to the incoming freshers (some of it probably more helpful than others). It was a really lovely way to kick off the year and enjoy some great snacks and even better company.

Gabriel Dass (2023) kindly volunteered to continue the tradition of holding weekly maths help sessions throughout the year. The help sessions allow students to work together and ask for advice on any problem sheet questions they're stuck on. They also provide another way for the year groups to mix and learn from each other.

The mathematics tutors also organised many great events throughout the year. Distinguished speakers are invited termly for the Merton Mathematics Lecture, followed by drinks and Formal Hall. This year we were lucky enough to have two brilliant talks from Sir Andrew Wiles and Professor Jon Chapman. Sir Andrew spoke on Dirichlet's arithmetic and how his ideas have shaped the way in which we do number theory and try to solve equations. It was a great talk that gave us an increased respect for Sir Andrew's favourite mathematician. Professor Chapman gave a fascinating talk on the making of an Escher print and showed us how he had managed to create his own Escher-style picture of the Maths department!

Additionally, Merton graduate students and fourth-year undergraduate students gave talks to share their interests with the society in Hilary term. These talks were on topics ranging from campanology (bell ringing) to AI and were a great way to learn more about what other Merton mathematicians had been thinking about.

One of the highlights of the academic year was the annual Subject Dinner in Hilary term. This year, the dinner was once again 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 onto two tables for dinner in the Savile Room. The food was delicious and judging by the amount of empty glasses, the wine was also excellent. Professor Radek Erban gave a wonderful speech with his trademark combination of wisdom and humour. The dinner stretched on well into the night which was a testament to the brilliant company.

In Trinity term, the Mathematics Society Garden Party offered a sunny respite from exam preparations. We were blessed with good weather and spent some lovely hours in Fellows' Garden enjoying snacks and catching up with each other.

We are excited to pass the torch to the new pair of presidents for 2025–26, Tessa Baker and Malaika Aiyar (both 2023), who we are sure will do a phenomenal job.

Beatrice Bannister and Rosie Chen (both 2022)
Mathematics Society Co-Presidents 2024–25



Roger Bacon Society

The Roger Bacon Society had a wonderfully successful year with unprecedented reach across the physics community at the College.

The year started off with the annual Freshers' Tea: a chance for the new first years to meet the eclectic group that is the physics undergraduate community at Merton, to ask (many) questions and to get a feel for the years ahead. Inordinate numbers of email reminders meant attendance was unusually (and wonderfully) high, giving us all a chance to catch up after the long vacation.

The highlight of the RBS calendar is, of course, the annual Physics Dinner, a four-course black tie affair which takes place every Hilary. For the first time in the history of the society, the dinner was free of charge thanks to the securing of the generous support of Wincent, a high-frequency trading firm. No doubt this fact helped us double last year's attendance, with an unprecedented 41 attendees including undergraduates, postgraduates, tutors and, for the first time, postdoctoral researchers. The dinner was preceded by a

drinks reception in the New Common Room, after which the party enjoyed a three-course meal in the Savile Room. The food was accompanied by glorious wines from the College cellar, which we were able to access thanks to the blessing of Professor Schekochihin. After brief speeches by the president, Professor Alan Barr and the incoming presidents, the merry gang proceeded to the JCR at the behest of Professor Barr, eager to best everyone at table tennis once again.

The dinner also marked the culmination of yet another hotly contested election for next year's presidents, won by the joint candidacy of Louis Macro and Marc Giroux de Foyard Brown (both 2022).

Though the number of records broken might make it a tough act to follow, I have no doubt that under Marc and Louis the society will continue to flourish.

Camilo Mosquera (2020)

Roger Bacon Society President 2024–25

1980 Society

The 1980 Society has continued to thrive this year, cementing events implemented last year and forging ties with other College societies.

Our bi-weekly 'Wine and Whine' discussion groups have been well attended by students from different year groups and even different colleges throughout the year – the first session was focused on the popularisation of the 'trad wife' aesthetic, a topic typical of the society's commitment to the examination of both current social media trends and the deeper political climate of which they are symptomatic. 'Wine and Whine' topics have ranged from the US election to incel culture, to the intersection of feminism, immigration and class. The last of these exemplified the thoughtfulness, intelligence and respect which students have consistently brought to each discussion, with people sharing personal and illuminating insights about how these issues have affected them and others. We concluded our 'Wine and Whine' series with an important discussion – in collaboration with Nik Hazel (2023), the JCR Trans Representative – of the UK Supreme Court's recent ruling to restrict the definition of 'woman' under the Equality Act to biological sex. The 1980 Society is committed to being an intersectional and welcoming space for all those who identify as women, as well as non-binary and other gender-marginalised groups.

We have also continued to create links with other college societies and representatives. This has included helping to run the termly 'Cake and Compliments' event with our JCR Welfare and Gender Equality Reps, which is always a welcome reminder of the warmth and friendship within the Merton community, with students writing notes to be pigged to their friends (accompanied by some delicious cake). In addition, we were delighted to collaborate with the Merton Film Society for a film screening of *Emma* (2019) and with the Poetry Society for an evening of poetry-writing inspired by exceptional and inspirational women. We hope to continue to collaborate with other Merton societies in the future and secure the society's place as a staple of the Merton community.

Another highlight was the International Women's Day

Formal and drinks reception in Hilary term, which gave the community at Merton a chance to come together and celebrate the progress which has been made at the College. Our senior member, Lorna Hutson (Professor of English Literature), gave a vital and inspiring speech reflecting on both her own time at Merton and how these experiences relate to the wider world and the current political climate, highlighting the barriers which have already been broken and the importance of maintaining and continuing this progress.

We ended the year with a speaker event which the society helped to coordinate alongside Eryn Greenaway (2023), the JCR Gender Equality Representative, who reached out to podcasters Sephy and Wing (from the podcast 'Goes Without Saying') and initiated the planning of a panel discussion about womanhood, women in academia and the female space online. Along with Eryn, I had the pleasure of interviewing Sephy and Wing about these topics in front of a packed audience in the TS Eliot Theatre. Our panellists were witty, engaging and thoughtful, providing comment on a range of issues. It was wonderful to witness the engagement of the audience in the discussion; the event, which included an online Q and A and ended with a drinks reception, became a truly interactive one, allowing for real connection between the panellists and members of the audience, some of them long-time listeners of the podcast. I would like to thank Eryn for organising this event, and the society looks forward to more events of this type in the future.

Lastly, I would like to thank the society's committee this year for their unceasing commitment and support: Cara Treacy, Anne Irving and Freya Munsch (all 2023) have all been essential in the planning, coordination and bolstering of this year's events, and I am very grateful to them. I have loved taking on the role of Society President this year, and I am very proud of all that we have achieved. I look forward to what the next year brings.

Verity Fleetwood-Law (2023)
1980 Society President 2024–25



Freshers' Concert 2024

Merton College Music Society

Merton College Music Society has hosted a variety of events this year, and has presented for the College community talents from within Merton's walls and from across the wider University. This year's Lunchtime Recital Series has been a huge success, as each recital has gone from strength to strength in the quality and musicality of its performers. The lunchtime recitals have received good audiences each week, and I would strongly encourage the rest of the College community to come along to support its musicians – if only to hear some fantastic music! These recitals have demonstrated that there is no shortage of musical talent at Merton College; composers, soloists and chamber ensembles have graced the TS Eliot Theatre throughout the year with beautiful repertoire and formidable confidence in performing for those who already know them.

The Music Society also welcomed a professional performance in Michaelmas term by Trio Casella, a piano trio who performed for Merton College students and staff in the Holywell Music Room. The capability of this ensemble can be rivalled only by the Merton–Univ Fidelio Orchestra, which performed in concert with Merton's Kodály Choir

in Michaelmas. Both ensembles, overseen primarily by Antonia McClintock (2022), presented a fantastic evening of music. Finally, Merton welcomed aspiring (and already highly successful) composers from across the University to showcase their newest works. This was a change from the usual programme of the lunchtime recitals in return for an exciting hour of world premieres. Works for solo piano and mixed ensemble performed by musicians from Merton College made for a wonderful performance. Having enjoyed my year as Music Society President, it is clear to me that the warm and good-spirited atmosphere of Merton more generally is reflected in the readiness and dedication of performers, stewards and ensemble directors that have contributed to the Music Society's calendar this year.

With thanks to Ben Nicholas, the Director of Music, and to all the students and staff who supported the instrumentalists passing through Merton this year, Merton College Music Society has had a very successful and busy year indeed.

Cecilia Loughney (2023)

Merton College Music Society President 2024–25

The Bodley Club

The Bodley Club has had a wonderfully full and engaging year, with a wide range of speakers and events that have truly lived up to our aim of hosting ‘fabulously interesting’ discussions. From the complexities of global politics to the quirks of architectural history, this year’s talks have taken us in all sorts of fascinating directions. Alongside our speaker events, we also introduced a new collaboration, and of course, enjoyed the annual Bodley Club Dinner.

We began the year in Michaelmas term with Dr Edward Howell (Mertonian and Lecturer in Politics, New College), who gave a sharp and timely talk on North Korean politics and diplomacy. Drawing on both his academic work and personal visits to North Korea, he spoke with real depth and clarity about a subject that is often difficult to approach. His recently published book, *North Korea and the Global Nuclear Order: When Bad Behaviour Pays* (2023), gave structure to the evening, and the discussion that followed was lively and insightful.

Our second speaker of the term was Professor Sabina Alkire, Director of the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative. Professor Alkire introduced us to the Alkire-Foster method, which she developed with economist James Foster, and which is now used around the world to measure multidimensional poverty. Her talk combined serious academic insight with real-world applications and was one of the highlights of the term for many.

The Bodley Club Dinner, as always, was a real occasion. Held in the SCR dining room, it brought together members of the club for an evening of excellent food and conversation. It was a chance to reflect on the term and to celebrate the kind of community that the Bodley Club continues to foster: thoughtful, curious and welcoming.

In Hilary term, we continued with a particularly charming talk by Oxford alumnus Rory Fraser (Trinity, 2015). Rory, a historian, podcaster, painter and writer, spoke about England’s architectural follies; those curious, often beautiful buildings with little practical use but lots of personality. His talk combined humour, history and visual storytelling,

and offered a fresh way of thinking about how we use and understand space.

Later in the term, we hosted a joint event with the newly revived Neave Society; the first collaboration of its kind for the club in recent years. Together, we welcomed Sebastian Neave, grandson of Airey Neave and a trustee of the Airey Neave Trust. He spoke about his grandfather’s life and legacy, and the work the Trust continues to do today. It was a reflective and moving evening, and a great success.

As we reached the end of the year, we said goodbye to three committee members who have given a huge amount to the club. Nat Otley and Bea Bannister (co-presidents 2023–24) and Jamie Ngo (secretary 2024–25) have all worked tirelessly to organise events and keep everything running smoothly. Their energy and commitment have shaped the year in ways that will last well beyond their time on the committee.

A special thank you is also due to Frà John Eidinow, whose support and advice have once again been invaluable. His quiet encouragement and long-standing involvement with the Bodley Club are deeply appreciated.

As ever, we’re looking ahead to the next year with enthusiasm. There are already ideas taking shape for new speakers and partnerships, and we’re excited to continue growing the Bodley community. A huge thank you to everyone who attended an event this year; your interest and engagement are what keep the club going.

Eleanor Hamilton Clark (2023)
Bodley Club President (2024–25)



Poetry Society Co-Presidents 2024–25. From left: Eryn Greenaway, Ishbel Hallam and Freddy Chelsom

Poetry Society

It has been a real pleasure to run the Merton College Poetry Society this academic year with Eryn Greenaway and Ishbel Hallam. Our sessions on Monday evenings have been attended by a loyal cohort of Mertonians, and we have also delighted in welcoming students from other colleges.

In Michaelmas, our weekly meetings were a great opportunity to meet the incoming first years, and it has been wonderful to have these friendships flourish over the course of the year. Our first collaboration of the year was with the JCR Welfare Representatives, as part of the College's Welfare Week; this was a great chance to welcome some new faces to the Poetry Society and to consider the ways that the society can be beneficial to our wellbeing. Later in the term we hosted a joint session with the Teddy Hall Creative Writing Group, an opportunity to meet students who share an interest in the creative arts from outside the College.

We have enjoyed organising a diverse range of sessions for the society. While we still made time for composition-focused sessions, such as sonnet-writing and blackout poetry (poetry formed from the redaction of a piece of prose), some of our most successful sessions involved creative re-interpretations of what the society could do. In Hilary, we hosted a popular murder mystery session, which entailed sneaking a code word into one's composition that evaded the group's notice. Also in Hilary, we were grateful to repeat last year's successful collaboration with François Cloete (2022) for a performance of Messiaen's *Nativité du Seigneur*. Poetry readings from members of the society and extracts from the scripture that inspired Messiaen

accompanied François' performance. Later in Hilary we collaborated with the 1980 Society and JCR Gender Equality Representative, writing poetry to commemorate International Women's Day.

In Trinity, the society joined with the Merton History Society to welcome Theophilus Kwek (2013) and Nancy Campbell (1996) for an evening of discussion centred around relocations and Kwek's latest book, *Commonwealth*. It was inspiring to see how a fellow Mertonian has pursued poetry as a career beyond university and to hear both Kwek and Campbell read excerpts from their published works. Also in Trinity, we were pleased to be involved in the highly anticipated revival of the Merton Arts Festival, inaugurating the week of events with readings of '(non)dramatic soliloquies' in Chapel.

Each term culminated in the launch of the society's pamphlet, *Pekes and Pollices*, which was always a joy to collate. The quality of the pamphlets produced over the year is a testament to the talent and dedication of the society's members, and we are grateful to everyone who made submissions and particularly to Florence Wolter (2022) for creating the pamphlets' beautiful covers.

We are looking forward to handing on the mantle of presidency to Geo Maur-Batsaki (2024) and seeing the direction in which he takes the society next year.

Eryn Greenaway, Ishbel Hallam and Freddy Chelsom (all 2023)

Poetry Society Co-Presidents 2024–25



Neave Society

Founded in honour of former Mertonian, lawyer, soldier and MP Airey Neave (1934), the Neave Society is Merton's current affairs and debating society. After a short hiatus in recent years, the 2024–25 academic year saw the society's successful revival as the centre of political discussion for undergraduates and graduates alike at Merton.

With each term following a theme, our year began in Hilary – our term of 'renewal'. With the return of fortnightly debates, accompanied by drinks and nibbles, members fielded topics including Trump, euthanasia and the divine right of kings. For those new to formal debating, undergraduate committee members Oscar Lambert (2023) and Jonathan Berry (2024) held a 'Introduction to Debating' workshop, while members seeking a more informal atmosphere joined us for our more relaxed and unstructured discussion fora.

A particular highlight, both of Hilary and indeed the wider year, has been working more closely with the Airey Neave Trust. In 6th Week we hosted Sebastian Neave Esq, trustee and grandson of Airey Neave, who spoke about his grandfather's fascinating life – including his rather boisterous time at Merton, humorous escape from Colditz and remarkable post-war career in Parliament. Sebastian kindly donated a copy of *The Man who was Saturday* – a biography of Airey,

which, alongside this year's Neave Book Prize winner *God, Guns and Sedition: Far-Right Terrorism in America*, can be found in Mob Library.

Naturally, Trinity saw our term of 'dedication'. Excitingly, for the first time since 2021–22 the society hosted the JCR Presidential Debate which, although only one candidate was able to attend, saw an admirable effort from Kubilay Mendi (2024) representing re-opening nominations (RON)! With the 80th anniversary of VE Day we debated whether we would 'fight on the beaches', invoking Churchill's famous phraseology, while others took inspiration from *Severance* in 'This House believes labour has replaced life,' and from Billy Joel in 'This House believes that we didn't start the fire.' Our final debate took place in Fellows' Garden, for our Greece-inspired 'Socratic Soiree' garden party in which members arrived donned in their best interpretation of a himation!

With Michaelmas yet to come, we are looking forward to welcoming Merton's next cohort of debaters at our freshers' debate in 0th Week. We are currently working alongside Oxford MP Layla Moran to organise a trip to Parliament for undergraduates as well as with Make Votes Matter to organise a joint debate in collaboration with Hertford and Brasenose on electoral reform. In our search for speakers, we are always grateful to hear from any alumni with political or current affairs experience and would welcome them to get involved with our Michaelmas term card by emailing neave.society@merton.ox.ac.uk.

It has been a pleasure this last year once again to offer Merton a place in which debate can take place free of judgement and not confined in thought. I have been indebted to the work of the society's committee in helping that happen: Levente Vas, Aishia Simmons and Oscar Lambert (all 2023), Robert Foksett, Amelia Starky, Jonathan Berry and Henry Colegate (all 2024); and to the JCR Vice-President Lucia Ross (2023) who has proved invaluable to both the society and myself.

After our successful revival, we now look forward to seeing what the next year – and future committees – might hold.

Dylan W. Turner

Neave Society President 2024–25



Chalcenterics

What another year it has been for the classicists at Merton! Taking up the mantle from Gabby Murray, Maia Pereira (both 2021) and Benjamin Atkinson (2021), we started off the year in style with the annual subject tea, allowing familiar faces to blend in with fresh ones over cups of tea and biscuits. The topic of conversation drifted towards the highly anticipated *Gladiator 2* film with a surprising number of students admitting to not even having seen the first. The jury is still out on those sharks in the Colosseum.

Before we knew it, Hilary term had arrived and with it came the subject dinner. It was a wonderful evening and a special mention must go to Professor Rhiannon Ash for her excellent recommendations for restaurants in Oxford. The evening served as a send-off to our Modlings as they entered the depths of their revision, having been briefed diligently by the third years about the horrors of exams. Nevertheless, they coped wonderfully with the intense two weeks, and we are so proud of what they have achieved.

Alongside academic commitments, Merton members have been particularly involved with classical drama this year. In Michaelmas, Alexandre Guilloteau (2023) gave an impressive performance as Menelaus in the Oxford Ancient Languages Society's production of *Orestes*, entirely in Ancient Greek. My co-president, Jemima Freeman (2022), wrote and directed the play *Up Styx Creek*, a comedy full of spectacular musical numbers and focusing on Aristophanes and the relevance of

his plays to our modern world. Continuing into Trinity, we had the Merton garden play, this year being Euripides' *Helen*. Jemima was part of the cast, and Izzy Dowling (2023) was the marketing manager for the show. I must admit it was a surreal yet amusing sight to see a life-size tomb placed in the middle of the Fellows' Garden. Next year, we can also look forward to some Roman comedy, with Plautus' *Menaechmi* to be put on in the TS Eliot Theatre in Michaelmas. It has been truly delightful to see a prevalence of classical drama within Oxford, spoiling us classics students with choice for entertainment, and highlighting the importance of seeing these ancient texts as performances.

As we approached the end of the academic year, the Chalcenterics Garden Party marked our final event. It was a lovely opportunity to unite all the members of the Merton classics community and bid goodbye to our finalists, whom we sent off with lots of support to get through their gruelling weeks of exams. In addition, in Trinity term, we said goodbye to Dr Mar Rodda and Dr Krishnan Ram-Prasad, who have been brilliant tutors to many of us during their time at Merton. You will be deeply missed and we wish you the best in your future endeavours.

Mathilde Persidat, Jemima Freeman and Grace Shionaka (all 2022)

Chalcenterics Co-Presidents 2024–25



Merton College medical students, alumni and tutors at the 30th anniversary reunion of the Harvey Society

Harvey Society

This year marked the 30th anniversary of the Harvey Society. In September 2024, we hosted a reunion event for current and past Merton medical students and tutors at Merton College. The evening began with a talk by Sir Peter Ratcliffe FRS FMedSci on the topic of human oxygen homeostasis. After paying tribute to the Society's namesake, William Harvey, who discovered the circulatory system that delivers oxygen to tissues, Sir Peter explored the cellular and molecular mechanisms underlying oxygen sensing. His pivotal role in the discovery of the hypoxia inducible factor (HIF) pathway earned him the Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine in 2019, shared with William Kaelin Jr and Gregg Semenza. It was an honour to be in the presence of such a distinguished scientist and to gain insights into the implications and future directions of his work.

The lecture was followed by a prosecco reception in Fellows' Garden and a commemorative photo. As the sun set, guests moved indoors to enjoy a fantastic dinner catered by Merton's dining hall team. It was lovely to see alumni mingling with current students and catching up with their old tutors – truly a night to remember!

As Michaelmas term rolled around, we welcomed the incoming medical students with the annual Freshers' Tea, offering the new cohort an informal opportunity to meet second and

third years over tea, coffee and biscuits. Later in the term, we brought together medical students from all six years, along with tutors, for the annual Harvey Society Dinner. Our guest speaker, Professor Ana Domingos from the Department of Physiology, Anatomy and Genetics, delivered a fascinating talk on sympathetic signalling in obesity which sparked lively discussion about the broader public health implications of her work. We were also pleased to meet Justin Wormald MBBS PGDip MRes MRCS DPhil, the new Stipendiary Lecturer in Clinical Surgery at Merton College.

We concluded the academic year with the traditional garden party in Fellows' Garden. Over Pimms and nibbles, second- and third-year students took the opportunity to unwind after their exams, while the first years enjoyed a well-deserved break from revising for their preliminary examinations.

The garden party also marked the conclusion of my term as president of the Harvey Society. I am pleased to announce that Daisy Rogers and Edward Kingsbury (both 2023) will serve as co-presidents in the upcoming academic year. I am confident that they will lead the society with enthusiasm and dedication.

Lilli Ganzer (2022)

Harvey Society President 2024–25



History Society

The History Society has had a wonderful year, with many events ranging from guest speakers to archive sessions. We also created an Instagram account for the society (@merton_history) which has brought us technologically up to date!

Michaelmas began with Freshers' Tea in the MCR. We welcomed new historians to Merton with a chance to talk to older students and graduate mentors over cake. Freshers' Week also involved an Oxford historical treasure hunt, and the winners received a set of Merton's very own Dr Steven Gunn's 'Accidental Tudor Deaths' Top Trumps. Second Week saw a collaboration with Merton's JCR BAME representative and Film Society to watch *Judas and the Black Messiah* for Black History Month. Mid-term, the society (alongside Univ and Balliol historians) won the Oxford University History Society pub quiz. Then came our main event of term: our guest speaker Dr Jonathan Healey gave a talk about social history and the English Civil Wars. This was well attended, attracting an audience from across year groups and colleges. We also led a small group to see the Laudian Vestments exhibition at St John's College. The end of Michaelmas meant Oxmas, which we celebrated in the annual Oxmas History Quiz. This involved plenty of snacks, historical trivia and, of course, a 'Horrible Histories' round.

Hilary term was largely taken up by organising and enjoying our wonderful subject dinner. This was a huge success, and a lovely way to celebrate Merton's history community. It was especially good to invite Merton's postgraduate historians and newly appointed Junior Research Fellows which I hope will be continued in the future. It was an honour to give a speech as president alongside Merton's amazing history tutors. The delicious meal was followed by an entertaining

evening in the College Bar. Subject Dinner has to be one of the best events of the year! We ended the term with our second speaker event: an exciting interdisciplinary talk by Ashmolean curator Dr Shailendra Bhandare discussing colonial paper money in Africa.

Trinity was our busiest term, kicking off with a brilliant session in Merton's library and archive exploring the College's collections. We saw items ranging from Caxton's Chaucer and Merton's unusual Marian college charter to 19th- and 20th-century student life captured in photo albums and minute books.

Mertonians also won another history quiz, hosted by Univ and Mansfield history societies. Fourth Week brought the yearly garden party which was accompanied by plenty of sun, drinks and cake. Next, we had our final speaker event: Dr Oliver Coulson from the Norwich Historic Churches Trust, who spoke about Lollards and the material culture of medieval heresy.

Our penultimate event of term was co-hosted with Merton's Poetry Society – a launch reading of *Commonwealth*, the latest poetry collection by Theophilus Kwek (2013), and a discussion with poet Nancy Campbell (1996). Trinity ended with a fun evening of historical board games, alongside historians from Univ.

It has been a pleasure to run the society alongside Juliette and Eloise, and I am looking forward to seeing what events next year's committee will have in store.

Asha Levy (2023)

History Society President 2024–25

Interdisciplinary Groups





William of Occam depicted on a stained glass window by Lawrence Lee at All Saints' Church, Ockham. Photo: Paula Bailey

Ockham Lectures

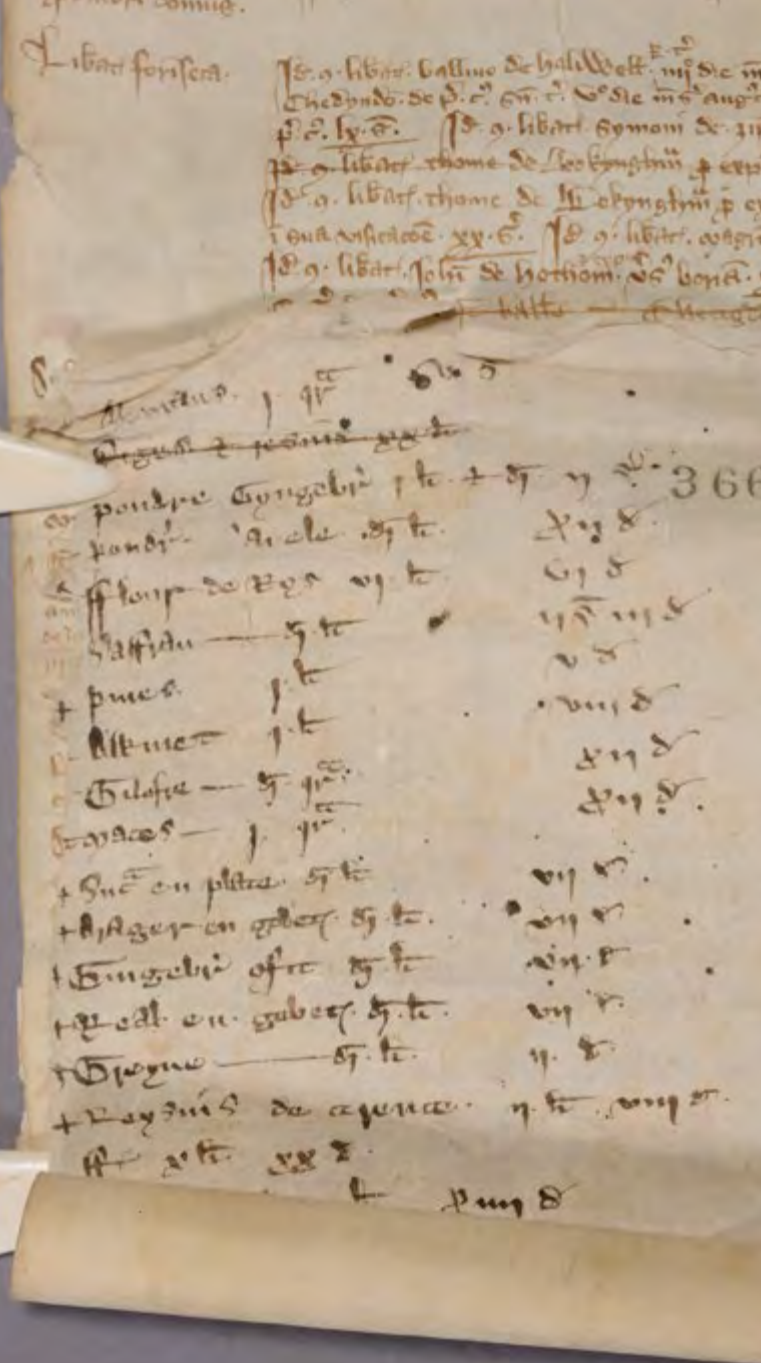
The Ockham (or Occam) lectures are one of the highlights of being a physicist at Merton. Once a term, 'physicists and sympathisers' meet in the TS Eliot Theatre for a physics-related talk, with speakers ranging from academic physicists to engineers who have braved the real world. Each talk is preceded by a drinks reception, followed by a Formal (at which the tutors grace us with their presence and forgo High Table), and rounded off by drinks and joviality in the MCR.

This year's series was kicked off by Professor Tunde Fulop's talk on plasmas, ranging from their significance in the Universe to how scientists are fighting to control them and harness their potential. Hilary term saw one of the best talks the College has ever heard: Professor Vijay

Balasubramanian's talk on Occam's Razor and his work on finding a mathematical and physical justification for this principle using probability theory and statistical mechanics – a more fitting speaker may perhaps never be found. Finally, the Trinity term lecture was given by Merton's Tutor in Physics and Philosophy, Professor Sam Fletcher. Tackling the truly unwieldy topic of interpretations of relativity, the talk was a welcome opportunity for us to explore something we don't often get much time for within the degree: philosophising about what all our mathematical statements actually mean.

Camilo Mosquera (2020)

Roger Bacon Society President 2024–25



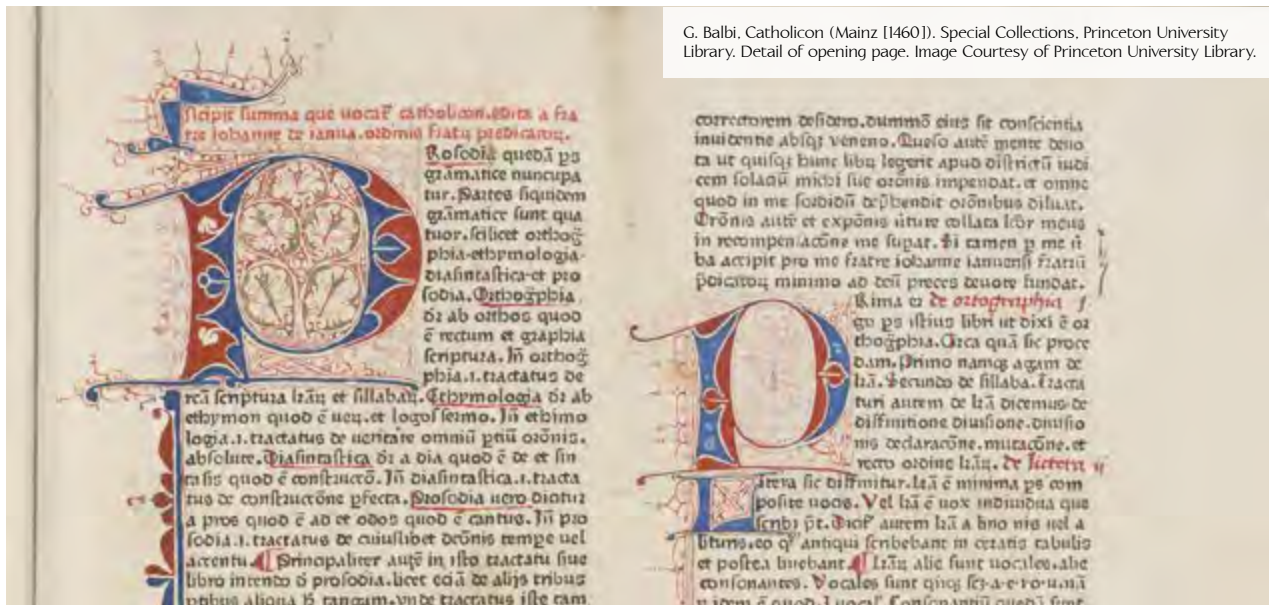
The 1335 paper, listing luxury foodstuffs (MCR 3669)

History of the Book Group

Looking back at the three History of the Book Group talks of the past year, one sees that without any advance planning, they all focused on some physical aspect of books: the paper from which they were made, the printing technique employed, or the ways that owners adapt and alter the structure of books they own.

The Michaelmas term talk on 22 November 2024 by Professor Christine Kraus (Yale University and Visiting Research Fellow at Merton in Michaelmas term 2024) was entitled 'Caesar and his readers: A late 16th-century compilation in the Bodleian Library'. The book in question is a 1575 edition of Julius Caesar's *Commentaries on the Gallic and the Civil Wars* – a high-quality publication produced by the Venetian printer Aldus Manutius. What distinguishes this copy is how a late 16th-century owner made it into a unique research 'resource' by adding marginal comments, interleaved pages of notes, printed illustrations from other sources, maps and extra indexes. Professor Kraus had been studying this unusual and unique volume in the Bodleian Library, and her illustrated talk allowed the attendees virtually to look over her shoulder as she went through the many additions. All the extra material can help us understand the owners' interactions with Caesar's text. Professor Kraus also reminded the group that until relatively recently it was not uncommon for students to have copies of important standard texts re-bound with blank pages interleaved especially for their notes.

On 7 May, Professor Orietta Da Rold (Professor of Medieval Literature and Manuscript Studies and Fellow of St John's College, University of Cambridge) spoke about 'The many crafts of paper'. She encouraged attendees to think about aspects of pre-modern paper that have often been overlooked by historians – technologies such as the making of the wooden moulds and the manufacture of wire of different thicknesses used to form the mesh that gives early paper its characteristic texture. The way in which the mesh was put together can give the resulting sheets of paper a



G. Balbi, *Catholicon* (Mainz [1460]). Special Collections, Princeton University Library. Detail of opening page. Image Courtesy of Princeton University Library.

kind of unique ‘fingerprint’. Professor Da Rold’s talk was enlivened with images from her hands-on research with papermakers in Italy who still use some of the practices of early papermakers. Following the talk, attendees were able to view some examples of early paper from Merton’s collections including the oldest piece of paper in the archives, used in 1335 for a list of luxury foodstuffs, including rice, sugar, spices and dried fruit. Since paper-making was not introduced to northern Europe until the late 14th century, it may have come from Italy, France or Spain, or perhaps even the eastern Mediterranean. Further research may tell us more.

The annual joint session of the Merton History of the Book Group and the Oxford Bibliographical Society also featured research into the technologies of the book – in this case printing and the manufacture of type. One of the early printed books that continues to puzzle book historians is the 15th-century *Catholicon* – a Latin dictionary. In his talk on 29 May, Paul W. Nash (Bodleian Library and independent printer) spoke about ‘The *Catholicon* and the mystery of early printing at Mainz’. The printing of this large book is frequently attributed to Johannes Gutenberg, with three impressions

dated to 1460, 1469 and 1472. One of the debated points (from the appearance of the letterforms) is whether this book was printed with moveable individual pieces of type or whether it was printed using a form of two-line stereotypes, known as ‘slugs’. As a handpress printer himself, Paul Nash decided to investigate the latter theory by experimenting with whether and how two lines of text could be produced as a single unit for printing. He tried various methods of casting ‘slugs’ and then printed from them. The results of these experiments were available for attendees to inspect after the talk and, for comparison, Professor Henry Woudhuysen brought along two leaves from the *Catholicon* itself. The question of how the *Catholicon* was printed remains open, although Paul Nash’s experiments indicate that it could have been done two lines at a time – although it was hard to see what advantage this method would have over moveable type. So the questions remain, but Paul Nash has brought us closer to an answer. Certainly, this was a memorable and thoroughly enjoyable talk to end the academic year.

Julia Walworth
Fellow Librarian



Biomedical and Life Sciences Network

At the Science Exchange Symposium

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 instance, 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, created in March 2020, is hosted on LinkedIn and now has 220 members covering a range of occupations and geographical locations.

The organising committee for the network has expanded as well. Besides myself, it consists of Ethan Prince (2019), David Bernstein (2019) and Salmana Nadeem (2020) from the alumni, and Aaron Syme (2022), Ivan Solomakhin (2024), Laura Bartkova (2024) and Miranda Bate (2024) from the current student body.

We organise termly events both online and in person to promote networking among and between students and alumni.

In Michaelmas term 2024, we held an online event with three alumni – Matthew Raybould (2012), Sara Wehlin (2010) and Peter Howe (1988) – sharing their diverse career paths. In 2025, our Hilary term online event featured the three younger alumni on the committee (Ethan, David and Salmana) speaking about their experiences after leaving Merton and how their involvement in the network has inspired and helped them in their careers to date.

In Trinity term, our first Science Exchange Symposium was held in the MCR on the evening of 29 May. This event was ably organised and hosted by the graduate members of the organising committee, Miranda and Laura. The evening featured nine three-minute talks by Merton students on a fascinating array of research projects. Professor Julian Knight of the Merton SCR then spoke about his career path and research. Informal networking ensued over drinks and delicious Lebanese street food. It was an excellent opportunity for people to meet in person and for students to learn about each other's work. I hope that it will be the first of many such gatherings organised under the auspices of the network.

We remain grateful for the steadfast support of Chelsea Chisholm from the Development Office and Dr Lindsay Baker, Tutor in Biochemistry. We would also like to thank the Merton Society for encouraging the flourishing of this group.

If you are interested in being part of this growing network or joining the organising committee, please either email me (declark@talktalk.net) or send me a connection invite on Linked-In (search for 'David Clark Charles River'). I look forward to hearing from you.

David Clark (1984)



Net Zero Group

The Net Zero Group continued to be of substantial interest to the alumni community as the topic retains its centrality to various aspects of public policy and day-to-day life.

The main event conducted by the group in 2025 was a discussion hosted at College in February featuring Patrick Begg, the Outdoors and Natural Resources Director at the National Trust. Paul Roberts (1996), committee member of the Net Zero Group, led an insightful discussion with Patrick on the criticality of land use in tackling climate change. Patrick's perspectives helped us gain a true appreciation of this knotty issue and of the various stakeholders involved in driving us towards a nature-positive world.

The group committee, set up in 2024, has actively started working towards a future calendar of events. Considering the diversity of topics impacted by our journey towards Net Zero, the group plans to conduct focused discussions and interactive events around a wide set of topics, including financial flows towards net zero, impacts of decarbonisation on core industries, and aspects such as communications around climate change policy. Furthermore, engaging with the student community remains one of the goals of the group.

Merton College Net Zero Group is open to all Mertonians, including alumni, students, staff and Fellows. You can find and join the group on LinkedIn as Merton College Net Zero Group.

Nagadarsan Suresh (2021)

Departments





The Chapel

Following Simon Jones' exceptional ministry at Merton, it has been both an honour and a privilege to take up the role of College Chaplain. Simon handed over a rich inheritance of faith and tradition, together with a deep commitment to pastoral care and welfare. His legacy sets a high bar, and I am deeply grateful for the opportunity to build upon it.

It has been immensely heartening to witness how the life of the Chapel touches so many members of our community. The affection felt for this place – by students, staff, Fellows, alumni and friends – is tangible. The Chapel's flourishing owes much to the dedication and generosity of a number of key individuals: the Warden, whose unfailing support of the Chaplaincy is a constant encouragement; the Revd Lyndon Webb, Associate Chaplain, whose priestly ministry, especially during the interregnum, has been invaluable; Benjamin Nicholas, whose leadership continues to elevate the College's choral standards and international reputation to ever greater heights; Elizabeth Casey, Chapel and Choir Manager, whose vital and often unsung work enables the smooth running of the Chaplaincy and Choral Foundation; Jennifer Crompton, our devoted Verger, whose faithful service sustains the Chapel's daily round of worship; Dr Tristan Franklins and his meticulous training of our servers; and the many Chapel Officers, servers, livestreamers, organists, Choir and Choristers whose commitment makes possible our offering of praise and thanksgiving to Almighty God. I am deeply grateful to all for the warmth of their welcome to me.

Michaelmas saw the welcome return of the Revd Canon Dr Chris Collingwood as Visiting Chaplain, accompanied by his wife, Sue. They have both become dear friends to the College, and their presence and ministry were a blessing to all. We also welcomed Ewan Gillings, ordinand at St Stephen's House, as Pastoral Assistant. After two terms assisting in the life of the Chapel, Ewan was ordained Deacon at Peter tide and now serves his title in the Ariconium Benefice in the Diocese of Hereford. During the term we held the funeral of Professor Sir George Radda, whose ashes were laid to rest in the Chapel Grove in December. The term's liturgical highlights included the annual All Souls' Requiem, sung to Mozart's Requiem, which brought together the families of recently deceased Mertonians in a powerful act of remembrance. The term ended with the hugely popular carol services.

Hilary term began with a Service of Welcome for a new Chaplain. The Bishop of Oxford preached the sermon and licensed me to serve in the wider diocese in a private ceremony before the service. The term continued with a packed Epiphany Carol Service and a live broadcast of Choral Evensong on BBC Radio 3, which drew acclaim from those in Chapel and from that growing diaspora of international listeners and viewers. The Choir were joined on that occasion by the Britten Sinfonia as part of their year-long residency. A Choral Evensong for the Commemoration of the Founder and Benefactors of the College fell on Shrove Tuesday, followed by the Ash Wednesday service with a performance

of Allegri's *Miserere*, before the term ended with a Sequence of Music and Readings for Lent.

During the Easter vacation, I experienced my first Passiontide Festival — one of Merton's most anticipated fixtures. The blend of liturgies and concerts drew large and appreciative congregations and audiences. The festival concluded with a performance of Bach's *St John Passion* at the University Church — an unforgettable moment of musical and devotional intensity. Also during the vacation, I led a pilgrimage to Rome for 15 members of the College. Highlights included celebrating the Eucharist at the Anglican Centre in Rome, and passing through the Holy Doors of several of the major basilicas to mark this Year of Jubilee.

Trinity term opened with a liturgical performance of the Stravinsky Mass, again featuring the Britten Sinfonia. Solemnity and thanksgiving combined for a service to mark the sad passing of Professor Béla Novak earlier in the year. Ascension Day brought the beloved tradition of a midday service atop the Chapel Tower, followed by an evening Eucharist in Chapel shared with the congregation of the University Church. Several Mertonians were confirmed by the Bishop of Oxford at a joint service in the University Church on Pentecost Sunday. On Trinity Sunday the Choir sang Choral Matins at All Souls' College, where the sermon was preached by the Rt Revd Dr Rowan Williams. The term ended with a festal Evensong and Benediction on the Eve of Corpus Christi, followed by a Eucharist on the feast day itself.

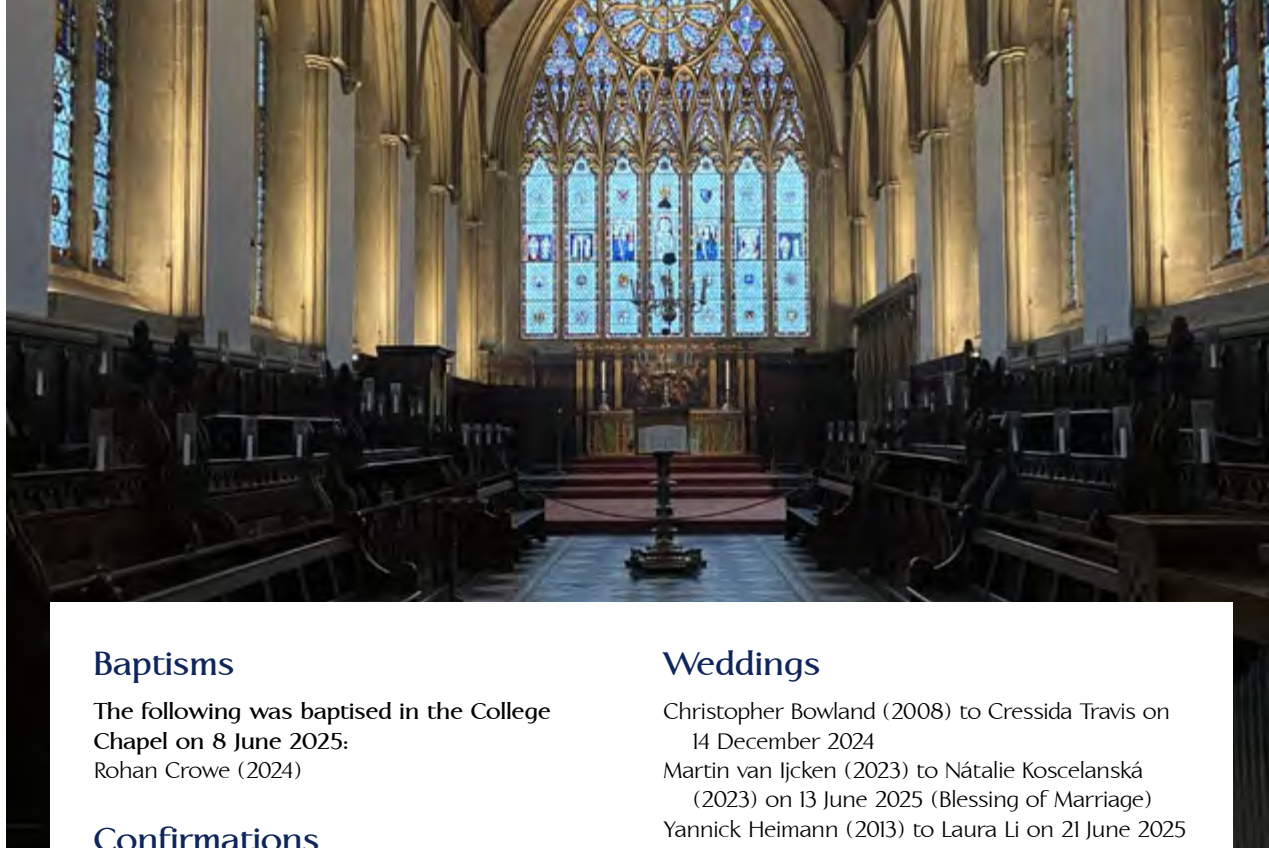
In addition to sermons given by the home team, preachers during the year have included: the Revd Canon Michael Smith, Canon Emeritus of York Minster; Dr Mar Rodda, Fellow & Tutor in Classics; the Rt Revd Sarah Bullock, Bishop of Shrewsbury; the Revd Canon Mark Birch, Canon Rector of Westminster Abbey and Chaplain to the Speaker of the House of Commons; the Rt Revd Dr Steven Croft, Bishop of Oxford; the Revd Canon Dr Tess Kuin Lawton, Canon Missioner of Winchester Cathedral; the Revd Canon Jack Noble, Rector of St Giles Cripplegate; the Revd Dr Jonathan Dean, Chair of the London District of the Methodist Church; the Revd Professor Jane Shaw, Principal of Harris Manchester College; Dr Celia Deane-Drummond, Director, Laudato Si' Research Institute, Campion Hall; the Revd Jonathan Evans KC, Rector of Bruton and District, Bath &



Wells; the Revd Canon Dr Paul Burt, former Regional Director, Mission to Seafarers; the Revd Canon Dr William Lamb, Vicar of the University Church; and the Revd Dan Warnke, Chaplain of Westminster School and Priest Vicar, Westminster Abbey.

At the end of my second term as Chaplain, I remain struck by how remarkable and distinctive Merton is. There can be little doubt that our Founder and benefactors intended the Chapel to be at the heart of the College's common life: the place where the community is fed and sustained. This generation of the Chapel's custodians continue that vision in a way that is both generous and attractive. I feel so blessed to be here and look forward to building upon the strong foundations already in place and to serving this vibrant and faithful community in the coming years.

The Revd Canon Justin White
Chaplain



Baptisms

The following was baptised in the College Chapel on 8 June 2025:
Rohan Crowe (2024)

Confirmations

The following were confirmed by the Bishop of Oxford at the University Church of St Mary the Virgin on 8 June 2025:
Rohan Crowe (2024)
Sophie Jackson (2022)
Amelia Starky (2024)

Patronage

The Revd Nicholas Pye, Vicar of St Paul's, Finchley (Diocese of London), has been installed as Vicar of St Mary the Virgin, Chessington (Diocese of Guildford).
The Revd Marion Harrison, Rector of the Lavingtons, Cheverells, and Easterton (Diocese of Salisbury), has been installed as Assistant Curate (Associate Minister) of St Helen's, Benson with Ewelme (Diocese of Oxford).

Weddings

Christopher Bowland (2008) to Cressida Travis on 14 December 2024
Martin van Ijcken (2023) to Nátalie Koscelanská (2023) on 13 June 2025 (Blessing of Marriage)
Yannick Heimann (2013) to Laura Li on 21 June 2025 (Blessing of Marriage)
David Lancaster (1999) to Jonathan Breeze on 5 July 2025 (Blessing of Marriage)
Simon Broughton-Wells to Rebecca Wilson on 19 July 2025
Fred Morgan (2015) to Liv Shovlin on 26 July 2025
Harry Spillane (2014) to Eleanor Atkinson (2014) on 2 August 2025
Bethany Brand (2015) to Oliver Howe (2015) on 16 August 2025
Lachlan Scarsbrook (2021) to Caitlin Talbot (2021) on 20 September 2025



The Choir and Choristers singing Orchestral Evensong, broadcast live on BBC Radio 3 in February

The Choirs

One of the highlights of this year has been the Britten Sinfonia's residency at Merton. This has enabled not only the choirs to work with one of the country's most highly regarded chamber orchestras on a regular basis, but also for our College musicians to benefit from chamber music coaching resulting in a performance of Mendelssohn's *Octet*. The residency began with an 'Orchestral Evensong' sung by the College Choir and Choristers, and broadcast live on BBC Radio 3. The music included works by Elgar and Dyson and possibly the first performance – since the premiere in 1917 – of the original orchestral version of Bairstow's *Lord, thou hast been our refuge*.

The orchestra returned for Bach's *St John Passion* on Palm Sunday (performed in the University Church as part of our Passiontide Festival) and on 30 April, the College Choir took part in the Britten Sinfonia's concert at St George's Cathedral, Southwark, which was a farewell concert for the orchestra's distinguished oboist, Nicholas Daniel. The Choir contributed Stravinsky's *Mass* and motets by 20th-century French composers; in their review, *The Times* commented that the

"resonance (of the Cathedral) was perfect to enhance the choir's warm-toned and beautifully phrased performances of motets by Poulenc and Duruflé."

In addition to the opportunities offered by this residency, the College Choir began the academic year by giving two performances of Duruflé's *Requiem* as part of the Martin Randall Choral Festival. Indeed, multiple performances of the same work have been a feature of this year: on 26 October the Choir sang two performances of Mozart's *Requiem* as part of the Oxford International Song Festival, repeating the same work a week later at the College's All Souls' Requiem Mass. The College Choir has also appeared at Temple Church in London as part of the 'Temple Music Winter Festival' – sponsored by the Morris-Venables Charitable Foundation – and in the Sheldonian Theatre with the Oxford Philharmonic Orchestra for a Christmas Concert conducted by Sir John Rutter. The final concert of the Choir's year was given in Cheltenham Town Hall as part of the Cheltenham Music Festival.



The Choir recording *Orchestral Anthems Vol. II* with the Britten Sinfonia

Of the many special services this year, two in particular stand out. Firstly, on 14 September (the College's 760th birthday), the College Choir joined Lincoln Cathedral Choir to sing for the Installation of the Revd Canon Dr Simon Jones as Dean of Lincoln. The combined choirs, accompanied by brass and organ, made a thrilling sound and it was wonderful to see Simon looking so happy and excited for his future in Lincoln. Then, on 16 January, we held a 'Service of Welcome' for the new Chaplain, the Revd Canon Justin White. It was good to welcome many of Justin's friends and former colleagues to Merton to mark the beginning of a new era for the College and Chapel.

The College Choir has been fortunate to sing on the radio several times this year. In addition to the broadcast of Choral Evensong, the Choir sang live from Broadcasting House for a special pre-Christmas edition of Radio 3's *In Tune* programme. And for the Vice-Chancellor's appearance as a Guest Editor of the *Today* programme on Radio 4, the Choir recorded Gustav Holst's setting of *In the bleak midwinter* for the close of the programme. On 18 February 2026, the Choir will broadcast Choral Evensong for Ash Wednesday on Radio 3 live from the Chapel.

Both choirs have enjoyed giving concerts further afield: the Girl Choristers began their year with five days in the South West, where we sang Choral Evensong at Exeter and Truro cathedrals, and gave a concert at Buckfast Abbey to a capacity crowd. It was particularly good to be joined by alumni, the Warden and Director of Development for the service in Exeter Cathedral and for a reception afterwards. The College Choir visited Munich in September, giving concerts at St Ludwig, Munich, and Sankt Martin, Kaufbeuren. The tour ended with the choir singing Mass at the Romanesque Freising Cathedral. And to finish the academic year, in July the choir undertook a

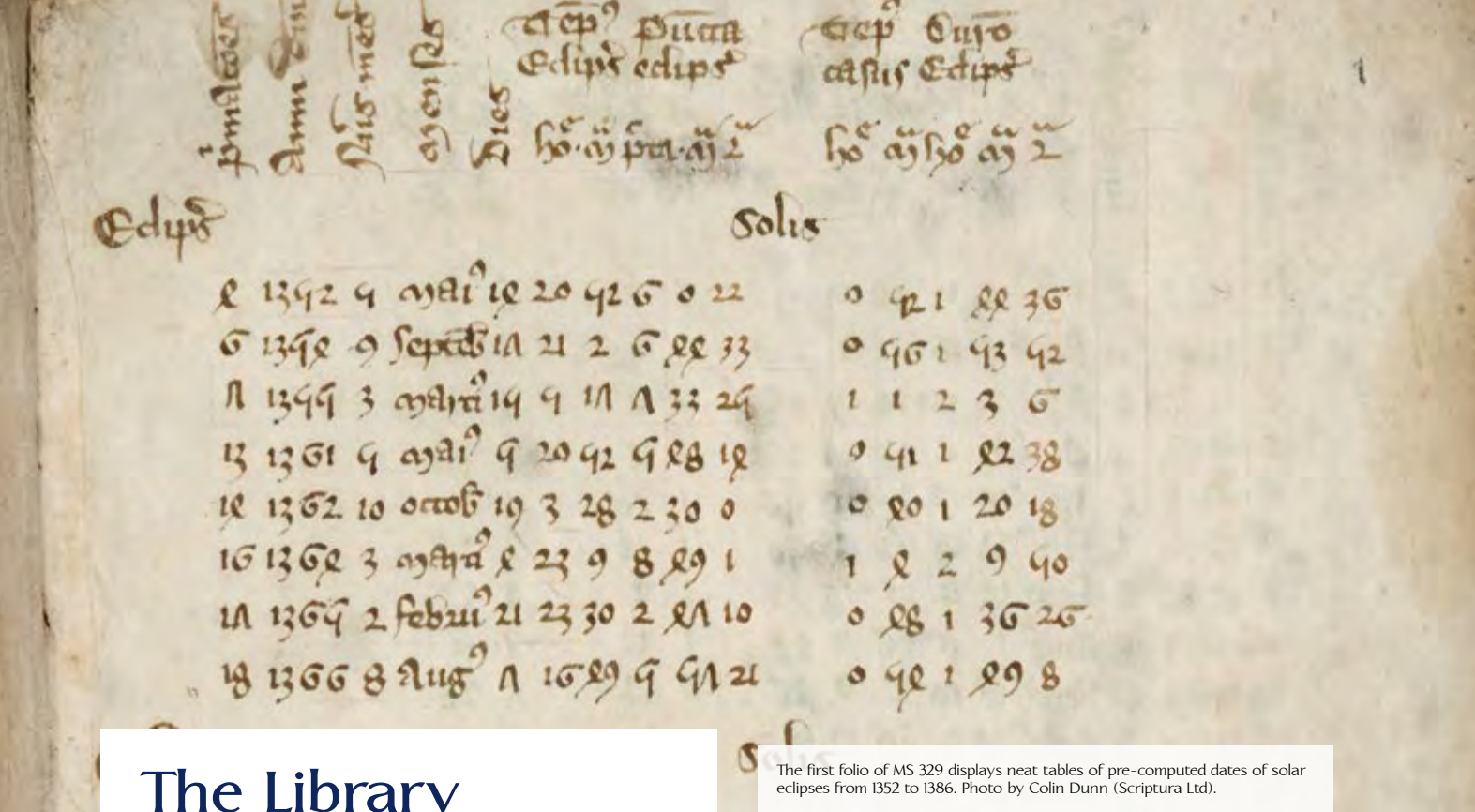
short tour of the Netherlands, giving concerts at St Nicholas' Basilica in Amsterdam, St Bavo's Cathedral in Haarlem, and the splendid Hooglandse Kerk in Leiden. As with the Choristers' tour, this time away provides the ideal opportunity for the choirs to bond, and to rehearse intensely. My thanks to David Harvey for his continued support of the Choristers' tour, and to Reed Rubin for supporting the College Choir's tours.

Two recordings were released during the year on the Delphian label: Gabriel Jackson's *Christmas Story*, featuring both choirs, was an Editor's Choice in the December 2024 issue of *Gramophone* and received five stars in *The Times*, with their reviewer commenting on "an ambitious, multilayered creation...it's impossible not to be impressed and moved by its pungent force, by the singing of the choir and girl choristers of Merton College, and the Oxford Contemporary Sinfonia's striking instrumental line-up". In May, the second volume of *Orchestral Anthems*, recorded with the Britten Sinfonia, was released to a series of good reviews including praise on BBC Radio 3's *Record Review* programme: "the clarity and purity of the singing is very impressive, and lovingly supported by the excellent Britten Sinfonia".

For the last three years, we have been blessed with the most superb organ playing from our organ scholar, François Cloete. It was fitting that his last services with us were at Westminster Abbey as part of the Girl Choristers' Summer Residential, as François now begins a year as the Abbey's organ scholar alongside his studies at King's College London. Assisting us this year has been Dr Peter King, Organist Emeritus of Bath Abbey. We are enormously grateful to Peter for his colourful accompaniments, his carefully chosen organ voluntaries, and his good humour! Elizabeth Casey as Choir Manager and Jennifer Crompton as Chapel Verger continue to be wonderful colleagues, providing superb pastoral care for the Choristers and managing a busy year of events for both choirs. Lyndon Webb, assisted by Christopher Collingwood, got the year off to a very positive start before Justin White began as Chaplain in January. The Choir and I have very much enjoyed getting to know Justin and we look forward to an exciting future under his stewardship.

Benjamin Nicholas

Reed Rubin Organist and Director of Music



The Library

Sometimes the stars seem to align. One of this year's exciting additions to Merton's library collections started a few days before Christmas 2024 with an email from Mertonian Charles Tolkien-Gillett (2019). Charles now works in the Books and Manuscripts department of Christie's auction house in New York, and he wrote to let me know about an item in an upcoming sale that might have a Merton connection. As soon as I read the description of 'Astronomical tables for 1349–1386', I knew this was something special, and I also knew just whom to consult: Dr Laure Miolo (Wadham College, Associate Professor in Medieval Latin Manuscript Studies), an expert in medieval astronomy. Over several days in early January, Laure in France and I in Ohio corresponded about the images of the manuscript.

What we were looking at was a slim parchment booklet, about A5 in size, with eight pages covered in tables of

Arabic numerals with Latin headings and several marginal annotations. The tables provided a practical set of fundamental tools to help a skilled user compute astronomical conjunctions. Conjunctions, a term encompassing planetary conjunctions and lunar and solar eclipses, represent one of the most complex phenomena to compute in the Middle Ages. This kind of astronomy was the particular interest of a group of 14th-century Mertonians, led by William Reed (d. 1385) and John Ashenden (d. circa 1368). The manuscript contains most of the tables necessary to perform these computations. The poor-quality parchment, lack of decoration, and the fact that the volume probably circulated as a booklet with simple parchment wrappers, also point towards the manuscript having been used as a working tool. There are similar 'booklets' bound into other manuscripts from Merton that contain evidence that they were shared or passed between friends and colleagues collaborating in the College.

Paul Johnson's 'Magic Merton Pop-up Book'



The first set of tables in the manuscript were originally composed by Walter Elveden (a fellow of Gonville Hall in Cambridge) and was previously thought to have survived in only one copy. The inclusion of a note in a 14th-century hand at the foot of the first leaf of the Christie's manuscript, referencing a partial solar eclipse computed for the meridian of Oxford, provides strong evidence that the manuscript was in Oxford at the time or soon after the tables were copied. The particular set of tables included in the manuscript (main sources for the work of 14th-century Mertonians) may also point to Merton as a plausible place of production for this manuscript. It contributes to our knowledge about a moment when Oxford, especially Merton, was at the cutting edge of the science of its day.

Having established that the Christie's manuscript had convincing links to Merton, and that it would complement

known Merton manuscripts, the next challenge was to see whether we could put together funding in the few weeks before the auction in New York. This involved bringing together and coordinating the assistance of several people including Merton's Development Director and Fellow Mark Coote, external advisor Mr Richard Linenthal, Dr Paul Saenger of Chicago (a long-time friend of the library), and other donors. A quickly written application was made to the Friends of the Nation's Libraries, which generously pledged a grant that would cover a significant part of the final cost of the acquisition (up to our agreed limit). But would all this effort be enough on the day of the auction? Although there were other bidders, Merton was successful. Now with the number Merton MS 329, the manuscript, previously unknown to scholars, will be available for further study by specialists and students both in the reading room and in digital form online.



Extract of a page from *Circles of Time*

There was scarcely time to draw breath after the success with the astronomical manuscript when another auction opportunity arose – and the two works could not have been more different. The sale of the collection of artworks, books, ballgowns and outrageous eyeglasses of the late comedian and actor Barry Humphries included several drawings by Max Beerbohm. (Humphries was a noted bibliophile and collector of late-19th-century art and books). With the support of Mertonians Peter Hay (1963) and Nicholas Davie-Thornhill (1955), Merton bid successfully for a double-caricature portrait dated 1906 of the brothers and artists Will Rothenstein and Albert Rutherston (Albert anglicised his

surname in 1916). Max Beerbohm and Will had been close friends since Max was an undergraduate in 1893. The drawing is humorous, poking gentle fun at the differing physiques of the two brothers – Will short of stature, Albert at 25 still looking a bit like a schoolboy. It complements several other drawings and correspondence between Beerbohm and the Rothensteins already in the Merton Beerbohm Collection.

Another collection windfall came to the library in the form of the work of the book artists who were this year's Visiting Research Fellows in the Creative Arts. Paul Johnson's 'Magic Merton Pop-up Book' is a sculptural celebration of four of

Merton's interiors: the Hall, the Chapel, the Upper Library and the Upper Bursary. When closed, the large 'book' resembles a kind of castle, with a 'spine' inspired by the chapel tower. Paul (VRF during Hilary term) observes: 'It must be said that the Merton tower although solid and impressive is rather avuncular, like a portly College Fellow who has relied on vintage fortified wine for too long. It must often take an envious sideways glance at the tall, slim and athletic tower of Magdalen College next door.' When the covers are opened, the accordion folds of stiff paper extend several feet horizontally, revealing a free-standing vista of brightly coloured interiors that invite the viewer into alternative Merton worlds. Paul's donations to the library collections also include a number of smaller works focusing on other parts of the College, such as the Rosebrock and the Beatson memorial gardens behind Postmasters' Hall.

The Merton gardens played a different but crucial role in the books created by Joumana Medlej (VRF during Michaelmas term). Part of Joumana's work involves studying ancient recipes for pigments and inks and using these pigments and dyes in her own work. Well before her arrival at Merton, Joumana was in touch with Lucille Savin, Merton's head gardener, in order to harvest flowers such as iris, camassia, wallflower and a type of marigold to make inks to use in her Merton works. Joumana's project, *Circles of Time*, takes the form of a boxed set of three volumes, each of which is dedicated to one of the systems of marking time through the observation of celestial and terrestrial cycles. Joumana observes: 'Solar, Lunar and Planetary time can be picked up in any sequence. Three volumes rather than one, because there is no single correct order to read them.' While in Oxford, Joumana made intensive studies of medieval astronomical instruments from the Islamic and the Western worlds (including Merton's astrolabes), as well as medieval manuscripts. Each page invites quiet contemplation.

At the time of writing, Gareth Brookes (the Trinity term VRF) is at work on his 'book', which will be discussed in next year's *Postmaster*. Words truly cannot do justice to the wonderful creations of these artists, and Mertonians will be given a chance to see for themselves at future College events.

Finally, but certainly not least, late spring brought the

completion of the project to conserve and preserve the wonderful stained-glass windows in the Upper Library. A celebration to thank the many Mertonians who supported the work of the specialist conservators took place in College on 24 May. As light streamed through the newly cleaned, restored and protected windows, attendees were able to listen to Dr Sarah Brown, Director of the York Glaziers Trust, talk about the special historical significance of the library's windows. Like many Merton achievements, the project was a community effort and will benefit the future Merton community and visitors to the College.

Julia Walworth
Fellow Librarian

Works by John Wyclif found in the College Library

John Wyclif, one of the most influential intellectual and political figures in 14th-century England, was a Fellow of Merton College in 1356. But until recently no works by this famous alumnus had been uncovered among Merton's medieval manuscripts.

In July, at the International Medieval Congress at Leeds University, Dr Jordan Lavender (Texas A&M University) presented new evidence that among the texts in Merton MS 284 is a previously unrecognised partial copy of Wyclif's psychological treatise *On the Activities of the Soul* (*De actibus animae*) as well as a previously unknown Latin philosophical work by him. Supporting evidence was provided by Dr Mark Thakkar (Radboud University), a specialist on Wyclif's philosophical writings, who demonstrated that the newly discovered work has the hallmarks of Wyclif's distinctive writing style. The manuscript had belonged to Merton Fellow Simon Lambourne, a contemporary and critic of Wyclif's at Merton.

Dr Jordan Lavender (Texas A&M University)

Donations to the Library and Archives 2024–25

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

Anonymous donor – a sizeable donation of prints, sound recordings, and 22 printed books in the fields of musicology, music history and philosophy.

Jane Douglas – a copy of *Dionysii. Pomponius Mela. Situs orbis descriptio* (a collection of Greek and Latin works on the geography of the ancient world) printed by Henri Estienne in Geneva in 1577, inscribed and annotated by Thomas Savile (d. 1593, Fellow of Merton 1581–93).

A. Gillian Drake (d. 2024, estate of) – a photograph album and a clippings album compiled by her mother Audrey Pim, covering the years 1919–22 and the 1924 Everest expedition. (Audrey Pim was a close school friend of Sandy Irvine’s sister Evelyn.)

Nell Gray, daughter of David Nichol Smith (Fellow 1921–46) – an account of life at 20 Merton Street as the daughter of a Fellow of Merton in the 1930s.

Peter Hay (1963) and **Nicholas Davie-Thornhill** (1955) – drawing of William Rothenstein and Albert Rutherston by Max Beerbohm.

Paul Johnson (VRF in the Creative Arts Hilary term 2025) – *The Magic Merton Pop-up Book*, *The Winter Merton Pop-up Book*, *The Merton Book of Hours*, *The Robin Beatson Garden Pull-up Book*, and additional small books, drawings, sketches, and preliminary notes and papers.ours

Magdalen College Library – the *Works of Plato* in Greek and Latin, printed by Henri Estienne in Geneva in 1578, three volumes.

Joumana Medlej (VRF in the Creative Arts Michaelmas term 2024) – ‘Circles of Time’ (artist’s books: three volumes, boxed) and accompanying notes.

Grateful thanks for gifts and support are extended to:

Bodleian Library Publishing, Stephen Cole (1972), Corpus Christi College Library, John Crossley (1960), D.L. d’Avray, Gail Fine (Emeritus Fellow), the Friends of the Nation’s Libraries, the Fry Art Gallery, Magdalen College Library, Richard McCabe (Emeritus Fellow), the Neave Society, R.B. Peberdy (1975), Dylan Price (Stipendiary Lecturer), Jessica Rawson (Warden 1994–2010), Michael Rines (1954; deceased), Julia Walworth (Fellow Librarian).

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

Allen, RH (1967). *Murder of a Leveller* ([no publisher information], 2024)

_____. *The “Green Grow the Rushes O” Mystery* ([no publisher information], 2024)

_____. *Moqqa: (A Coffee House Murder)* ([no publisher information], 2025)

_____. *Borne on the Wind. 3: Sarrkiita Arhilka* ([no publisher information], 2025)

Beaudry, J-S (VRF 2023). *The Disabled Contract: Severe Intellectual Disability, Justice and Morality* (Cambridge University Press, 2022)

Bowden, B (VRF in the Creative Arts 2023–24). *Marginalia: Song to the River* (Bevis Bowden, 2025). Two copies.

Bowers, JM (1973) and P Steffensen. *Tolkien on Chaucer, 1913– 1959* (Oxford University Press, 2024)

Boxall, P (VRF in the Creative Arts Michaelmas term 2019). *Letty and the Mystery of the Golden Thread* (London: Puffin, 2025)

Brook, M (2002) and S Hundedhege (eds). *Gefälschte Provenienzen in der Literatur und ihren Wissenschaften* (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2024)

Brooke, A (Fellow) (ed. and tr.). Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz. *Critique of a Sermon and Other Letters: Crisis Sobre un Sermón. Carta de Sor Filotea (by Manuel Fernández de Santa Cruz). Respuesta a Sor Filotea* (Liverpool University Press, 2025)

Brookes, G (VRF in the Creative Arts Trinity term 2025) and I Walton. *The Compleat Angler: A Graphic Adaptation* (London: SelfMadeHero, 2025)

Brookes, L (Fellow). *Convention and the Individual in Medieval English Romance* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2025)



Craske, H (JRF 2021–24). *Complicity in Fin-de-Siècle Literature* (Oxford University Press, 2024)

Currie, P (1971). *Ten Great Hymn Writers and Their Hymns* (Greenville, South Carolina: Ambassador International, 2025)

Eaves, W (VRF in the Creative Arts Michaelmas term 2020). *Invasion of the Polyhedrons* (London: CB Editions, 2024)

_____. *The Point of Distraction* (London: TLS Books, 2024)

Everson, P (1965) (contributor). In G Byng and H Lunnon (eds) *Medieval Art, Architecture and Archaeology in Cambridge: College, Church and City* (London: Routledge, 2022)

____ and D Stocker. *Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire* (Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Stone Sculpture Vol. XIV) (Oxford University Press, 2023)

____ and D Stocker. “Guthlac at Medehamstede?”. Offprint from *Early Medieval Europe* Vol. 31, Issue 2 (Chichester: John Wiley and Sons, May 2023)

____ (contributor). In C Wakeling and N Pevsner, *Staffordshire*, revised edn (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2024)

Cuffaro, ME and SC Fletcher (Fellow) (eds). *Physical Perspectives on Computation, Computational Perspectives on Physics* (Cambridge University Press, 2018)

____. *Foundations of General Relativity* (Cambridge University Press, 2024)

Franklinos, TE (2011). *Propertius' Cynthia: The Book as Beloved* (Oxford University Press, 2024)

Gunn, S (Fellow) and T Gromelski. *An Accidental History of Tudor England: From Daily Life to Sudden Death* (London: John Murray, 2025)

Howes, D (1979) *Sensorium: Contextualizing the Senses and Cognition in History and Across Cultures*. (Cambridge University Press, 2024)

Killingley, D (1955) (ed. and tr.). R Roy, *The Only True God: Works on Religion* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Grevatt & Grevatt, 1982)

____, W Menski and S Firth. *Hindu Ritual and Society* (Newcastle upon Tyne: S.Y. Killingley, 1991)

____. *Polemic and Dialogue in Rammohun Roy* (Wien: Verein “Sammlung de Nobili – Arbeitsgemeinschaft für Indologie und Religionsforschung”, 2013)

Jackson, R and _____. *Narrowboat Music: Poems of Life* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Grevatt & Grevatt, 2015)

Kwek, T (2013). *Commonwealth* (Manchester: Carcanet Poetry, 2025)

Latham, AJH (1959). *The Rice Trade in Asia* (London: Routledge, 2025)

MacShane, D (1966). *Labour Takes Power: The Denis MacShane Diaries 1997– 2001* (London: Biteback Publishing, 2023)

Tanfield, C (1980). *A Companion to the Aeneid in Translation*. Vols 1, 2 and 3 (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2025)

Tomlin, RSO (1966; Harmsworth Senior Scholar 1966–68). *The Uley Tablets: Roman Curse Tablets from the Temple of Mercury at Uley (Gloucestershire)* (Oxford University Press, 2024)

Morris, AF and H Vogel (Visiting Scholar September–October 2024) (eds). *Disability in Ancient Egypt and Egyptology: All Our Yesterdays* (London: Routledge, 2025)

Waltham-Smith, N (Fellow). *Free Listening* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2024)

Wycherley, L (Library Assistant 2003–12). *Alighting in Time: New Poems* (Beeston: Shoestring Press, 2024)

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



The Archives

The past year has, in many ways, felt quiet after all the activity in 2024 associated with the centenary of the 1924 Mount Everest expedition. There were nine accessions of records to the archives, somewhat fewer than last year, mostly transferred from College departments. I was very pleased, however, to receive an account of life in 20 Merton Street during the 1920s and 30s, when it was the family home of Merton English Tutor, and subsequently Merton Professor of English Literature, David Nichol-Smith. I was equally pleased to be able to add to the archives the minutes of the JCR meetings for the three most recent academic years, care of the demitting JCR Vice-President, and production records and photos of the 2024 Merton Floats production of *All's Well That Ends Well*. In the modern digital world, it is tempting to assume that everything will survive somewhere. That may be partially true, but they will only be preserved together in the same place if someone makes a conscious decision to do so. I encourage all College clubs and societies that generate records to consider how they wish to preserve the memories of their activities. The College archives are here to preserve all areas of College life, not just the official activities of its Governing Body, committees and departments.

The change in rhythm from the previous year allowed some time to be spent in the archives undertaking housekeeping activities that had been postponed. When the 'new' archives room was fitted out in 2004, it was done so with rolling stacks that had been designed to accommodate nine standard (standard to Merton, at least) storage boxes per shelf. Many of our smaller archival items are housed in these boxes and it makes for an efficient means of storage. Many historic items in our collections, however, are large volumes, ledgers and registers which would be classified by a librarian as Oversize, Elephant, or some such. Over the years, a good number of these volumes had been stored lying flat on the shelves as they had been installed. This did not pose a problem when the building was new, but in recent years the room has started to fill up and space has become a challenge. A concerted project in the early summer of 2025 saw many shelves emptied of their contents, the distance between the shelves adjusted to accommodate volumes of different sizes, and the contents re-shelved to optimise the use of space.



Walter Horton's (1895) banjo

Last year's Archives' report concluded with an account by our summer students of their experience listing building plans from the Estates Bursary. This summer we once again employed two students for two weeks; Lili-rose Kent (2023) and Elizabeth Tolley (2024). This year, instead of a single project, our students worked on a number of housekeeping tasks in the Library and Archives for which there is rarely time during term. These included cleaning, moving and covering of books for the Library, inputting data from existing paper catalogues of the Beerbohm Collection onto the computer to make parts of that collection more easily searchable, and transferring a large quantity of records from one of the College departments to the archives. That transfer of records, long postponed, was made possible by the time that had been put in over the previous months to rationalise the

space, and by the labours of our two indefatigable students. As I write, requests from two further departments have arrived in my inbox requesting transfer of some of their records to the archives for permanent preservation.

The maintenance and development of an archive can only be justified if it is used, and at Merton it is used regularly and heavily, both internally and externally. Registers, minute books and files may be consulted by, for example, the Warden's Office or the Academic Office, and this year the Head of Maintenance examined the original plans by Basil Champneys for Front Quad Staircase 5 preparatory to the refurbishment work taking place there this summer. Freshers' and sports team photographs, the minute books of clubs and societies, concert and play posters and programmes, and JCR suggestion books feature in the ever-popular displays that are arranged for gaudies and anniversary lunches.

At the same time, the Archive receives regular enquiries on a wide range of subjects, some of which resolve into research visits. Some of the subjects are recurrent, such as the real tennis court or the rooms occupied by JRR Tolkien and TS Eliot. To the latter category can be added this year the rooms occupied by Sandy Irvine in the 1920s and Stuart Hall in the 1950s. For the curious, in the academic year 1923–24 Sandy Irvine occupied St Alban's Quad 1.3; in his first year, 1951–52, Stuart Hall had rooms on Grove 2 overlooking the Chapel. Although, as the sets on that staircase have been divided and renumbered since Hall's time, exactly which floor he lived on (first or second) is disputed. Among the more esoteric enquiries to reach the archivist this year, however, joint first place must surely be given to: 1) the visit to Oxford by Lord Nelson, together with Lord and Lady Hamilton, in July 1802 and whether it included a visit to Merton; and 2) the original owner of a Victorian banjo, carefully inscribed, 'W. Horton, Merton College, Oxford'. Horton is identifiable as Walter Horton of Smethwick, Staffordshire, who matriculated in 1895 and graduated with Honours in Modern History in 1899. We may imagine him performing at smoking concerts singing comic songs or romantic ballads accompanied on the banjo. A tiny glimpse into student life in the 1890s.

Julian Reid
Archivist



Development & Alumni Relations

This was a year in which College connected with more Mertonians than ever before during our busiest-ever and unprecedentedly popular calendar of alumni events.

The Long Vacation started as we meant to go on, with the Warden and Development Director Mark Coote accompanying the Girl Choristers on their tour of the West Country. The Warden and Mark Coote also joined the Merton Choir on its tour to Munich in early September, which included an informal drinks reception before a concert at the University Church. Back in the UK, Mertonians met once again at The Antelope in London for the Michaelmas Drinks.

The early part of 2025 saw us venturing further afield: in February to Edinburgh, where the new Deputy Director, Dr Sara Gordon, joined the Warden and the Development Director at a reception in the historic setting of Edinburgh's Old College. In March, the Development Director then headed off to East Asia: first to Tokyo, and then on to Hong Kong for an informal and enjoyable gathering at the China Club (generously sponsored by Charles Target, 1975).

In May the Founder's Society Lunch recognised those who have pledged a legacy to Merton in their Will. We hosted 40

alumni and friends for drinks on a quintessential summer's afternoon on Sundial Lawn, followed by lunch and a stirring performance by the Girl Choristers. Later in May key supporters of the Upper Library Windows Restoration Appeal enjoyed a first-look tour of the restored windows. This was a wonderful occasion on which to celebrate the preservation of our unique medieval library windows, made possible by so many generous contributions.

For the third year in a row, we returned to Peterhouse in Cambridge, with Trinity term then culminating with a suitably lively Summer Eights dinner, following the success of the Merton crews on the river this year, and attended by our proudly Mertonian Vice-Chancellor, Professor Irene Tracey (1985). July saw the Development Director make a second trip to Europe, this time accompanying the Choir to Amsterdam for their Netherlands tour debut at the Basilica of Saint Nicholas, followed by an alumni reception.

This rich and varied calendar was punctuated by warm reunions at College, including two Jubilee reunion lunches (Golden and Diamond) and Gaudies for the years 2000–2007 and 2000–2003.

The events held under the banner of the Merton Society, throughout Dame Philippa Whipple's (1984) final year as President, were indicative of the tremendous energy and ambition that have characterised her tenure. These began with the Merton Choir's Christmas Carol Concert at the Temple Church in December. A highlight of the year was annual lecture given by Professor Steven Gunn (1979), on the improbable accidents that befell the Tudor populace, hosted generously for the fourth consecutive year by Patrick Long (1995) at Lazard's.

After a prolonged Covid-related hiatus, June saw the return of the Merton Society's London Dinner, which took attendees behind the usually closed doors of Vintners' Hall. The guest speaker was Groove Armada co-founder turned sustainable farmer, Andy Cato (1991), who discussed the role that farming should play in reversing biodiversity loss.

The Society's year was brought to a triumphant conclusion with the biennial Garden Party, which welcomed an

unprecedented 400 alumni and their families to the College. It was a fitting tribute to Dame Philippa, to whom we owe special thanks for her six years of service, including the establishment of the successful Merton College Mentoring (MCM), together with her husband Sam Whipple (1983).

This year also saw two successful trips to the US. In November the Warden and the Development Director joined 55 Mertonians for a series of events which included private tours of CNN (kindly hosted by Sir Mark Thompson, 1976) and the Metropolitan Museum of New York (led by Susan Cullman), a dinner at the University Club (with speaker Sir Howard Stringer, 1961) and a Sunday brunch generously hosted at the Park Avenue home of Susan Cullman. MC3 followed this in May with a cocktail party in New York, graciously hosted by Amna Naseer (1997), and attended by the double bill of the current Warden, Professor Jennifer Payne, and former Warden and current Vice-Chancellor, Professor Irene Tracey.

Beyond these wonderful gatherings, MC3 continues to support the College. As the year began, MC3 confirmed the completion of its fourth endowed graduate scholarship, to be named in honour of MC3 founder Robert 'Bob' McKelvey (1959). The scholarship funded a graduate in the Humanities from Michaelmas term 2025. Fundraising for a fifth scholarship is well underway. In addition, MC3 concluded its pledge towards the endowment of the Regius Professorship in Mathematics.

Fundraising for posts and scholarships has been particularly successful this year. More than £3 million has been raised in new gifts and pledges between 1 August 2024 and 31 July 2025. The Michael Huffington Chair in Eastern Orthodox Christianity has been established through the generosity of Texan philanthropist the Hon. Michael Huffington. The Hilary & Galen Weston Foundation assigned an additional £1 million of funding towards the Earth Scholarships programme announced last year, resulting in another two graduate students being awarded full scholarships.

We thank Ed Field (1986), who has generously fully funded two DPhil Biochemistry scholarships – the Kyner-Field Scholarships in Structural Vaccinology – to be based in

Professor Matt Higgins' laboratory. We are also grateful to David Ure (1965) who has pledged to fund a graduate scholarship in Modern Languages (with a match by an anonymous donor) and to Professor Anselmo Reyes, who has supported a new graduate scholarship in the Humanities named after his late mother. We extend special thanks to Tira Wannamethee (1981) who has also established his second graduate scholarship, the recipient of which will commence at Merton next year.

Our appeal in support of the University's Black Academic Futures programme has now achieved its target, while the Refugee Academic Futures Scholarship has more than met its original goal thanks to donations made during the March 2025 telethon. Surplus funds will go towards a second cycle of the scholarship. It was a great result for this year's telethon, raising £183,887 thanks to the incredible generosity of our community. The opportunities that these two scholarships represent is a testament to how every gift, no matter the size, can have a lasting an effect on future generations of Merton students.

The third MCR Posterity Gift for Student Support and Welfare had a 97% contribution rate, match funded by Sven Kirkerup (2014) for the third time. The JCR Leavers' Gift also had a 97% contribution rate, match funded for the fifth time by Mustafa Abbas (1990), who also supported the April Returners' Dinner for last year's graduands.

Keeping all of this activity on the go are our wonderful colleagues in the Development Office. This year, Chelsea and Julia have been joined by newcomers Eleanor and Grace, and the returning Gaby. We would like to thank them for all their hard work, which has made the past year such a success.

And finally, thank you to you, the Merton community, for your constant engagement and support of the College, securing the future of this bastion of academic excellence.

Mark Coote, Development Director & Fellow
Sara Gordon, Deputy Development Director



Schools Liaison and Outreach

Merton's Access and Outreach Programme aims to attract academically talented applicants from a wide range of backgrounds and strives to equip them with the information and skills to make competitive applications to university. Under Oxford's regional outreach scheme, Merton's work is focused on the South West of England including Dorset, Wiltshire, Bristol, Bath and north-east Somerset and the London Borough of Merton. However, we also 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 work in the South West, Merton is partnered with Exeter College and Lady Margaret Hall to form the Oxford for South West Consortium. The consortium works together regularly both online and at in-person events and collaborates with the Cambridge colleges which share our outreach areas (Trinity Hall, Robinson College and

Downing College). In February we hosted the Oxford and Cambridge Information Days – a collection of online events lasting for around a week, aimed at equipping prospective applicants, parents and teachers all over the South West with information about student life at Oxford and Cambridge and the application process. In February, Merton and Trinity Hall (Cambridge) joined forces for the Bath and North East Somerset Oxbridge Conference to deliver a programme of events to students from schools across the area. The day included talks for students and parents about studying at both Oxford and Cambridge, and sample lectures from academics. Dr Lucy Brookes, one of Merton's Early Career Fellows, was kind enough to give a brilliant lecture about Medieval Romance Literature.

One of the mainstays of Merton's outreach initiative is the programme of regular inbound school visits that we host from schools across our outreach area during term time. This

Attending the Bristol UCAS Fair
in April with Vicky from Lady
Margaret Hall



One of the 'chalkings' made by students for the Open Days

year we welcomed 22 state schools to Merton for the day to learn more about life at Oxford, tour the College, speak to current students and eat lunch in our dining hall. We are very grateful for the support of our brilliant student ambassadors, who offer insights into student life and the application process for visiting schools – our outreach work is so much richer for their willingness to share their perspectives.

It has been a pleasure to visit schools and colleges in the South West to meet students, teachers and parents across Merton's target areas. Alongside in-person visits to give talks about Oxford and the application process, there have been several opportunities to give talks and host workshops virtually. This has allowed Merton to engage with a greater number of schools and potential applicants and helps to develop relationships with schools that we might not otherwise have had contact with. Digital outreach has also been a new focus this year, as Merton has ventured into the world of TikTok. With more than 110,000 views over 19 videos, the official Merton account is reaching prospective students successfully. It's also popular with our student ambassadors, who have enjoyed the opportunity to get creative making videos for the account – their best video to date has more than 20,000 views.

Our partnership with the Social Mobility Foundation (SMF) has continued to flourish this year with a successful programme of both online and in-person events. The SMF is

a UK-wide charity which supports high-achieving students to achieve their potential by providing them with networks and opportunities that they may otherwise not have. Alongside the interview workshops we run each year to give practical advice to students about approaching their admissions interviews with confidence, we added some new events to our yearly programme. Our engagement with the new Year 12 SMF cohort began with two pre-application events in June, focusing on personal statements and admissions tests.

In July we hosted our fourth summer residential with the SMF, welcoming 35 students and four members of staff to join us for three days. The group explored the city and got to know Merton while experiencing elements of university life. They attended workshops based on writing and interview skills, and received advice about writing their personal statements and navigating the fees and funding associated with university. Students attended a production of *Twelfth Night* at the Oxford Castle and Prison, which received brilliant reviews from SMF students and staff alike. On the final day of the residential the group were treated to mini lectures from Dr David Nadlinger (Early Career Researcher in Physics) and Dr Lucy Brookes, which they engaged with enthusiastically.

The summer Open Days in early July were very successful, with over 3,700 people visiting the College over the course of two days. Our team of student ambassadors were wonderful representatives for the College, giving tours, answering questions and handing out an incredible amount of ice cream!

Merton's outreach would not be possible without the support of our whole community, and we are grateful to all the students and members of academic and support staff who have been involved in outreach this year. It has been lovely to spend another year sharing Merton's welcoming and inclusive community with prospective applicants. As I enter my final few months at Merton after time spent here as both student and staff, I'm proud to say that the College's friendly atmosphere, brilliant students and staff and outstanding support have made talking about studying and living at Merton one of the most enjoyable parts of my job.

Jenny Shaw
Schools Liaison and Access Officer



Domestic Bursary

Stonework restoration on the south elevation of Fellows' Quad

Repairs and Restoration

As custodians of the College, maintaining the historic fabric of the various buildings that form the Oxford estate is a central part of our activity. Our in-house team of maintenance staff look after general repairs on a day-to-day basis, and this year, a much larger team of specialist contractors have been involved in more complex refurbishment work.

A major programme of stone repair work has been taking place in Patey's Quad and to the south elevation of Fellows' Quad. Years of weather erosion have taken their toll on the ashlar limestone facades. A specialist team of stonemasons from Owlswoth Conservation, project architects and building surveyors have been working with the College under the close supervision of local conservation officers and English Heritage advisors on a 'once in 100 years' restoration.

An extensive planning process took place to find a suitable match for the original stone. Much of the stone used in Oxford would have been originally sourced from local quarries at Headington or Wheatley, both of which are now closed. Owlswoth Head Mason John Lister was tasked with

sourcing samples from other quarries. After carrying out tests, a stone called Stoke Ground, Cotswold Hill Quarry near Cheltenham, was selected for the main facade. An Ashlar stone from the Johnsons Wellfield quarry near Huddersfield was used for repairs around the windows.

The restoration work has been planned over three phases, each taking about four months, starting at the Warden's office. Phase two is about to start, which will be from the Hawkins Room towards the central archway; it is anticipated that this will be finished by Christmas.

Running simultaneously with the Fellows' Quad work, an extensive project has commenced to repair the roof and stone exterior, along with the internal refurbishment of ten student rooms in Front 5. As part of the schedule, a large scaffold is being built to enclose Front 5 on both the St Alban's and Front Quad elevations. The scaffold is necessary to provide a temporary roof while roof slates are carefully removed, and the supporting timber structure is inspected and insulated before the roof is refitted, complete with new lead guttering and rainwater systems. This work ensures that the building is watertight and has better insulation.

Internally, 50-year-old electrical wiring is being replaced, along with the fire detection and security systems. Secondary glazing is being installed along with energy efficient heating and hot water systems to create a warm, comfortable and energy-efficient environment, all managed by a new building control system and monitored through smart meters. Bathrooms, flooring and redecoration will also be renewed in a project that is expected to conclude by Easter 2026. While installing new electrical services into Front 5, we are taking the opportunity to replace fire cladding in the entrance and stairwell to the bar. Preparatory work is taking place to enable the future installation of an access lift into the MCR along with insulation and a fire-compliant kitchen.

Readers of *Postmaster* may recall 'Chestnut Hall', a temporary dining facility installed during the Covid pandemic. While the building work is taking place in Front 4 staircase, a second, smaller marquee facility has been built on Chestnut Lawn for the summer as a substitute space for the College Bar.

Food, glorious food!

Head Chef Simon Crawshaw reports that we have served a massive 123,763 meals since the last edition of *Postmaster*. Aligned to which, Simon has been working with the Sustainability Group to reduce food waste by weighing and reporting the amount of leftover food.

Conferencing and events

Our fabulous conference team, led by Rebecca Stewart, organises over 2,000 events each year. During the summer vac, Merton hosts 12 international residential conferences, including guests from UCL Berkeley and the Smithsonian. Both programmes have been coming to Merton for more than 20 years.

Laila Neblett, who has participated in the programme since its inception in the early 1980s, provided us with a summary of the Oxford-Berkeley experience.

For her, the best parts of the course are 'the astounding lecturers and the chance to work with people of all ages and walks of life and benefit from each other's knowledge. You

also get to continue talking about your subjects late into the evening at the collegiate high table dinners with delicious food and wine, and you end up knowing your subject matter inside and out by the end of the programme.

A new Spanish oak

The Gardens Department care for a collection of nearly 150 trees, and are responsible for monitoring their continuing health and safety. Unfortunately, two Horse Chestnuts adjacent to the Late Gate in Fellows' Garden became unsafe. One of the trees had been coping with a decay fungus since 2012, which severely compromised the structural integrity of the wood. The other was suffering from bleeding canker girdling the trunk, and honey fungus which kills the roots before decaying them, making the tree unstable.

Merton's trees are within a Central (City and University) Planning area, set up to preserve and enhance the unique and distinctive character of Oxford. Due to the safety issues identified, permission was granted from the Oxford City Council Planning Department to remove the trees.

Following removal, a poll took place among college members to select a replacement from a shortlist agreed with the Oxford City Tree Officer. The winning choice was a Spanish Oak.

Staff

The staff at Merton embody the sense of community that is at the heart of college life. We said goodbye this summer to Jean Cullen, who retired from the role of PA to the Finance Bursar and Land Agent after eight years of service. Jean has been a brilliant colleague, and we wish her the very best for a long and healthy retirement.

Sadly, at the start of the year, Merton groundsman James Lisle passed away. James was a remarkable colleague who contributed to the College for over 36 years. He is very much missed, and he and his family remain in our thoughts.

Tim Lightfoot
Domestic Bursar



Welfare and Student Support

At the start of January, I joined the College in the newly created post of Head of Welfare. I was immediately struck by Merton's evident commitment to the wellbeing of its students, and the dedication of the Welfare team, especially our Senior Welfare Advisor Jenny Barrett who acted as interim Head of Welfare before my arrival. The team evidently all work extremely hard to ensure our students are well supported.

It's clear that while Merton has a well-deserved reputation for academic excellence, our talented, motivated students are also determined to make the most of their student experience by engaging with all kinds of clubs, societies, activities and opportunities. Balancing all of this, sometimes alongside challenging life circumstances, can of course bring its own pressures. The Welfare team's support plays a key role in helping to ensure our students can negotiate the ups and downs of life at Oxford as well as the exceptional stresses

that may affect their wellbeing and studies. I know that I am building on a long tradition at Merton of community activities which foster belonging, wellbeing and peer support, opportunities for development of life skills and healthy, balanced habits, as well as the invaluable guidance offered by the team through one-to-one support.

The role of Head of Welfare is intended to help Merton continue to shape and evolve its College welfare provision so it can respond to the diverse needs of our students in an increasingly complex and challenging world. For example, across the higher education sector, we know that more young people are struggling with their mental health. It is a privilege to work for a college that cares so much about its students and that can dedicate resources to their care, helping them to thrive. One of my tasks this year has been to create a statement of the aims of Merton's welfare provision, to articulate this commitment clearly and guide our work in future years.

We have plenty of ideas for how we might continue to develop our provision, and I am looking forward to seeing the whole academic year, with the arrival of our freshers in October. We are delighted that Julie Osborne, who has been covering the role of College Nurse, was appointed to the permanent post in Trinity term. I am also very grateful to our team of Junior Deans for Welfare, Pippa Warman, Olivia Simpson and Daisy Bressington, for their contributions in helping to make the strong sense of community that characterises Merton. Pippa leaves us at the end of this year having held the role for three years, and although I have only worked with her for two terms, I know her experienced and cheerful approach will be much missed. Elizabeth Irving in the Academic Office has done a fantastic job this year of supporting the team's administrative needs and helping us develop more effective processes.

With the team's increased capacity, we have been able to offer an even wider range of activities including Welfare Walks and new Focused Revision Sessions, and I look forward to more to come.

Helen Webster
Head of Welfare

Academic Office

It has been a year of change for the Academic Office, but one in which the whole team's commitment to supporting our students' journeys and the work of Merton's Fellows and lecturers has, as ever, been strongly evident.

Our roles are shaped by the cycle of each academic year, but we continuously review our processes. This year, various student-facing policies and documentation have been revised, with the much-valued input of Fra' John Eidinow. Rachel Wilkins (Academic Officer) and Jemma Underdown (Academic Registrar) have continued their work to develop the support for our students with disabilities, as well as responding to other changes in their own roles. A new initiative was piloted in Trinity term, when we held a Careers Insights Day, bringing together students and some of our wonderful alumni to reflect on career skills and pathways. Merton alumnae Pippa Shirley (1983), Sam Whipple (1983) and Jessica Searle (2018), together with Professor Kate Blackmon all brought their experiences to discussions, and I am hugely grateful for their involvement. Pippa and Alumni Relations Manager Chelsea Chisholm (Development Office) were instrumental in turning a Merton Society idea into reality. As the College's thinking about skills development continues, further consideration will be given to how the pilot might inform future activities.

Academic recruitment continues and we were delighted that Professor Paul McGonigal, who replaces Professor Gouverneur as Tutor in Chemistry, joined us in May. An appointment has also been made to fill the post in Law vacated by Professor Payne, with the new tutor starting in Michaelmas 2026. In the coming academic year, we will be recruiting two new Associate Professors to fill posts vacated by Professor Tim Guilford (Biology) and Dr Daniela Dover (Philosophy), as well as two new Early Career Researchers, including the replacement for Dr Mar Rodda (Ancient Greek) who is taking up a position at the University of Cambridge.

Alongside these changes, we have seen new arrivals and departures in the team. Our Admissions Manager, Katie Selwood, had a baby daughter in December. The transition for

her maternity replacement, at one of the busiest times of the year, was aided by the fantastic help of the whole team and by Katie's legendary admissions wallchart, which tracks each task leading up to the final decisions. Our new Head of Welfare, Dr Helen Webster, joined the College in January and Elizabeth Irving temporarily moved to become the Welfare and Student Support administrator. Together with the Welfare team, they have worked to develop a number of new systems, some of which were in response to a welfare review (now completed).

September sees two departures from the team, both of whom will be sadly missed. Jenny Shaw joined as Schools Liaison and Outreach Officer two years ago, having completed an undergraduate History degree at Merton. She has been a brilliant ambassador for the College, the University and for higher education and I am delighted that her academic and professional experiences here have helped inform her next career steps. Julie Gerhardi will be retiring after nearly 35 years in the Academic Office. Over her career, she has seen the team change and grow, and her knowledge is extraordinary. Having had experience in almost every aspect of the College's academic administration, she has been a phenomenal source of guidance to many team members over the years, including to me when I arrived. Julie tells the most wonderful stories about her early experiences and about how the College has evolved. She remembers with fondness former students, former Fellows and former staff and I know that those feelings are reciprocated. It will take a little time to adjust to an Academic Office without Julie, but we wish her all the best, as I am sure will all the past members of the College whose lives she has touched.

Dr Jane Gover
Senior Tutor



Work in St Albans Quad, 2024

The Gardens

This year, due to sustainability concerns, the question arose: could Merton reimagine Fellows' Quad as something other than fine lawn?

The stark-looking quad provokes a stark contrast of opinions: to some it is the quintessential tranquil look of an Oxford college, viewed as part of a wider 'Oxford landscape'; to others it is a dearth of wildlife, waste of resources (artificial fertilisers, plus a lot of water) and a completely underused area.

Since 1971, it has come under a Planning and Conservation area covering 636 acres in the city centre with significant

heritage status. It was put down to lawn in 1838 and this has given the quad a central focus, supporting the College's role as a place for reflection and scholarly pursuit.

Thinking along sustainability lines we proposed a French style 'potager' garden, as it is after all neighbouring the kitchens. The shelter and warmth radiating from the surrounding buildings provide the perfect conditions in which tender fruits and vegetables would thrive. Imagine floriferous low hedges of herbs, perennial vegetables (think artichokes, sea kale and rhubarb), trained fruit such as vines or quince, and secluded seating nooks inviting quiet reflection.



Lonicera caerulea – or honey berries, as they are known

In fact, this would not be entirely new. When the quad was built (1608–10), Elizabethan gardens often featured a careful combination of plants both functional and decorative, providing food and medicine as well as herbs and cut flowers. These enclosed spaces, known as *hortus conclusus*, were secluded oases encouraging contemplation to renew the body and refresh the mind.

Historic England, however, has reservations – concerned that elements of height would draw the focus away from the architecture. For many, the tightly mown lawns of college quads are considered sacrosanct, although they are relatively modern contrivances (only appearing in the last 200 years) and often get dug up when building work must go ahead. Historic England has suggested that other areas of the College may be better suited to accommodate the College's aspirations to provide a vegetable garden. Watch this space.

Edible ornamental plants, or 'edimentals' for short, are one way of making your garden productive without a dedicated veg plot. We cannot get enough of honey berries, *Lonicera caerulea*, which, unlike blueberries, are able to thrive on our alkaline soil.

On the subject of fertiliser, change may be coming. A company called NitroCapt has developed a solar-powered process for producing nitrate fertiliser without the carbon-

heavy Haber–Bosch method, inspired by how lightning fixes nitrogen in nature. With the help of the 2025 Food Planet Prize, small-scale production facilities are now underway.

Elsewhere, a tune has been in our heads this year: 'Sweet *Cordyline*' (to the melody of 'Sweet Caroline'). We were spotted digging up a large *Cordyline* near the Law Library (with full permission), using it for propagation. Cut into sections and buried, it is already sprouting. This particular specimen traces its lineage to seeds from New Zealand, where *Cordyline australis* and the higher-altitude *C. indivisa* hybridise to produce tougher offspring – excellent news for exotic plant lovers.

Tree spotting is now a big thing, and the Lonely Planet has published a book I recommend: *The Tree Atlas* by Matthew Collins with Thomas Rutter. Also *Tree Hunting* by urban tree specialist Paul Wood presents a fascinating journey through some of the most distinctive and storied trees growing in towns and cities across the UK, with maps, grid references and travel notes for those inspired to explore these landscapes themselves.

The flower meadows continue to go from strength to strength and tie in with Merton's aim to achieve biodiversity net gain. Professor Stephen Harris, Curator of Oxford University Herbaria, has been advising us on a strategy for monitoring what we have, so changes can be recorded and analysed in future. For me, more is more, but not simply linear – it's compounding! The amplification of species diversity leads to dramatic results both for their aesthetic value and ecological resource.

Charismatic garden species capture our attention as much as they whet pollinator appetites. *Hesperaloe parviflora* has proved hardy in free draining soil and has been flowering for months. It is one of the many drought-tolerant species we are trialling at Holywell Annexe accommodation.

The gardens team have been amazing this year; I couldn't do any of this without them.

Lucille Savin
Head Gardener

Hail to New Fellows



Dr Andrés Bustamante Agudelo
Julia de Lacy Mann Fellow as Early Career
Researcher in History

Before arriving in Oxford, I graduated with a BA and PhD in History from Yale University. I also received an MPhil in Archaeology (Heritage & Museum Studies) and an MPhil in History of Art & Architecture from the University of Cambridge, where I was a Paul Mellon Fellow at Clare College.

I am a historian of modern Latin America, specialising in 19th- and 20th-century Mexico. I focus on the history of archaeology and the social sciences, Indigenous history and Mesoamerican art. My research explores the intertwined histories of archaeology, resource extraction and sovereignty in modern Mexico. My first book project, *Excavating Mexico: Archaeology and the Making of Subterranean Sovereignty*, examines how archaeological excavations shaped one of the defining processes of Mexican state formation: the nationalisation of subsoil resources. *Excavating Mexico* traces the legal and political battles that engulfed both popular and scholarly efforts to unearth ancient artifacts. These disputes transformed archaeological excavations into key testing grounds for the regulatory mechanisms and legal frameworks that extended the state's power underground.

More broadly, my work investigates the afterlives of the ancient Americas in the modern world. I am curating a forthcoming exhibition at the Yale Center for British Art about the legacies and transformations of Mesoamerican art in 19th-century British visual culture.

I am very grateful for the warm welcome I have received at Merton and feel fortunate to be part of such a vibrant college community.



Dr Sumali Bajaj

Julia de Lacy Mann Fellow as Peter J. Braam Early Career Researcher in Global Wellbeing

I became part of the Merton College community in January 2025, when I was appointed as the Peter J Braam Early Career Research Fellow in Global Wellbeing. My academic journey began with an undergraduate degree in statistics from Lady Shri Ram College for Women in New Delhi, followed by a masters in biostatistics from Harvard University. Before starting my doctoral studies, I spent three years as a research assistant at Imperial College London working on estimating HIV prevalence and treatment uptake at fine spatial scales and developing models to understand the progression of Alzheimer's disease. I recently completed a DPhil at the University of Oxford, where I focused on modelling infectious diseases, particularly exploring how Covid-19 spread and how access to healthcare varied across different communities in England.

Building on this foundation, my current research focuses on developing and applying statistical and computational tools to better understand how infectious diseases spread and how they impact different populations. I'm particularly interested in using serological data to trace patterns of past transmission and to inform the design of effective, resource-sensitive surveys. Alongside research, I find great fulfilment in teaching, especially on the ways in which quantitative methods can be used to address real-world challenges in public health and epidemiology.

Settling into Merton has been a thoroughly rewarding experience. The College has offered a vibrant and intellectually stimulating environment, and has also provided a wonderfully welcoming new home, filled with friends, admirable colleagues and delicious food. I'm excited about my next few years here.



Professor Sam Fletcher

Professor of Philosophy of Physics and Tutor in Philosophy

I studied physics and applied mathematics as an undergraduate at Princeton University before switching to philosophy of science in graduate school. While studying for my PhD at the University of California, Irvine, I completed an MS in Statistics after becoming interested in the foundations of statistical evidence. Before joining Merton College in September 2024, I was Associate Professor of Philosophy at the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities, and before that, I held a Marie Curie Fellowship at the Munich Center for Mathematical Philosophy. I have held visiting positions at the universities of Pittsburgh, Geneva, Oxford, Bristol, Bonn and the LSE.

Much of my research has concerned the foundations of physics and of statistics, and how problems in these fields inform and are informed by broader issues in the philosophy of science. I also have interests in the conceptual and physical basis of computation, metaphilosophy, and the history of physics and philosophy of science. Accordingly, my research deploys many of the methods available to interdisciplinary scholarship, including archival explorations, close reading, conceptual explication, logical argumentation, mathematical modelling, empirical studies and computer programming.

At Merton, I teach introductory logic the new Philosophical Topics in Logic and Probability paper for the students in the science and philosophy joint schools, philosophy of physics and science papers at any level, and the paper on Turing for computer science and philosophy students.

Even though Oxford is wonderfully unique in so many respects, I already feel at home with the fellowship in Merton.



Dr Katharina Friege

Julia de Lacy Mann Fellow as Early Career Researcher in History

I joined Merton in October 2024 as a Julia de Lacy Mann Fellow and have been appointed a Junior Research Fellow for the next two academic years as part of a three-year Early Career Fellowship. My research as a historian focuses on media, gender and identity in 20th-century Europe. It is people and the stories people told – about themselves, their societies and their era – that interest me most in the study of history.

My doctoral research was about a small group of heterogeneous German women in the Weimar and Nazi period. They all built independent careers as writers, journalists or photographers and they all lived and worked abroad, outside Germany. But they held extremely divergent political views. The women at the centre of this work nevertheless belonged to the same ‘new generation’ of modern women even while they defended opposite political and cultural ideals.

How did humour serve people – creators and audiences alike – as a means through which to question, criticise and reshape their understanding of collective identities after the Second World War? This question is at the heart of my postdoctoral research project; I am especially interested in the perceived moral ambiguities of humorous storytelling as well as in its accompanying social commentary.

Merton is a wonderful college and it has been a real pleasure to get to know the community. I love spending time in the beautiful gardens, meeting Fellows and students and learning about the College’s traditions. I have really enjoyed my first few terms and am looking forward to those to come.



Dr Gabby Messeder

Julia de Lacy Mann Fellow as Fitzjames Early Career Researcher in Music

Before joining Merton, I worked freelance, balancing academic and non-academic roles. I was a visiting lecturer in Music at both Goldsmiths and City, University of London, and held a Research Fellowship at the University of Greenwich as part of the AHRC-funded project *Exploring Cultural Diversity in Experimental Sound* (2021–23). Alongside this, I taught piano in schools, occasionally wrote for music magazines, and played Brazilian music in London.

At Merton, my current research focuses on *rodas de samba* – or “samba circles” – in Rio de Janeiro. The project explores the social role of these vibrant musical events in the context of everyday violence and precarity in Rio’s northern working-class suburbs. I’m also investigating how notions of masculinity are shaped within these spaces, and how samba interacts with contemporary political shifts in Brazil. I’m extremely grateful for the generous research support that allows me to carry out ethnographic fieldwork in Rio. Working with these musical communities in such a captivating city has been deeply rewarding, and unexpected insights and new questions are emerging in my research. In addition to this project, I’m also preparing several publications based on my doctoral research on Brazilian music and dance in Lebanon, which I was awarded in 2023 from City, University of London.

So far, I’ve loved my time at Merton. Adapting to the Oxford style of teaching was challenging at first, but I’m finding it so rewarding. The students bring so much energy and originality to our discussions. Perhaps best of all, it’s an incredibly sociable and welcoming place: it’s been wonderful to meet so many fascinating people and share conversations over dinner.



Dr Rory Gregson

Associate Professor and Tutor in Law

I read law as an undergraduate in Cambridge, before coming to Oxford for my graduate studies. Following my doctorate, I went back to Cambridge as a Junior Research Fellow at Trinity College, and then as a University Assistant Professor and a Fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge.

I'm delighted to have joined Merton and its rich legal tradition. I teach Contract Law and Land Law to undergraduates at Merton, as well as teaching the Commercial Remedies paper on the BCL.

In my research, I'm interested in the interrelation between different areas of private law, looking for opportunities for one area of law to learn from another. In this vein, I've recently finished a number of projects, including my first book, on the law of subrogation and marshalling of securities.

Another recent project concerns silence. A common misconception is to think that, if a text does not say one thing, it must be saying another. I argue that this is a misconception because it overlooks the possibility of silence: the possibility that a text does not say one thing or another. I argue that this misconception has misled multiple areas of law, including parts of contract, tort, land, trusts and restitution.

I try to write about problems currently troubling the courts, with a view to influencing the development of the law. My work was recently cited with approval by the Court of Appeal in an interesting consumer rights case, *Glaser v Atay*, which you can read about here: caselaw.nationalarchives.gov.uk/ewca/civ/2024/III1



Professor Paul McGonigal

Professor of Organic Chemistry and Courtenay Phillips Tutor of Chemistry

Before arriving in Oxford, my training and research has taken me to several different institutions. I completed my undergraduate and postgraduate degrees at the University of Edinburgh. I then moved to the Institute of Chemical Research of Catalonia, Spain, as a postdoctoral researcher (2011) before conducting research as a US–UK Fulbright Scholar (2012) at Northwestern University. I started my independent academic career at Durham University as an Assistant Professor, then Associate Professor, before moving to the University of York as a Reader and then Professor.

My research interests lie broadly in studying dynamic processes in organic functional materials. I enjoy taking an interdisciplinary approach that encompasses a wide range of techniques in organic synthesis, advanced spectroscopy, organometallics, electrochemistry and computational modelling. Some of the systems I choose to investigate stem from curiosity about their unusual fundamental properties, such as the 'shapeshifting' rearrangement of fluxional carbon cages, or 'ruptured aromaticity' of strained ring systems. I also take an active interest in making new materials of relevance to society challenges in storing and transferring energy. In particular, my research group is involved in designing organic materials with novel mechanisms of ionic conduction and light emission.

One of the many strengths of Merton College is its stimulating interdisciplinary environment that brings together students and scholars from across a much broader range of backgrounds and disciplines. I'm very much looking forward to getting to know everyone and to exploring our overlapping interests.



Dr Raz Slutsky

Julia de Lacy Mann Fellow as Early Career
Researcher in Mathematics

I joined Merton in October 2024 as a Julia de Lacy Mann Fellow in Mathematics. I study an area of group theory sometimes known as geometric group theory. A group is an algebraic structure that describes the symmetries of other objects. In many cases, studying these groups can lead to new insights about the geometric structure of certain shapes. The specific groups I study play a crucial role in understanding certain curved geometries, for example, hyperbolic manifolds. These groups are also fundamental in many areas of physics and chemistry due to their role in describing symmetries and conservation laws, like the symmetries of crystals. Work in the field has also found applications in computer science, quantum information theory, and beyond.

Since these groups possess a rich structure, they can be studied through various mathematical tools, which is why I find them so interesting. In my research, I develop and apply techniques from geometry, number theory, and, most recently, operator algebras to investigate these groups and the geometric objects they correspond to.

Settling into college life has been rewarding on both scholarly and personal fronts. Having spent most of my academic life in departments composed solely of mathematicians, it is a pleasure to engage with fellows from many disciplines, and the lively atmosphere and intellectual curiosity of everyone at Merton is truly inspiring.



Dr Ted Tregear

Associate Professor and Tutor in English

Before coming to Merton in September 2024, I'd spent two years as a Lecturer at St Andrews, with three years before that as a Research Fellow at Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge.

My research ranges across early modern poetry and drama, and usually finds its way back to Shakespeare. My first book, *Anthologizing Shakespeare, 1593–1603*, explored how Shakespeare engaged with the practices of reading and commonplacing in which he, like his earliest readers, had been schooled. Midway through Shakespeare's career, five anthologies were printed with extracts from his poems and plays. My argument was that we see new things about those works, and how Shakespeare expected they'd be read, by reading them through the extracts those anthologies selected. Since finishing this project, I've continued writing about Shakespeare, most recently in the New Oxford edition of his final tragedy *Coriolanus*.

I'm currently at work on a new project, which explores the style of seventeenth-century poetry often known as 'metaphysical', and asks what – if anything – is metaphysical about it. For decades, the name has been written off as a misnomer. I'm wondering whether it might have something valuable to tell us: about poetry, and philosophy, and the historical moment to which they belonged. I'll be discussing some familiar poets (Donne, Herbert), as well as some less familiar ones (Abraham Cowley, Anne Southwell); inevitably, Shakespeare will be there too.

Merton is just the dreamiest of places to be doing this work: surrounded by brilliant colleagues, within and beyond my subject, and inspired and challenged by equally brilliant students. I feel unbelievably lucky.



The Reverend Canon Justin White Chaplain

I became College Chaplain in January 2025, following a career in chaplaincy in secondary education. Most of that time was spent at Winchester College, where I was Dean of Chapel, Head of Theology & Philosophy, and a teacher of Physics and Maths. Immediately before joining Merton, I worked with the Woodard Corporation, supporting pastoral and spiritual provision across some 40 schools nationwide, spanning the maintained and independent sectors.

Before ordination, my path included an MA in Theology and Religious Studies at Trinity College, Cambridge; a career in management consultancy in the City; an MA in International Studies at Warwick; and an MEng in Engineering Science at Keble College, Oxford.

The interface between the 'magisteria' of science and religion has long been a focus of my teaching and preaching. I'm particularly drawn to the work of the French-Canadian philosopher and anthropologist René Girard. His account of religion's anthropological roots in the scapegoat mechanism, and how the biblical tradition exposes and subverts this, has deeply shaped my own thinking. I'm especially interested in how this Girardian insight might enrich the science/religion dialogue.

All of this feels very much aligned with the College's charitable objects: to advance, for the public benefit, education, learning, research and religion. The Chapel, in its life and witness, is already proving to be a place where these purposes are not only upheld but also brought into fruitful conversation.



Professor Standa Živný Professor of Computer Science and Tutor in Computer Science

I joined Merton College in 2024 as Tutor and Professor of Computer Science. Before coming to Oxford in 2006, I studied in my native Czech Republic, the Netherlands and Finland. Following a DPhil at Keble College, I was elected to a stipendiary Junior Research Fellowship in Mathematical and Physical Sciences at University College, Oxford. After a year at Warwick University, I joined Oxford's Department of Computer Science as a Research Lecturer in 2013, where I was promoted to a full professorship in 2021 and where I am now the Deputy Head of Department for Teaching.

My research is in the broad area of theoretical computer science and discrete mathematics, involving the application of mathematics to the design and analysis of algorithms and understanding the inherent limits of efficient computation. Over the past few years, I have mostly focused on the mathematics of 'promise constraint satisfaction problems'. These are problems of the following type: given a three-colourable graph, is it possible to find a six-colouring efficiently?

Put differently, imagine a large number of people and the promise that they can be split into three disjoint groups in such a way that people in each group do not know each other. Finding such a split is computationally hard even if it exists. Could we then find a split into up to six disjoint groups in such a way that, again, people in each group do not know each other? This could in principle be an easier task as there are more groups. However, the complexity of this problem is unresolved.

Features



Esquenta do Batuqueiros event: a typical roda de samba



Research at Merton

Gabrielle Messeder and the Rodas de Samba of Northern Rio de Janeiro

Gabrielle Messeder joined Merton in Michaelmas 2024 as a Fitzjames Early Career Researcher in Music. A musician with a background in Brazilian music, Gabby spends her research trips in the working-class northern suburbs of Rio de Janeiro, where the **rodas de samba** (samba circles) are a significant cultural and social musical event, bringing joy to those living in the **subúrbio**. Here, she speaks with Alumni Communications Officer Julia Bell about the **rodas de samba** and how she came to be carrying out ethnographic research in Brazil.

Can you tell us about the current research you're doing?

My current research focuses on *rodas de samba* ('samba circles') in the *zona norte*, or northern suburbs, of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Samba is a style of music and dance which formed in the early 20th century: a product of social gatherings in the working-class neighbourhoods near the port of Rio de Janeiro. According to many almost-mythological stories, musicians, bohemians and those seeking a good time would gather in the houses of the *tias Baianas* – Black women from northeastern Brazil initiated into Afro-Brazilian religious practices – where they would play music together. Gradually, the blending of elements of guitar-based Iberian music, European folk dances and a panoply of Afro-Brazilian music and dance styles developed into what we now know as samba. These early gatherings at the houses of the *tias Baianas* took place around a table: '*roda*' is Portuguese for 'circle', and so a *roda de samba* generally consists of a group of musicians sitting around a table, singing a seemingly endless medley of popular songs accompanied by a range of stringed and percussion instruments. They are encircled by the audience, the participation of whom is essential to the atmosphere and to the sound of the music itself: if you're around the table you're expected to dance, sing and clap along. This gives *rodas de samba* a real sense of community, and it's normally a very multi-sensory, intense experience: people are often packed in together very tightly, it's loud, hot and sweaty, and it would be unusual to emerge from the circle without being covered in beer. Today, samba encompasses a wide variety of subgenres, from the fast and frenetic *samba-enredo* played by vast ensembles at carnival celebrations, to sentimental, romantic popular styles that

can be heard on the radio. Different musicians and bands have their own styles and repertoires, and many of the most exciting young musicians play a mixture of their own original repertoire and classics that the audience will know and sing along to. Often, artists will test out repertoire at a *roda* to see how well it's received.

A *roda* can be very informal and take place on the street, in someone's backyard or outside a local bar, but it can also be ticketed and organised more like a typical gig in a venue or bar. Today there are dozens of *rodas de samba* that take place every day across Rio de Janeiro, particularly in the *zona norte*, a vast, sprawling network of suburbs that stretches out from the centre to the northern peripheries of the city. The *subúrbio*, as it's known, is a predominantly working-class area, and many parts of it suffer from deprivation and endemic violence. In comparison to the glitzy, tourist areas in the south of the city – the famous Ipanema and Copacabana beaches, for example – much of this area is neglected by the government and local authorities. *Rodas de samba* can function as micro-economies for local residents, too: many provide flexible employment opportunities for bar staff and waiters; local companies provide services including table hire, chemical toilets, ice delivery and security; locals sell beer or homemade treats at food stalls, and of course these events provide musicians and their production teams with work opportunities too.

Aside from these employment opportunities, *rodas de samba* are meaningful leisure and social spaces, and many of my interlocutors have indicated that participating in a *roda* – either as musicians or as an attendee – provides a way

to temporarily escape the often tough conditions of the *subúrbio*. Others stated that they can provide a sense of catharsis, particularly as a way to let out frustrations after a week (often six days) of working hard for little remuneration. Children are generally welcome too – it's not unusual for *rodas* to have a children's play area and the children of musicians are often involved in the *roda* itself. This also indicates how children become immersed in the music and learn how to play instruments as 'apprentices' of their parents (normally fathers, as it's a very male-dominated scene).

In general, the *zona norte* is a very religious area: there are small churches of various Christian denominations everywhere, including Catholic churches and a wide variety of evangelical sects. There are also strong Afro-Brazilian religious traditions, including *Candomblé* and *Umbanda*: these syncretic religious practices are woven into samba's history and identity. Although the *rodas* themselves are not religious as such, there are frequent religious references: for example, musicians often describe the *rodas* as a '*missa*' (a mass), and lyrical references to both a Christian God and Afro-Brazilian *orixás* (deities) are common. Certain behaviours and songs are often repeated in particular ways, which can give these events a ritualistic feel.

In such a socially significant – and almost spiritual – setting, there are ethical issues that must be carefully considered by the researcher. In particular, I have to be careful that my presence doesn't disrupt the evening by detracting from the atmosphere. This means that it wouldn't be appropriate for me to stand at the front taking notes or filming too much: I make sure that I participate as much as everyone else, pay close attention to how others are acting and behave accordingly. I always try to be careful to not take up space and respect (and learn!) samba etiquette. This often means clapping at the right moments, singing loudly, never putting your drink on someone else's table without asking and never standing still!

How did you come to be doing research in Brazilian music?

My first exposure to Brazilian music came from my parents, who were jazz musicians. There was always a range of music being played in the house, from blues and soul to Brazilian bossa nova, and they would take me to concerts all the time.

Perhaps inevitably, I decided to study music at university (City, University of London), and during my degree I was given the chance to join a samba band. The combination of samba's rhythmic complexities, its rich history and the inherently social nature of playing percussion in an ensemble setting really fascinated me. Around the same time, I discovered that I had a Brazilian step-grandmother (a long story...) and met her in the UK, where she was living. When I was 23 she took me to Brazil for the first time, and seeing the music I had been studying and playing in its cultural context had a profound effect on me. In the years following this trip, I continued to study and play samba as a percussionist and vocalist, and decided to explore issues pertaining to race and gender in Rio de Janeiro's samba schools when I returned to City to undertake my Master's degree in music. After I graduated, I ended up volunteering and later working in Nablus, Palestine, for a music charity, which provided workshops and instrumental tuition for children in the city's refugee camps and surrounding villages. Some years later, my interests in Brazil and the Middle East combined in my PhD research on Brazilian music and dance in Lebanon, which involved intensive fieldwork, including musical participation, in Beirut. My current project builds upon the research skills I developed in Lebanon and applies them in the context of a much bigger and more complex musical arena: In Beirut I was researching a small, localised scene with mainly semi-professional musicians, whereas the samba community in Rio is home to many world-class professional musicians who are in demand both across Brazil and abroad.

As there are so many *rodas de samba* in the city, it was difficult to figure out where to start when I began my fieldwork. Although I'd already been to Rio several times, I didn't have many contacts in this world, so I started by analysing samba lyrics. Samba is very self-referential and the songs are full of significant place names, including areas and venues, mainly in the *zona norte*. I began developing a research network by going to these venues and simply trying to talk to people. I also spent time trawling through samba social media accounts to try and figure out who the most important musicians in the scene were and where I might find them. I had a few strokes of luck and serendipitous encounters, and quickly started developing a network. It's a slow and laborious process though, and can't be rushed: it takes time to make contacts and to build trust.



The famous Monday night samba, *Resenha Pagode e Chinele*, in Pílares, zona norte



Well-known song lyric, 'Samba is popular therapy', on the wall of a samba venue

It can also be very tricky pinning down busy musicians for an interview! I've undertaken three trips so far, and, as was the case with my previous fieldwork in Lebanon, in general it takes two to three weeks for the ball to get rolling: after this time connections start developing (or re-developing), interviews lead to other interviews and to social and musical invitations. I've been lucky enough to sing at *rodas* a few times: I've been invited to participate by musicians I know, which has been a wonderful (and terrifying) experience. Having an insight into being in the *roda* itself and performing with musicians is a real privilege and has really deepened my understanding of how they function musically.

For me, having the opportunity to immerse myself into this musical scene and try to understand its inner workings is absolutely a dream come true. I get a real sense of satisfaction and freedom when I'm doing this research – I've always loved travelling alone, and I get to meet so many incredible people. I've been working on honing the traits that I think are crucial to have as an ethnographic researcher: it's essential to be friendly and confident, and not to be worried about embarrassing yourself – often a tall order when approaching strangers and introducing yourself in a foreign language. Patience and resilience are essential too: although going to gigs and hanging out with musicians is obviously a lot of fun (many Fellows at Merton have commented that I chose my research site rather well), it can be frustrating at times when things inevitably don't go quite as smoothly as planned. Additionally, I've had to learn to be perceptive and sensitive: gauging how welcome my presence is in certain situations, and reading between the lines in another language, which

is certainly very challenging at times. Travelling alone as a woman also presents its own challenges, which are often further amplified in what is a very male-dominated musical scene. I've also learnt that being non-judgmental, open minded and never assuming things are the way they seem are very important: many of the most interesting findings are completely unexpected, and seemingly insignificant details can add so much nuance to a story. During my initial trips to Rio in the first year, I tried to keep my research questions open, exploratory and flexible in order to let the research be guided somewhat organically, which in turn helps to shape my central research questions.

Why Merton – and what's it like now you're here?

The opportunities afforded by Merton are incredible, particularly in terms of the teaching responsibilities. It's also a four-year post, which is longer than many postdoctoral positions. The balance between teaching extremely talented music students during the term and going to Rio de Janeiro for fieldwork during vacations has been very stimulating, not least because of the extreme contrast between the two places! I've really been enjoying college life at Merton: I was expecting to feel intimidated but there's a great sense of community and everyone has been so welcoming. It's such an intellectually stimulating environment, too: it's expected that Fellows take a keen interest in each other's research, interdisciplinary conversations happen all the time, and of course, there's plenty of socialising. One day, I'd love to find a way to invite some samba musicians to Merton: I'm sure that many of the Fellows would be happy to recreate the tropical, bohemian ambience of a *roda* around the beautiful table in the SCR!



A View from Here:

The Right Hon Dame Philippa Whipple DBE reflects on her term as President of the Merton Society

The Right Hon Dame Philippa Whipple DBE (1984) served as President of the Merton Society from 2019 to 2025. During her term as President, she steered the Merton Society through the Covid-19 pandemic, fostering intergenerational connections between Mertonians, and was instrumental in setting up Merton College Mentoring. Here, she talks to Postmaster about what she achieved as President and what the role meant to her.

What made you interested in the role of Merton Society President?

Merton called and asked me if I would take on the role. I could not say no to Merton! It sounded interesting and I liked the idea of working to foster community and equity. These are things I care passionately about.

I was at that time a busy High Court judge. I welcomed the opportunity to take on a role outside my professional life: as you progress through your career and the pressures become more intense, it is important to retain a variety of interests to help keep a sense of balance. Work pressures increased when I was promoted to the Court of Appeal a couple of years later, and it became even more important to retain my interests outside the law.

My time as President of the Merton Society has given me a window onto a different landscape. I have found it very rewarding.

What were your priorities as President?

I wanted to try to build a greater sense of community amongst Mertonians, connecting the alumni body with the College and connecting alumni with each other. I wanted the younger alumni to know that they could find support from the community of Mertonians after they had left the College. I wanted all Mertonians to think about how they could pay back for all the good things that had come to them via Merton. I wanted to embed the College's ethos of mentoring and kindness into the wider Mertonian community.

These are large ambitions! They were encouraged by the two Wardens I have worked with in this role, first Professor Irene Tracy and then Professor Jenny Payne. They both have a clear vision for the College. I wanted the Merton Society to mirror that vision in its own work.

Dame Philippa in ceremonial robes as a Court of Appeal judge



How did you set about achieving your goals?

I am not sure I thought about it in these terms at the time, but looking back I think there were three steps which we took to achieve our goals.

First, we looked at the Merton Society itself. We thought about the Society's role in supporting Merton alumni. We expanded the Council, which is the management committee, by introducing new members. Anyone with an interest in being on the Council was invited to get in contact and stand for election. Our elections are not particularly competitive! We welcomed newcomers and we benefited so much from the energy and creativity of our Council members, old and new, during my time. The Council needs to be representative of our membership, especially our younger members. Recent graduates are entering a world which is much changed from the one which greeted earlier generations.

Once we had expanded our membership, we settled down to focused discussion about what the Merton Society is for and what it should do. We reached an early consensus that gentle modernisation was needed: to reflect the direction of

Philippa and Sam Whipple



the College, to encourage greater diversity of offering and membership, and to find new and different ways of engaging with our members.

That led to our second mission: to ensure that the Merton Society hosts events which are relevant and attractive to a wide range of Mertonians. You can't please everyone all the time! Some Mertonians like formal dinners, others prefer more casual events; some like intellectual debate, some prefer networking, others want music or entertainment. All these things are possible within the Merton portfolio. With the help of the Development Office, the Council developed a plan of social events which – we hoped – offered something for everyone and was appropriately inclusive. So, in recent years we have hosted: the biennial Garden Party, which particularly appeals to Mertonians with young families; the London Dinner, popular with Mertonians looking for tradition and greater formality; the annual London lectures given by academics at or connected with Merton; the Merton Reunion weekend which included a dinner in Hall and offered lectures, tours and Evensong in the Chapel; concerts involving the Merton Choir; Christmas Carols; informal drinks in a pub

– where we had the wonderful sight of Merton 'old boys' chatting to recent leavers; and much, much more.

The Council has put a lot of energy and effort into reaching and including all Mertonians. I have met a wide spread of Mertonians at these various events – all of them so impressive! They tell me that they like getting together and enjoy their connections with Merton. So I think we have been pressing in the right direction. The Council is always open to new ideas so by all means get in touch with the Development Office if you have any feedback or requests. The Development Office team, ably led by Mark Coote, will be delighted to hear from you.

Thirdly, we developed new initiatives to connect Mertonians with each other. This is, I think, where the Merton Society has been particularly strong. We have tried to create vertical connections within the Mertonian community, so that Mertonians of different ages and stages can find themselves connected around a shared interest or common theme. We had an early model in the Merton Lawyers' Association, which was set up about 20 years ago and is now an established part of Merton life. Then we witnessed the enormous success of the Biomedical and Life Sciences Network, which David Clark (1984) set up using LinkedIn; it now has 220 members. We were thrilled at the advent of the Net Zero Discussion group, formed by Naga Suresh (2021), Dr Matt Vickers (1990) and Ria Miller (2008) in 2022; I love the way the Net Zero group operates as a forum for high level discussion of the science backed by the data – it is very Merton!

A year or two into my presidency, Covid-19 struck. As is now widely recognised, the impact of the pandemic was particularly acute for those in education or recently graduated. That recognition was the stimulus for Merton College Mentoring (MCM), a programme originally designed to help our recent graduates in the post-Covid years. It grew into a bespoke mentoring programme for Mertonians by Mertonians. It is – I think – an outstanding example of what our Merton community can achieve by working together. We have a fantastic pool of mentors. Mertonians are doing great things all over the world in law, medicine, the sciences, business, finance, the arts, government, politics, charities and NGOs, academia and teaching – the list could go on.

We can find Mertonians in almost any field you can imagine. For a mentor, MCM is about paying back by giving a helping hand to a younger Mertonian. For a mentee, MCM is about tapping into someone else's experience as a way of guiding self-reflection and decision-making. We have seen around 100 matches so far and feedback from mentees and mentors has been overwhelmingly positive.

If you are reading this and you think you might like to be a Merton mentor or mentee, you can find out more on the Merton College Mentoring page on the College website.

Finally, we have a new initiative just getting off the ground now called Career Insights. It is being led by fellow Council member Pippa Shirley (1983). Working with Dr Jane Gover, Merton's Senior Tutor, Pippa and her working party have piloted a workshop for current Merton students, with the aim of helping them to prepare for the early days of their careers, offering advice on various topics including confidence-building, interview techniques and networking. This is an exciting new way to help our younger members and build those connections between Mertonians.

What have you most enjoyed in your time?

All of it! But I would mention two highlights.

I really enjoyed working on MCM with my husband Sam (1983), another Mertonian (we met in St Alban's quad, or the Bar – we can't really remember which). He has long experience of setting up mentoring schemes for large organisations. Even now that my term as President has come to an end, he and I will continue to oversee MCM, always grateful for the wisdom and commitment of the Development Office alongside us (Chelsea Chisholm deserves particular mention for her sterling work in setting up MCM). It was special for me to be able to work with Sam on a project to benefit Merton.

I also really enjoyed working with the Council. We worked very collaboratively, listening to each other's ideas and working up plans in a very iterative way. As a judge, I am often required to impose my views on others (some of whom are not madly enthusiastic about them!). My work with the Merton Society has felt very different. The Council operates as one big volunteer team where everyone has an

equal voice. The willingness of Council members is infectious and very warming. I have looked forward to our meetings, to getting updates, to checking in with the team. I think we had fun and I hope we will all remain in touch with each other.

I thank my colleagues on the Council for the time and effort they have given to the Merton Society. Top of that list come the Chair Mark Davison (1978), and Greg Lim (2006) and Gary Backler (1973) who were the secretaries during my time. I am sure that they will continue to support my replacement, John Booth (1976), who carries the torch onwards. I wish him and them the very best of luck.

What does Merton mean to you?

Merton means a lot to me. I enjoyed my three years there. As a student, I did a bit of acting and a bit of rowing, and plenty of messing around as undergraduates ordinarily do. Those three years went by very quickly. And then I spilled out into the workplace.

At Merton I studied law, taught in the main by Jack Beatson, now The Right Hon Sir Jack Beatson, because he too became a judge. Jack was an excellent tutor who fired my interest in the subject. He knows, or should know, how grateful I am for his attention to my academic development while a student and my professional development in the years since. We sat together twice as judges, which was brilliant and strange (for me at least, as his erstwhile pupil). I feel lucky to have found the law as early as I did. Law suits me. I find plenty of human interest in the stories which come to court; and I like looking for the right answer and trying to do justice in the particular case. I have been lawyering for four decades now and I still find my work enormously stimulating.

The role of Merton Society President gave me a second shot of Merton life, and that has been very welcome. I have loved being closer to Merton, knowing what is going on in the College, the University and in higher education. I am privileged to be an Honorary Fellow of the College and I will continue to be a regular visitor. Sam and I were there this weekend: we wandered around the garden, saw the astrolabe gleaming in the early autumn sunshine, and rehearsed a few old stories about our time there. Merton really has been the foundation for so much of what has come to me since.

Mertonian novelists

Whether newly published or established for some time, four Mertonian writers share their thoughts about their careers and work to date and reflect on their time at Merton and its influence in their lives.



Nussaibah Younis (*Modern History and English*, 2004) published her debut novel, *Fundamentally*, earlier this year. A dark comedy about a UN programme to deradicalise ISIS brides, *Fundamentally* was shortlisted for the Women's Prize for Fiction 2025, the Wilbur Smith Adventure Writing Prize and the 2025 Sky Arts Breakthrough Award, and is currently longlisted for the Comedy Women in Print Prize. The novel was the subject of an eight-way auction between publishers, won by Weidenfeld & Nicolson (UK) and Tiny Reparations Books (US); and a ten-way auction for the TV rights, won by Boffola Pictures.

I came to Merton from a grammar school in the North of England, from a family with few financial resources, and the administration at Merton was so supportive of my aspirations. During the summer of my second year, a college fund at Merton paid for me to undertake an internship at DEMOS, a public policy think tank. This laid the groundwork for my future career as a Middle East expert, and I am so grateful for Merton's early support.

My extracurricular activities at Merton also had a massive impact on my career, especially participating in political debates at the Oxford Union and being a news and features editor at the *Cherwell*. The earliest comedy writing I ever wrote and published was for the *Cherwell*!

After Merton, I completed a Master's and PhD at Durham in International Affairs, then a postdoctoral fellowship at the Harvard Kennedy School's Belfer Center. After that, I worked as a Senior Fellow at a think tank in Washington DC, where I created a major programme on US Iraq policy. What followed were several years in peacebuilding 'on the ground', where I ran projects that sought to prevent a slide back into violence after ISIS had been defeated.

I had the idea for *Fundamentally* a couple of years before I decided to go ahead and write it. I knew that writing a spiky, funny satire of the UN would end my hard-won career in peacebuilding but ultimately, when the operating environment in Iraq grew more and more dangerous, I realised I had to leave. When I was ready to give up my career with the UN, I could finally sit down and write the honest, no-holds-barred novel I wanted to write. Making it humorous was for me the natural way to go: real life combines shades of light and dark all the time, and human beings often find humour in even the darkest situations – it's what helps us cope. Writing a novel with no humour doesn't feel human or honest to me, it's not how we really live. But I did spend a lot of time figuring out how to balance the humour and the emotion of the novel, so that neither undercut the other.

Whilst writing the novel, I took a stand-up comedy course to help me sharpen my jokes: there's nothing like live comedy to see if a joke 'lands'. This year I have been on an epic book tour promoting my novel, and I have found myself leaning on my stand-up training to make the events fun and entertaining!

I've been asked what it is about *Fundamentally* that has made it do so well. The wonderful Hugo Rifkind described it as, 'So incredibly funny that you only realise afterwards how much you've learned'. I think that's been the secret to its success. I tried to write a book that was genuinely enjoyable to read, but that also taught you something new about the world. Who doesn't want to learn interesting new things whilst also having a great time?

There have been some interesting reactions to the book. I've been surprised by how many UN workers have written to me to say how much they've enjoyed the novel and how much it resonated with them. I've also been very touched by the many Muslim readers who have told me that they've felt seen by the novel.

Looking ahead, *Fundamentally* has been optioned for TV, so I am currently writing the screenplay for episode one! I am also contracted to write another novel, so I will be working on that as soon as my book tour is over.

Finally, thinking back to Merton and how it influenced me: I loved my time at Merton, and the people I met there continue to be some of the most important people in my life. My college mother, Ellen Clarke, recently accompanied me to Hay Festival where I spoke at a big event about my novel, and my Mertonian friend Anthony Cardona was front and centre at my book launch. They and many other Mertonians have been so supportive of my literary journey.



Fundamentally by Nussuibah Younis was published in February 2025 by W&N



Veronika Dapunt matriculated at Merton to read PPE in 2003. Her debut novel *Death and Other Occupational Hazards* was runner-up for the Comedy Women in Print Prize 2023. Described as 'Gloriously absurdist, darkly comic and utterly readable' (Helen Lederer), it tells the story of a female personified Death whose sabbatical in modern-day London is rudely interrupted by a string of unexpected murders.

I'm originally from Innsbruck in Austria, and it had always been my dream to come to study in England. When I arrived in Oxford, I was mesmerised by the city which was very different from anything I'd grown up with. The architecture of Oxford was so beautiful, and Merton was a magical environment to be in for my studies. After finishing my undergraduate degree, I did a law conversion course – my aspiration at the time was to work for an international organisation or company – and my career began with a post at the EU in Brussels, where I worked at both the European Commission and the European Economic and Social Committee. My next role was at the London offices of a global luxury goods business where we collaborated

with various kinds of creatives, and I had the opportunity to be involved in fashion shows, the Academy Awards and even the James Bond franchise. I was on the business and legal side and this made me realise that I wanted to take the full step towards the creative industries – I'd always wanted to write a novel, but had so far not pursued this in earnest so working with creatives and being part of their projects was really inspiring.

I enrolled in a creative writing course at Central St Martin's, which was a brilliant experience, and a few of us on the course formed a writing group – we still meet, many years later! The group is wonderfully supportive and the regular feedback enabled me to complete my novel.

Becoming a published author has been a fantastic experience, but of course the road to this isn't straightforward and, for most of us, filled with a lot of rejection. Keeping the faith can be very hard at times as talent is not enough: it is perseverance that sets successful authors apart. The first novel is often not the one to get published, in fact for the average new writer, it's apparently only the third. For me it happened to be my second novel, as I wrote another book before this one which didn't find a publisher. That was hard, but I'm glad I decided to stick with it and write another book.

Death and Other Occupational Hazards first received attention when I was longlisted for the Comedy Women in Print Prize in 2023 and even more so when I was shortlisted and ultimately won Runner-Up. The prize was crucial to getting the attention of agents and publishers, and I would definitely advise any aspiring writers to enter as many competitions as possible. For me personally, being recognised for humour made the prize even more significant. British humour is famous and we have a level of reverence for it back home – I'd always admired the British for being so funny. So, to win a comedy writing prize in the UK felt particularly special to me.

The rights to my book ultimately sold 'at auction', which means that multiple publishers had made an offer. It was an incredible experience and when my agent told me I literally felt like I'd woken up in a different reality – I'd gone from years of polite 'no, thank you'-s to several publishers fighting for my book,

literally overnight. In the end I chose Transworld, a division of Penguin Random House and I love working with them.

I've often been asked why I decided to write a novel about Death. I guess I've always enjoyed books or films featuring Death and specifically the poignant, wise humour the character often brought to a narrative. More generally, ever since I was young I've read a lot of different kinds of mythologies — whether it's Greek, Egyptian or Norse — and relevant references are included throughout my book. It was noticeable for me, however, that modern stories featuring Death as a woman were few and far between. I felt that perhaps I could contribute to changing that, and this was the catalyst for me to start writing *Death and Other Occupational Hazards*.

I'm lucky to have had positive reviews of *Death and Other Occupational Hazards* and love hearing from readers especially. I was particularly touched when, for instance, one blogger found a figurine that looked like the dog in my book and posted a photo of the book and the figurine together. I loved that — it really showed that the characters I created live in others' minds which was a very profound moment for me. Many readers have also highlighted the sibling relationship, between Death and Life, and how this is one of their favourite parts of the novel.

My literary influences are quite broad — I read widely and enjoy many different types of books, but what they all share is a desire to say something meaningful about the human condition through an engaging, imaginative story. One of the first writers who had a lasting impact on me was Michael Ende, through his books *The Neverending Story* and *Momo*. Not only did I love the imaginative fantastical elements of his stories, but also the fact that the reader connects deeply with the protagonists on a human level. His books also feature insightful social commentary alongside engaging storytelling, and I was amazed how a novel can achieve all of this. Similarly, Terry Pratchett's books are funny, imaginative and wise. More recently I've hugely enjoyed Susanna Clarke's unusual and inventive *Piranesi* and Nobel Prize winner Olga Tokarczuk's *Drive Your Plow over the Bones of the Dead* with its quirky protagonist — even though it's quite a dark novel, there is a lot of heart underneath. Finally, I love Marian Keyes' work, which is funny and warm, but also smart and

compassionate. Overall I would say I'm drawn to books that have a lot of imagination, and which explore the human condition and existence, while also being, quite simply, fantastic stories. I always wanted to write a multi-layered book like that, and I hope I've achieved it.

I am currently working on my second book, another darkly comic novel with mythological underpinnings. The second book is often said to be the hardest to write, and it's been quite different working towards a deadline and fitting this in with the MA in Comedy Writing (for screen), which was part of my award from Comedy Women in Print — but I'm excited about it and looking forward to sharing the book when it is released in 2027.

When I put all this in the broader context and think back to my experience at Merton and the foundations it laid for me in my adult life, I'm thankful that I had a lot of learning to do when I arrived at Merton. Adjusting to a different system was tough, and I had to work hard to overcome obstacles. I think that this experience gave me the necessary resilience to be a writer. And now I'm so glad I persevered and I've been fortunate: my journey to publication has been brilliant. Writing is not always easy but undoubtedly an amazing career to be in.



Death and Other Occupational Hazards was published in April 2025 by Transworld. Penguin Random House.



Mark Haddon (*English Language and Literature, 1981*) is a writer and illustrator who has published children's fiction, illustrations, award-winning TV and radio drama for children and adults, poetry, and adult fiction, most famously the phenomenally successful novel *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* (2003) which won 17 awards, was translated into 36 languages, and was adapted for the stage, winning seven Olivier Awards during its premiere run in 2012. His most recent publication is a book of short stories, *Dogs and Monsters* (2024).

My parents grew up in working class families, but after National Service my father went to technical college and became a successful architect. He then used his new-found wealth to send me to boarding school because it was impossible to turn back time and go himself. He would have loved the place. It was like National Service with Latin and corporal punishment. I was less keen. Consequently, I arrived at Merton unsure of who I was and spent most of my three years trying to solve that puzzle. It was like turning an oil tanker. It took a lot of energy and there was little visible activity. But there was a great deal of churning below the water.

As for the teaching, the brutal truth is that there really wasn't any (I shall mention no names). My wife is now a professor in the English Faculty and when I look at the care, effort and consideration she puts into her students' education it bears no resemblance to my own experience.

During my degree, I read many books which had a profound impact on me, but none of them were part of the English syllabus (I have always been an obstreperously independent learner): Germaine Greer's *The Female Eunuch*, Kate Millett's *Sexual Politics*, Andrea Dworkin's *Pornography: Men Possessing Women*, Schumacher's *Small is Beautiful*, Ivan Illich's *Deschooling Society*...

It was only later when I returned to it in a non-academic context that I fell in love with some of the literature that I'd read for my degree. Virginia Woolf has been hugely important to me and I reread her repeatedly, but I remember encountering her for the first time at college and simply not understanding why she was a genius. See also: Dickens, Jane Austen, Beowulf...

As for writing during my student days, I started churning out terrible poetry when I was a student. Unhelpfully, one of my poems was published by a very reputable magazine (*Poetry Review*, perhaps?), which only encouraged me to write more.

I was also illustrating. For a period, I was the designer for *Isis* magazine and drew several covers and internal illustrations for them.

When I left Merton, I was feeling very privileged in both the good and the bad senses of the word. Life had been all about me for three years. So, I signed up with Community Service Volunteers to restore some kind of balance and found myself working as a live-in carer for a young man in Livingston new town in Scotland. Coincidentally he also happened to be a member of a small and rather rabid evangelical church. He genuinely believed that I was going to hell despite my changing his catheter bag and turning him in the night to prevent pressure sores. But that's another story altogether.

It was while I was in Livingston that I got my first job as an illustrator — I was asked to do a small pen portrait of HG Wells, if I remember correctly, for the *New Statesman*. This was a long time pre-internet and Livingston is not a great place to look for photographic references. I recall trying to construct his face from a tiny photograph in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* which I found in the local library.

I then moved to London and started illustrating for magazines while writing and illustrating many speculative picture books for children until *Gilbert's Gobstopper* was finally published by Hamish Hamilton in 1987.

When *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* (2003) became ridiculously successful we were able to move to a bigger house and I no longer had to think about my bank balance before going into a bookshop. I also gained the freedom to throw away any piece of writing that wasn't working and start all over again without thinking of the wolf at the door. Other than that, I tried to minimise its impact. It would have been easy for my job to become 'The Author of Curious Incident' and I was determined that was not going to happen. I never wanted simply to be a writer. I have always wanted to give readers the excitement that I myself sometimes get from writing, not just the sensation of language being used exquisitely but of the envelope being pushed in some way. And that means starting from scratch with each new book. I'm not sure I've ever really achieved my aim but it's an honourable mark to fall short of.

I remember watching the stage version of *Curious Incident* and realising how robust the novel was. Just as its linguistic simplicity meant that it wasn't dependent on English and

could be translated into many different languages without losing something essential, similarly the solidity of its structure meant that it could move from a first-person novel to a stage play and not be reduced significantly. When Simon Stephens first thought about adapting the novel he simply typed out the dialogue, removing everything else, and found that he pretty much had a script right there. It's a very lean novel. Every line of the alternating narrative chapters pushes the story along. There is very little slack.

There were a variety of interesting responses to the book and play. On the one hand there were readers who felt that the novel was a stereotyped portrayal of someone with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) who had no right to tell the story (in fact, the alternating non-fiction chapters about science and maths were wholly me, and Christopher's traits, quirks, beliefs and mannerisms were all drawn from members of my extended family). On the other hand, I've had many letters from people saying that they, their partner, their brother or their daughter is Christopher. Several readers have explained that they give the novel to friends and colleagues to help explain their own experience of the world.

I have been sent a novel written entirely in numbers (using a simple code Christopher mentions in passing). I have been sent many very beautiful illustrations by young readers. I have received way, way too many letters from people disagreeing with my interpretation of the Monty Hall problem. And to this day I receive a steady stream of letters from young students, some of which begin, 'Our class is writing to authors. I have been told to write to you...'

Since *The Red House* I've been driven, to a great extent, by the desire to avoid writing any more books about people like me and the people around me. But I am constrained by the fact that I don't want to appropriate other people's stories. Hence the appeal of mythology, of Arthurian legends, of historical settings, of stories set on the surface of Mars, of future dystopias and nightmares that might in fact be reality; anything that takes me away from the over-grazed pastures of the naturalistic, middle-class novel.

When I think back to Merton and the influence it had on my work, it's people who had the most significant impact. I had a

group of close friends from Merton who remained close after graduating. Writing is a lonely business. Trying to write and failing repeatedly (I wrote at least five entire unpublished novels before *Curious Incident*) is even lonelier. They were a large part of what kept me going.



Dogs and Monsters was published in November 2024 by Chatto & Windus



Charles Finch (*English Language and Literature*, 2009) is a novelist, literary critic and Hollywood screenwriter. As a novelist, he is best known for his Victorian mystery novels centred on the gentleman sleuth Charles Lenox. The first one, *A Beautiful Blue Death*, was nominated for the Agatha Award for best first novel of 2007.

There are now 16 titles in the Charles Lenox series, with the next due to be published in November. Charles' reviews and essays have been published in *The New York Times*, *The New Yorker*, *the Chicago Tribune* and *Slate*, among others.

I came to Oxford in 2005 for a Master's in English Literature at Lady Margaret Hall, which allowed me to read my favourite author at the time, Edmund Spenser. There, I was supervised by Richard McCabe. He had one of the smartest minds I had ever encountered, and he was the reason I applied to Merton. I started my DPhil at Merton in 2009, with the goal of later entering academia, but this was the year that my third title in the Charles Lenox series came out and the series started to really gain momentum. Finding myself at a crossroads, I took the writing route.

Studying at Merton was a wonderful experience. Firstly, there was the sheer brainpower of the people around you: it was thrilling to be at the MCR, at dinner in Hall, even at breakfast, with these brilliant minds. Secondly, there was the environment of Merton. The grounds at Merton are so tranquil and beautiful, they really were a daily inspiration. Sometimes I'd take my laptop to Tolkien's Table and work there, overlooking Christ Church Meadow. I've always loved

reading and getting immersed in English literature: I feel alive inside it. At Merton, the reading life is everywhere.

I was at LMH when I published the first of the Charles Lenox books. I had a vivid impression in my head of Victorian London from all the reading I'd done as a teenager: Jane Austen, George Eliot, Dickens, Wilkie Collins, and others. Later during my DPhil, I read Shakespeare and Sir Thomas Wyatt, and all this reading over such a long time helped build up a vivid map of Victorian England in my mind.

People are sometimes curious about how I create the plots. I work at them, letting the characters lead: I think about the characters and what they might do. I let my mind open up, without chasing ideas too hard, giving my mind some space, and letting the plot evolve. I find that my writing is driven by language and character, and this is what informs the story. The character of Charles Lenox has evolved over time. I started him when I was 24 years old – and now in my mid-40s I've caught up with him. I enjoy writing a series of books with the same main character because the impulse for the character I originally created is still there, and it is gratifying to explore the character and the world he inhabits more deeply over time.

The characters in my novels are often drawn from life, and I did draw on elements of various people I knew at LMH and at Merton for my novel set in Oxford, *The Last Enchantments*. It tells the story of a young American embarking on a year in Oxford, and is about turning 30, when the 'start of life' is over and you are forced to confront some large questions about where you are going with your life. It's easy to look back from an older age and diminish how hard it is at that time of life, not knowing much about yourself or indeed the world. Oxford was the culmination of my youth, and writing this book was my way of thinking through that time of my life.

I also work in literary criticism which, like all the strands of my career, evolved from being an avid reader from a young age. I grew up in a family of readers, and everything has grown from that source. With literary criticism, I work to understand what the writer is trying to do: to inhabit their point of view. As a writer, I know that my only frustration when reviewed is when a reviewer seems not to have sufficiently understood what I'm doing in my writing.

Thinking of other authors I find inspiring, I really appreciate the work of the recently deceased David Lodge, who managed to be both a writer and an academic. I've also loved the novels by Elena Ferrante – she is a very special writer. And I read for entertainment too: I love Patrick O'Brian's nautical novels and I've started reading Sherlock Holmes with my daughter.

To any aspiring authors among the readers of *Postmaster*, I'd say follow the advice of Isak Dinesen and write a little each day, 'without hope and without despair'. It's a question of keeping going, putting a penny in the bank as you go along, and not judging yourself. You might write for nine days and think it's gone badly, and then on day ten it somehow comes together. Either way, a year or two later, you'll have something. The magic comes afterwards. Another practical piece of advice for any would-be novelist is to ensure that you have a story, not just a setting. For example, if your starting point is, 'My grandmother was in the Blitz', this makes for a great setting for the first 30 pages, but without a story, it will fizzle out. What *happened* to your grandmother and those she was with during the Blitz?



The *Hidden City* will be published by Macmillan on 4 November 2025.

SAVE THE DATE: CELEBRATING ENGLISH LITERATURE AT MERTON

Saturday 9 May 2026, 10am–5:30pm, followed by
a reception

Celebrate the study of English Literature at Merton, past, present and future! English Literature alumni are warmly invited to join us for a day exploring the exciting variety of Merton's literary research, criticism and artistry. There will be talks and readings by creative writers, professors and students and convivial discussion, reminiscence and glimpses of the future.

Details will be on the College website from mid-January.



Insights into medieval Merton: notes from a Merton Tour Guide

As Merton is a site so rich in history, it's only fitting that we have designated tour guides to show visitors round the College. Official tour guiding is managed by Fellow Librarian Dr Julia Walworth, who hires a Tour Guide Coordinator to conduct official tours of the College and to organise the rest of the student tour guides at Merton. English graduate scholar Fred Morgan tells us about the role.

I have been taking people around Merton for three years now. This began quite informally. When I was elected as one of the social secretaries for the MCR I started taking guests from other colleges around the quads and gardens before formal dinners. The primary motivation was reciprocity (I really wanted to have a look around the other colleges we visited) and the tours themselves were – being generous – ‘improvisational’. As it turned out, however, I really enjoyed running these impromptu tours, and when I saw that Merton was looking for student tour guides, I applied.

The official tour guiding is ably run by Dr Julia Walworth, Merton’s Fellow Librarian. Julia interviews and trains new tour guides and was generous enough to offer me a role. The number of guides varies from term to term, but at any given time there are six or seven students who can offer tours and assist with events. We offer guided tours throughout the year, mostly to alumni visiting with families, those on ‘study abroad’ programmes and academic groups. I have also become well acquainted with a wide range of domestic and international Tolkien societies. Tours of the College typically last around 45 minutes, although I did once spend an hour and 45 minutes taking a particularly enthusiastic group around.



Throughout my DPhil, meeting people and taking them around the College has offered a welcome break from the solitude and silence of a typical writing day.”

In the last two years I have also acted as the College’s Tour Coordinator, which involves liaising with potential visitors, and matching guests with guides. Our most busy period is the summer when student guides run regular tours for the general public. The renovations of the Upper Library kept things quiet last year, but in 2023 I was spending four to five hours a week giving tours in the busiest months.

I have reduced the number of tours recently, although this is mainly because the doctoral thesis needs finishing. Throughout my DPhil, meeting people and taking them around the College has offered a welcome break from the solitude and silence of a typical writing day. Assuming the animated, energetic persona of ‘tour guide Fred’ has a positive impact on the rest of the day. Even when the material is familiar, I try never to give the same tour twice. Half the job is assessing how to present the College to the group in front of you. The best tours for academics are academic; international school kids need a very different kind of guide.

Of course, it helps that Merton is a wonderful place to welcome visitors, particularly if you have an interest in things medieval. The guides at Merton are not given a script, so the content of any given tour is determined to some extent by the interests of the guide. I ‘warn’ guests at the beginning of the tour that I am a medieval academic and it certainly features in my walks around the College, although I have learned to keep things accessible. On one early tour I spent several minutes explaining the layout of the medieval streets and alleys that once ran under Fellows’ Garden. I have not repeated that experiment.



The 15th-century sculpture above the front gate, showing Walter de Merton beside a unicorn

My research focuses on the ways in which English authors of the 14th and 15th centuries taught people to interpret religious images. The author of *The Canterbury Interludes*, an anonymous continuation of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* written in about 1420, features a cautionary tale about the dangers of over-confident image reading. Upon finally arriving at the Cathedral, the Pardoner, the Miller, 'and other lewde sotes [uneducated fools]' discuss and try to interpret the complex stained glass they see before them. Their attempts to establish meaning fail, however, as the crowd offers a series of conflicting explanations all of which are 'right as rammes horned [straight as rams' horns]!' (i.e. entirely crooked).

Merton features a number of images that have the potential to confuse visitors today. Perhaps the most mysterious is right above the front gate. The 15th-century sculpture, which survives from the original medieval gatehouse (the current façade dates to the 19th century), depicts a strange collection of people, animals, trees and a large ornate book. The design is an excellent example of the density of meaning that could be contained in a medieval design. The image symbolically

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My research focuses on the ways in which English authors of the 14th and 15th centuries taught people to interpret religious images.”

summarises the major doctrines of the New Testament. Identified by its seven seals, the Book of Revelations in the centre encourages onlookers to reflect on the transience of the world and the immanence of Judgement. To the right, Walter de Merton is leading by example, shown in bishop's robes kneeling in prayer before the Word. Behind him is John the Baptist, who was a patron saint of the College. John is a harbinger of Christ, but in the Middle Ages he was also misidentified as the John who authored Revelations; he is likely holding a smaller copy of the same book in his hands.

Around Walter and John are animals representing different



Top and above: The scorpion and the dolphin on the Fitzjames Arch

moments from the life of Christ. Some of these symbols are familiar today: the lamb represents His sacrifice, the lion His Resurrection. The other connections are less obvious and draw on some eyebrow-raising medieval biology. To take just one example, in the trees above the scene nests a mother pelican with her chicks (although admittedly, she looks more like a pigeon). Throughout the Middle Ages it was believed that pelicans fed their young with their own blood, rending their breasts with their sharp beaks. In this case, that biological 'fact' makes the bird a metaphor for Christ sacrifice and gift of his blood: 'Drink ye all of this. For this is my blood' (Matthew 26:27–28). The sculpture serves as an excellent example of an object that benefits from exposition. It falls to the guide to speak for the building and bring it to life for visitors.

Other details speak for themselves, but only if a visitor spots them. Asking guests to look up at the late-15th-century zodiac carving above the Fitzjames Arch is always a highlight of the tour. I particularly enjoy pointing out the Tudor sculptor's attempt at a scorpion (not a native English species) which, to quote a member of one tour, looks like a 'cat-faced woodlouse'. An earnest attempt was also made to represent the front pincers, although, lacking a reference, the sculptor decided to add a small pincer at the end of each foot. The Warden who commissioned the design, Richard Fitzjames, took a keen interest in astrology and reputedly had the first stone of the work laid on an auspicious horoscope for himself. The auspicious star sign, Pisces, matches his heraldic crest, which featured a dolphin. For those who might quibble with the idea that dolphins are fish, I point again to medieval biology. In the 16th century, dolphins were fish and could be eaten during Lent. The Fitzjames carving is based on the Warden's crest. Another recent visitor from a school group confidently informed me that this was 'typical' Pisces behaviour.

The most exciting part of the job, at least as far as I am concerned, is opening up and taking people round the Upper Library. It is the oldest library in Oxford and has been in continuous use since the late 14th century. As a tour guide, I go up on my own before guests arrive, turning on the lights, removing dust covers and so on. Having the space to yourself, even for a few minutes, is a real privilege. Some of the windows, recently restored with the generous support of many Merton alumni, are original. Standing by the bookshelves in the north wing it is possible to see 14th-century brushwork on the panes. The painted carvings on the late-16th-century roof panels are no less striking. Alongside the Tudor rose, various green men, and more of Fitzjames' dolphins, are the earliest examples of Merton's current crest. No less importantly, I firmly believe that the library has the best old book smell in Oxford. No small claim: competition is fierce.

It would be wrong to end an article about tour guiding in Oxford without mentioning the Chapel, which has entranced just about every group I have taken in. Having already talked about medieval sculpture and stained glass, I thought I might end by talking about something which isn't there.



Getting married in Merton Chapel (Photo: V & H Wedding Photography)

The Chapel of St Mary and St John, to give its full title, is an unusual shape. Most old churches are cruciform (or cross shaped), but Merton's Chapel lacks a nave and thus forms a T shape. Medieval construction projects often took a long time, and the Chapel was built in stages between the late 13th and the mid-15th century as and when funds became available. It seems likely that the College always intended to add on a nave at some point; looking from Grove Lane it is still possible to see where rough stone has been left for future construction.

However, all hope of finishing the Chapel was dashed during the wardenship of Richard Rawlins. Rawlins leased the land to Bishop Foxe in 1515, who then used the site to found Corpus Christi College in 1517. This blunder, together with other

acts of malfeasance and neglect eventually led to Rawlins' expulsion from the College. In a letter drafted in September 1521, the Visitor, Archbishop Warham, claimed that Rawlins was 'not merely useless but damnably so', and called for him to be cast off 'like a mortified limb'. As it happens, however, the unusual T shape proved a happy accident and Merton's Chapel later became a model for other Oxbridge colleges. In addition, I am rather glad that Corpus Christi exists.

Whatever its shape, Merton Chapel has a particular and personal resonance for me as I got married there in July. Beforehand, I asked my fiancé if it might be possible to add a historical note about the stained glass to the order of service. I was firmly told, perhaps understandably, that this was a bridge too far.

Photo by Elisa Serra



Behind the scenes with Lizzie Casey,
Chapel Office and Choir Manager

Lizzie Casey tells Postmaster about her role at Merton, revealing what is involved in organising the Choir, Girl Choristers and Chapel at Merton, and what drives her in her role.

I came into this job serendipitously in 2019. I'd had previous experience volunteering with children and had worked in event planning for a religious cultural centre, so I was looking to combine those skills. I was coming from academic publishing, which was relevant to the content creation part of the post. Overall, I was struck by the variety of the position!

That variety means that my days are all quite different, but on a typical Monday, I'll come in and check my email, then meet with the Butler, Steward and Chef to check on the week ahead. Choir members receive meals after singing in services, which is a wonderful way to build the community aspect of choir, and the Girl Choristers are given Tea when they arrive here from their schools all over Oxford. Plus, we host many drinks receptions and special events throughout term. I'll spend the rest of the morning editing the Order of Service for our weekly Sunday Evensong, ready for the team meeting on Tuesday. By then, the bells will let me know it's time for lunch in Hall.

Then back at the office – or 'the nerve centre' as College Chaplain the Revd Canon Justin White calls it – I check on forthcoming plans. In the summer, that's recordings and tours for both choirs: I'm responsible for logistics, from travel arrangements, accommodation and publicity to scheduling concerts with venues. In Hilary term, the emphasis is on our Passiontide Festival: liaising with performers, scheduling rehearsals, arranging accommodation and meals, publicising events and managing ticket sales. In Michaelmas term, the focus is on the All Souls' Requiem and the big candlelit Advent and Christmas carol services.

The Girl Choristers attend on Mondays and Wednesdays, so I'll check emails from parents before they arrive, and I might need to run to Blackwell's for sheet music. I'll then welcome the choristers to Tea in Hall, which is a great opportunity to check in with them each week, filled with excitement from whoever passed their Grade 3 flute exam or scored an amazing goal in a netball match, or helping a girl pick which song to sing for school play auditions. I supervise their music theory class, then provide support for group rehearsal and

individual singing lessons. Finally, I get them robed and ready to sing Vespers at 6pm. They're all picked up by seven, after which I cycle home.

My role revolves around working with people, especially managing the choristers. Merton founded the Girl Choristers in 2016, three years before I arrived, and there are now 41 choristers aged 8 to 17. It's a privilege to shape their experience, with an emphasis on pastoral care and creating an environment for them to thrive. Being a chorister at Merton means having adults besides parents and teachers who are truly invested in your growth. The choristers attend many schools around Oxford, coming to Merton twice weekly during term for lessons, rehearsals and services. Singing here is unique: it's a very high standard, but unlike school or other activities, there's no competition. As children performing at an exceptional level, choristers learn to manage emotions and anxieties, so we practise resilience and model breathing exercises. This support helps them regulate emotions to focus on singing. Ultimately, though, it's up to me and our Verger, Jen Crompton, to ensure the choristers feel safe and confident – if a girl is struggling, she knows she can talk it through with us. Choristers are with us for up to nine years, giving time to build the trust and respect that help children thrive.



The Girl Choristers outside Chapel with Lizzie and Director of Music Ben Nicholas



The Girl Choristers with Lizzie after singing in Westminster Abbey, August 2025

Alongside the 41 choristers, we have the Merton College Choir. The 30 undergraduates plus organ scholars who make up the Choir are part of a world-renowned Oxford tradition. One reason I enjoy managing the Choir is that it epitomises Merton: exceptional scholarship, hard work, and performing at your best because you are passionate about what you do and want to share it.

The Choir and Chapel are a living part of Merton history, and I'm privileged to devote resources to safeguarding it. Just as the Maintenance Team preserves Merton's historic buildings, and the Library and Archives Team conserves the College's artefacts, through Choir we protect both the physical space of the Chapel and the spirit of it by keeping our heritage alive. Unlike places where you might be imagining history, in Chapel you can actually experience it — you can live it — by pausing to hear the Choir perform music spanning hundreds of years, in the very place it has echoed for centuries.

This is not to say we are stuck in the past: far from it. Despite the weight of history, Choir is forward-looking, with innovative contemporary choral music and commissioned pieces. World premieres by contemporary composers are performed by Merton Choir and the Girl Choristers: this is history in the making. We honour Merton's history but balance it with the freedom and alacrity to innovate.

It is special to open the Chapel doors to the wider community



Lizzie with the Girl Choristers taking a break during their tour in Summer 2025

so that the Choir's musical distinction resonates far beyond our College walls. We do this literally, with Chapel services open to the public; and figuratively, through livestreaming our services. The digital chapel experience began during the pandemic, when I edited a weekly service. After learning to audio mix in an alarmingly short time, I sent each of the 32 Choir members a click track; they recorded their voices from isolation, and I mixed them together. A handful of students filmed readings, the Chaplains recorded prayers, and Director of Music Ben Nicholas recorded a piece on the organ. I compiled everything and uploaded it to YouTube. Once we were all back in College, a generous donor funded livestreaming equipment. It was daunting at first, as livestreaming is a skill — capturing key moments from the right angles in real time — and the controls seemed more suited to a Formula 1 car than a 13th-century chapel. Now we have a great team of student livestreamers, keeping our reach global and showcasing the brilliance of our choral and organ scholars and the beauty of the Chapel.

The Chapel has a beautiful acoustic and is ideal for recording: we record twice a year and release music on Spotify and Apple Music, and I manage scheduling, catering, accommodation and rehearsals for visiting orchestras and soloists. Sometimes these recordings demand a bigger venue: we recently released the follow-up to our critically acclaimed *Orchestral Anthems*, recorded with the Britten Sinfonia in London. It was monumental: a symphony orchestra and 40-person choir performing huge arrangements for coronations and enthronements, and other

than the sound engineers in the booth, I was the only audience for this glorious tidal wave of sound!

Both the choir and choristers go on tour, often at the end of term, after recordings, or both. I plan so that it is as minimally stressful as possible. The concerts are high pressure, so everything else – travel, schedule, transport – should ease tension rather than add to it. By the end of a four- or five-day tour, the singers' voices are tired. The last thing they need from me is a 9am rehearsal!

For singers in the Choir, the experience of touring and giving professional concerts is invaluable, especially if they want to sing professionally. Then there are the incredible cultural elements of the touring experience. This December, we are going to Japan on a two-week tour, thanks to the generosity of our donors. Ben launched the tour in March by giving a talk at the British Council in Tokyo, and I worked with our Japanese agent to arrange the logistics to make sure that this tour will provide a singular opportunity for the singers to experience the culture of Japan alongside their performances.

For the choristers, touring builds performance experience and also plays an important bonding role. The shared experience of a tour is a great way to grow together: it's often where those lifelong friendships blossom. School and social media, which can be overwhelming in everyday life, are absent, and the choristers learn from each other and grow as singers, young people and friends.

Outreach to young people outside the choristers is also crucial: a third of the choir graduate each year, so we are constantly recruiting. The summer College Open Days are a great opportunity to reach potential choral scholars, but our main event is the Choral Open Day each February. When I first arrived at Merton, just over 30 children attended and the ratio of independent to state school attendees was 9:1. I've worked to expand our networks to include children new to chapel choirs, and now the open day attracts nearly 100 children and that ratio is closer to 50:50. We look for potential and aptitude: although applicants must read music, prior experience with the Anglican Choral tradition isn't necessary. We've had amazing choral scholars who had never sung Evensong before, and it feels good to have reached them.

The Choir of Merton College Tour of Japan, December 2025

Dec 10	Higashi Osaka Souzoukan Hall
Dec 11	Muntsugu Hall, Nagoya
Dec 14	Hakodate Art Hall, Hokkaido
Dec 15	Musashino Shimin Bunka Hall, Tokyo
Dec 16	Tokyo Junshin
Dec 17	Yokohama Minato Mirai Hall
Dec 19	Hiroshima Cultural Centre

This is why I feel so strongly about opportunities for the Girl Choristers: they are young singers with incredible potential, and many of them would not have learned to read music without Merton. Now we can offer even more support with our new bursary scheme, which funds instrumental lessons for each girl. A favourite part of my job is when a girl with great vocal talent, but who arrived not reading a note of music, comes dashing up to tell me she's passed her Grade 1 piano exam. Learning to read music is a wonderful gift: a lifelong skill, and having acquired this skill through their own hard work, the girls will gain confidence that they can strive and succeed. What could be more 'Merton' than that?

Another way we reach people is with our publicity videos. I worked with the creative director of our record label on these, a highlight of last year. For the Choir, we produced a 'day in the life' video – 'What's it like singing at Merton?' – which zips through a day of being a choral scholar and the fun of college life. For the Girl Choristers, we needed to showcase the experience of being a chorister to children and parents. The girls completed a questionnaire, so the results on the video 'Life as a Merton Girl Chorister' are their own words – unscripted. We simply asked them the questions again to camera and the responses are their own words. The results are truly heartwarming. The videos are on YouTube and embedded in our Choir and Girl Chorister webpages. I recommend watching both to explore Merton Choir and Girl Choristers, or our YouTube livestreams to experience the music and service in full – wherever in the world you may be.

Looking back: Mertonians and National Service

In this feature we look back to post-war Britain in the 1950s, when National Service was compulsory for most young men. For 18 months (or, for a time, two years), several of the undergraduates at Merton in the 1950s served their time in one of the armed services, usually before going up to university but sometimes after graduating. *Postmaster* invited Mertonians who matriculated in the 1950s to recount their experiences of National Service and to reflect on how it impacted their lives.

John Mays (1951)



John Mays (far left) at his passing out parade, being commissioned into the Royal Artillery, December 1954

In 1949 I went up to Merton to sit the exam required for entrance and received a letter shortly afterwards offering me a place at the College.

My mother, who was a widow, suggested that I go up to Oxford before National Service. She was insistent upon this because the Korean War started soon afterwards, and she was obviously concerned that I might be involved in that war. I applied for a deferment, which was readily available, and once I obtained a scholarship I went up in October 1951. At that time there were two groups of undergraduates: those who had already been in the forces and those who had come up directly from school. There was a further subdivision: those who were state educated and those who had been to public school.

I knew that I would have to do National Service and planned to give myself the best opportunity of being commissioned. I had been in the CCF (Combined Cadet Force) at school so I joined the Oxford University Officers' Training Corps. The objective was to get the preliminary training over and thus set in train the commissioning process before actually being called up. To this end I went to Oswestry training camp for one month in each of the long vacations and also took the WASB (War Office Selection Board) – the entry qualification for being posted to an Officer Training Unit.

In 1954 I came down from Oxford and was called up. Within two or three weeks I was posted to Mons Barracks in Aldershot and, after four months of officer training, passed out as a second lieutenant.

The training was not without incident. One of the cadets was killed during the course – crushed under an overturned tractor.

At that time successful cadets were offered various different postings. I requested Hong Kong (on the basis it was the furthest away) and in January 1955 sailed on a troop ship to the Far East. The vessel called at Suez and then through the canal to Aden, Colombo, Singapore and Hong Kong.

I joined a regiment which had been in Korea during the war years and at that time was in the New Territories close to the border with China. The idea was that if the Chinese invaded Hong Kong we would be able to protect the Colony. All I can say is that we were very fortunate and no invasion took place – our resistance would have been brief, futile and probably fatal.

I enjoyed Hong Kong tremendously; the work was not particularly arduous and the facilities for us subalterns were enjoyable. Although we were stationed a long way from Kowloon (the city on the mainland), we were allowed to use regimental transport to visit the high spots in the metropolis. It was not without risks, bearing in mind that the roads over the hills were not lit and the Jeeps we used were somewhat unreliable. Moreover, the drivers who transported us were often drunk after an evening in the fleshpots of Kowloon, so for our own safety we often chose to drive home ourselves.

With fellow officers I took a trip to Japan (enduring the roughest sea voyage I can remember) to seek the cultural life of that country. Unfortunately, directly outside our hotel was the Queen Bee nightclub and I am afraid our cultural ambitions didn't get very far.

The regiment returned home and was stationed in South Wales. I did various jobs for the army including running a school cadet camp in North Wales which carried an increase in pay (£1.50 per day).

“

For me, National Service was entirely positive. It taught me self-discipline and gave me leadership qualities which I entirely lacked before.”

National Service for me was critical for the rest of my life. When I was demobilised in August 1956, I sought a job out in Hong Kong and returned there in January 1957 as a civilian. I met my wife there and we married in Singapore in January 1959. I then spent the next ten years in various Far Eastern postings including the Philippines, Malaysia and Thailand. In turn this led to my working in Denmark and Dubai until the 1990s when I became involved in the Reconstruction and Renewal of Lloyds of London – the response to what was probably the most complicated financial scandal involving 30,000 people all in different situations ever to hit the Square Mile.

For me, therefore, National Service was entirely positive. It taught me self-discipline and gave me leadership qualities which I entirely lacked before. I will always be indebted to the Army and grateful for the opportunities I was afforded.

Charles Dodd (1954)



Charles Dodd during his National Service years

I had a choice. I had been offered a place at another college, with the proviso that I would complete National Service before matriculating. But Merton's offer came with the invitation to start straight from school, and that deferred any feeling of foreboding until the end of my time in Oxford.

I was born in 1935. My early childhood and my primary schooldays were spent in the ten years before and during The War. We called it The War without always mentioning it was the Second World War, because it was the one happening then which had taken over our lives. I was aware of it, quite sharply sometimes, with almost a physical recollection of a gas mask in a cardboard box always being carried, of distant explosions and a dogfight of aircraft overhead, shrapnel scything through the roof of our house, and a hessian sack I carried to collect salvage from neighbours for recycling as part of the war effort. Mostly, as a child I accepted it all as nothing out of the normal in my world.

Then on to grammar school and the discovery of Latin and Greek, followed by Classics at Merton with Robert Levens, new friends, glorious architecture, some acting with Floats and an OUDS production in France, walks in the Meadows, meeting Jenny, attending very few lectures (but one or two by Tolkien and David Cecil), freedom and peace. Greats seemed daunting, so after Mods I changed to English and joyous tutorials with the irrepressible Hugo Dyson. There was the possibility of staying in Oxford and doing a second degree and evading National Service which was soon to end, but by late 1957 I was on the Isle of Man for three strenuous months of training and a commission in the Royal Air Force. Would the Merton years fade away?



Charles (in the foreground) directing a rehearsal for *Othello* in the 1960s

Although there were many changes from the idyllic life of the previous four years, there was also much unexpected continuity. My first posting was to the RAF College at Cranwell in Lincolnshire, as a tutor in English. The college is the Royal Air Force equivalent of Sandhurst and Dartmouth, training pilots and other air and ground crew. At about that time it was decided to upgrade the entry for cadets to degree level, and to teach current students for an external degree. Besides English, I had a small Latin class and even one student who already had A-level Greek. My work at Merton was being revived in a new context.

Life and work were so enjoyable and rewarding that I took up the option to extend my time in the RAF. This led to a posting to Cyprus. Akrotiri was the largest air force station overseas, and many of the service families lived in hirings in

the main town nearby because the accommodation on the base was full. I was put in charge of the services children's schools, about 2,000 children in half a dozen schools staffed by teachers appointed from the UK and with some locally entered. A coloured pin in an NCO's large map in unnamed roads signified where each child lived. The children were delivered to and from school in old Blackpool buses driven by Greeks with Turkish escorts. Neither Homer nor Old English poetry had prepared me for any of this. But it was exhilarating, and there was also the Greco-Roman amphitheatre a few miles away and Shakespeare plays to direct.

Adrian Esdaile (1954)



I left Merton to start my National Service in 1957. In retrospect, it would have been better for me, I think, to have done it the other way round. But there it was. I started in the Royal Sussex Regiment for my basic training at Chichester Barracks. We were knocked into shape on the parade ground and with the rifle and so on for six weeks. I was in a small barrack room with only four beds in it – the four of us made good friends. We could hardly have been more varied: a Fellow of All Soul's, a silversmith, a bricklayer and myself. We became very hungry and the bricklayer's mother made him a cake each week – he generously cut it into four and we each had a quarter. I felt most sorry for the silversmith who was likely to lose some of his skills during the two years of National Service. As a Christian, along with two others, we argued that we should be allowed to go to church on Sunday morning –

this was granted and we were inspected before leaving for the cathedral early on Sunday. The dean of the cathedral, Dean Hussey, had a wonderful collection of art and he invited us to breakfast. It was an astonishing cultured experience in the midst of all our other weekday experiences!

I went for officer training at Eton Hall in Cheshire, the country home of the Duke of Westminster. I think he retained a bit of the Hall and all the rest was overrun with young officer material. I switched from the Royal Sussex to the Royal Hampshire and, after our final Passing Out Parade, started as the Assistant Adjutant at the Depot in Winchester with a beautiful living room in the Upper Barracks overlooking the city. I had an extraordinary mix of duties which included being the Recruiting Officer for Hampshire and I organised a landing craft to take the regimental band to the Channel Islands. I don't recall making any recruits! There were two other senior subalterns who ran the training platoons and I made lifelong friends with them. They each had a car and we had occasional timed races from Winchester to Salisbury – and then more slowly back, stopping at some of the country pubs.

One day at the Depot I was exploring the old stables and garages. These were largely empty and locked. I obtained the key and found a large tarpaulin in a corner of one of the rooms. I ventured to look underneath and found an extraordinary collection of old regimental silver. It had probably been there since before the war. Some of it was damaged; other pieces were repairable, and I obtained permission to get it all out and examine it in detail. It was an amazing find and I had some of the exceptional dinner pieces repaired. Other pieces were distributed to the various Royal Hampshire units; some EPNS (electroplated nickel silver) pieces could only be thrown away. Some of the figures were of soldiers in period uniform. Some silver I had melted down and made into officers' cap badges. I could have done with the help of the silversmith I met in Chichester. My job now was to list all the silver, insure it and make a complete list. It took me, on and off, the rest of my National Service. Some of the items looked wonderful on special dinner nights.

The Depot in Winchester was closed and I was sent to the 1st Battalion in Germany – stationed in a delightful little town called Lemgo, separate from the larger barracks. Our task as

a regiment, as I recall it, was to make sure that the boundary with East Germany was kept secure and we arranged regular patrols along that border. I had various duties there which included guarding ammunition trains from West Germany to Berlin. There were checkpoints along the line so I had to stay awake through the night and report in to the Russian checkpoint. It was interesting to see Berlin.

We made the most of our time and we had weekend trips out to Amsterdam, to the Harz Mountains, and right up into Denmark and Sweden.

My National Service was thoroughly enjoyable, I learnt a lot and made some good friends. The disappearance of the County Regiment seems to me to be one of the sad things of our time.

Robin Purdue (1954)

Robin Purdue on a transatlantic crossing on *Queen Mary 2* in 2025



In the early 1950s I was called up for National Service, which was due to last two years. Although there were certain advantages in rank if one did National Service after university (and there was always a chance that the scheme would be dropped), I decided to do it before university, having already obtained a berth at Merton.

At that time we were offered the chance to learn Russian regardless of which service we joined. I chose the Royal Navy and went for initial training to Victoria Barracks, Southsea. This lasted only three weeks but they were unforgettable weeks: as an atmosphere of welcome pervaded the process, even though we were just National Service youths and probably something of a nuisance to the regulars. At one point we were taken to Nelson's flagship HMS *Victory* and solemnly ranged around the spot where he fell. Not only were we being inducted into the practicalities of serving on a modern fighting ship but were being embraced into a mystery! After the initial training we were transferred to the Guards Barracks at Caterham where a unit of the Joint Services School for Linguists (JSSL) had been established, staffed mainly by refugees from regions then under the heel of Soviet Russia and Russia itself. One of them formed a choir and he took me on as a bass. I can still sing 'The Volga Boatman' in Russian plus a rather dolorous love song. These were cultivated men and women who not only taught us the basic grammar of the language and the technical vocabulary required of us but gave us all a love of the literature and music of the country. To this day I consider them to have been an immense loss to Russia.

After some nine months those who had performed best went to GCHQ in Cheltenham as midshipmen. The rest of us, including myself, were shipped off to an RAF station near Birmingham to learn all about radio frequencies, our ultimate task being to monitor Russian military traffic and send the logs to GCHQ. We all had to sign the Official Secrets Act, which I believe still applies to all of us. When this ended we were regarded as useful creatures, were sent to northern West Germany and set to work. It may sound like a mere extension of our schooling, but the Navy treated us as regulars with, in my case, sea-time on a destroyer (HMS *Finisterre*) as well as spells in specialist communications units in the UK. In conclusion I cannot say that the two years was an imposition. As it was, I had a taste of life in all three services and have retained throughout my life an affection and regard for them, in particular of course the Royal Navy.

One made many friends in the services, some of whom came up to Oxford. There were also in my year quite a few who went to Cambridge and there was a sense of comradeship with those who had, in their National Service, been to JSSL.

Beyond that there was also this feeling that, in whatever capacity you had served, you had all been in it together. It was easier to appreciate the wonderful freedom you had after those years of military discipline and make full use of it. In whatever branch you served you were taught a trade within an ethos of service and this made its mark on us. I suppose we may have lost something academic in the two years' hiatus but I did not notice it. We certainly got to grips with the new life quicker than those who came straight from school.

Dermot Killingley (1955)

I was called up for National Service in the summer of 1953, having elected not to defer it till after university. I was placed in the Royal Corps of Signals, in Catterick Camp in North Yorkshire. That enabled me to have weekends with my aunt in Richmond, just across the River Swale.



Those NCOs and officers who were themselves national servicemen often held on to civilian values, only thinking on military lines when it was required of them, and behaving humanely and politely to their subordinates whenever they could."

A lot of what you learn in military training is quite useless anywhere else, but much of the work of the Royal Signals has civilian applications, so I was better occupied than some of my contemporaries who served in infantry or artillery regiments, though not so profitably occupied as those who were picked to learn Russian. I learnt touch typing, having been an unsystematic typist before, and the skill has served me well ever since. I also got some practice in map reading by walking in beautiful hills, and joined a Latin class in the garrison education centre. Some of my fellow signalmen were students like myself, with university places waiting for them at the end of their service; some were recent graduates; and some had started employment and had it interrupted after a year or two.

In the Royal Signals, as in other technical corps, promotion largely depended on technical proficiency, rather than on arrogance or on the ostentatious conformity to military culture which we referred to as bullshit. This was reflected in the behaviour of NCOs and officers; many of the latter were experienced signals operators commissioned from the ranks. Those NCOs and officers who were themselves national servicemen often held on to civilian values, only thinking on military lines when it was required of them, and behaving humanely and politely to their subordinates whenever they could.

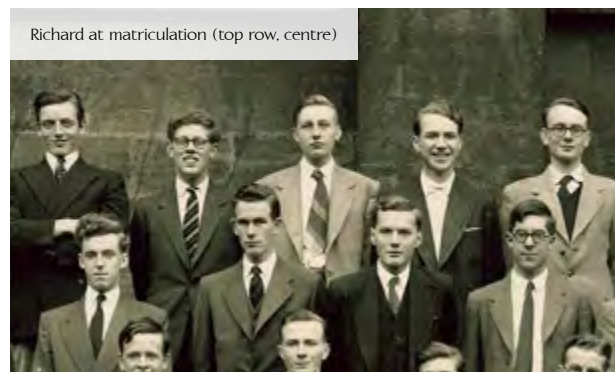
National Service gave our generation a proper attitude to authority, which is one of contempt tempered with caution. You knew that the people who gave you orders were no better than you were, and possibly more ignorant, but you obeyed them if you knew you couldn't otherwise get away with it. National Service also ensured that the forces were not so isolated from society as they are now: every family knew a serviceman, and would write to their MP if they found anything sinister was going on.

The best thing the army did for me was to send me to Malaya (now West Malaysia); we went by ship, so that we were gradually acclimatised instead of being thrust into humid heat from a plane. I had an office job, working for the chief cipher officer, which gave me time to sing in the garrison church choir and a chamber choir, and play in a civilian string orchestra. I got to know a few local people, and learnt a few words of Malay. When I started studying Sanskrit at Merton, after classical Mods, I found that some of those few words of Malay that I knew were Sanskrit words, dating from the time when Indian pandits served in the courts of Southeast Asian rajas, while the little I had seen of Indian culture in Malaya gave some colour to my reading of Sanskrit literature. A couple of years after I graduated, I applied successfully for a post in Indian studies, specialising in Sanskrit, at the University of Malaya. If I hadn't done National Service that would have been a leap in the dark, but to me it was more like a homecoming. It led to my career in teaching and research, to my marriage, and to some lifelong friendships.

There was a noticeable difference between undergraduates who had done National Service and those who had come

straight from school. However, it was not a simple binary division. Among those who had done National Service, some had found it formative and others a complete waste of two years. There were also some who had served three years in the forces instead of the compulsory two – which gave them a higher rate of pay – and some who came as mature students from various walks of life. Some of those straight from school affected to be older than they were. For these reasons, it would not always have been easy to distinguish those who had done National Service from those who had not.

Richard Kenyon (1956)



Those like myself who came down in 1959 were the last ones who were liable for conscription if they had not done National Service before coming to Merton.

Because we knew that those coming down in 1960 would not be conscripted, graduates like myself who could work in exempted occupations mostly chose to avoid their careers being 'leap-frogged' by the next year's graduates. I volunteered to do National Service if the Army would guarantee me a place on its Russian Language and Intelligence programme. The Army would give me no guarantee so I accepted a job in rocket research. By a strange twist of interviewing fate I was offered a position as a computer programmer; it was planned that I should do mathematical computation work but my boss quickly transferred me to the software section where I developed software for others to use.

“

When my offer letter arrived it had a full page describing the work of a research engineer. Overleaf was a short paragraph saying: ‘Or would you rather be a computer programmer?’”

This is how it came about. I came to the Coventry Plant and was interviewed for the rocket research division. Back in the Personnel Department the young lady said: ‘I’ll take you to the station’. I replied: ‘My friend Charles has another interview with Aircraft Division, so I’ll sit here and read the magazines so that you will have only one journey to the station and I shall have company on the train back to Oxford.’ Five minutes later, she reappeared and said: ‘Would you like to meet the computer manager?’ I did not know what a computer was nor what it did, but having nothing else to do I said that of course I would meet the computer manager.

The manager turned out to be a serious introvert who could not face interviews and went sick whenever they were pre-arranged. But this time he could not escape and we sat down together. He saw from my CV that I had been president of the Kodaly Choir and Music Club. For the next 30 minutes he talked about music. I could not get a word in, and in any case had little idea what to ask. I left the interview almost none the wiser. When my offer letter arrived it had a full page describing the work of a research engineer. Overleaf was a short paragraph saying: ‘Or would you rather be a computer programmer?’ I said to my father: ‘I don’t know what a computer is, nor what it does. But I’ll be learning something all the time. I think I’ll take it!’ Thereby hangs a tale.

I was quite possibly the first Mertonian whose first job was as a computer programmer, though there were others from later years who were senior in the field. I never worked in IT though. That term was coined only after I had retired and moved on.

John N Crossley (1960)



Ground Radar Fitters after finishing our course at RAF Locking in 1956 and getting our single stripe: Junior Technician, John is in the front row, far left.

New experiences. Naked for medical examination. Cough for testicles. Hammer on the knee. Notice came of assigned roles: in my case: Ground Radar Fitter, which was a top posting allocated to those who had done well in Physics and Maths in GCE, the examination regime introduced in 1951. I had hoped to go to the Far East but that was not to be. I would only get as far as the West of England.

An only child, not sporty and very reticent, I had previously spent a week or so away from home with courtesy aunts and uncles, nothing more. Now it was to be much longer sojourns.

September 1955: I took the special train to RAF Cardington. It took a wrong turn but we got there in the end. Rough uniforms were issued and then very quickly we were off to basic training: six weeks at RAF Hednesford, bleakly situated on the edge of barren Cannock Chase. There were about 20 of us

billeted in my hut. Discipline was strict; there was drill, square-bashing dominated, plus instruction, memorable for gruesome films of venereal disease symptoms. Sergeant McCloskey, who was unfortunately our drill sergeant, was reprimanded after he unreasonably had us presenting arms, meaning holding rifles at almost arms' length, for an excessive period.

A first trip home for a couple of days, and then on to RAF Locking in Somerset for specialist training: nine months! Now the company was elite. All my hut were going to university afterwards, many to Oxford or Cambridge. The course was academic, in some ways a continuation of physics lessons from grammar school, but with more rote learning.

Outside classes my companions were pleasant and educated. I learnt much about music and heard my first Stravinsky. Several of us were allowed to enrol in courses at Bristol Tech for the London BSc (Intermediate) on one day a week foundation level courses that to a significant extent went over what we had done for GCE A levels. But after lectures we were free for the rest of the day. Bristol was so valuable. It was a haven.

We were paid 4 shillings a day (about £6 in today's money). With that, when in Bristol, I bought my first record player, a portable, and could afford two records: a Frank Sinatra LP ('Songs for swinging lovers') and Eine Kleine Nachtmusik.

Studying was fine; and although I was incompetent at practical sessions, for example, woodwork, I learnt how to start a diesel engine, which was much harder then than it is now. Flowing out of the training course came the opportunity to go to a summer school in practical physics at Hull University, back in Yorkshire. The visit there was pleasant indeed — we were treated as, and dressed like, civilians or normal human beings.

Back in Locking there were occasional 48-hour passes when I took a long coach ride back to home in the North, arriving back before 23:59 on Sunday night.

Entertainment was going to the local seaside town of Weston-super-Mare, where egg and chips were a treat. Days were full enough and it was not an unpleasant existence.

After nine months we finished the course. A few of us were selected to be instructors. That led to the high point for me. We went to Spitalfields for a three-week course on how to teach; the sum total of my teacher training in my whole career. The course was excellent and enjoyable, though intense and demanding, with splendid companions doing very different jobs, but we had no spare time. It has been an immensely valuable contribution to my teaching abilities.

The rest of my time was spent teaching at Locking. It was good experience and my students amenable.

I have often said National Service was a valuable one year's experience, just a pity that it took two years. Yet it widened my horizons and made me ready for the variety of people I would meet in Oxford (first at St John's in 1957, then at Merton in 1960 for my DPhil). In that regard I had been mixing with (potential) students for the previous two years, people with similar aspirations. Half of my first friends in Oxford had done National Service, half not, and the difference was palpable. I am sure I got more out of Oxford because of serving time.

“

We went to Spitalfields for a three-week course on how to teach: the sum total of my teacher training in my whole career.”



1. St Alban Hall, *Oxonia Depicta*, 1733; *Almanack*, 1748. Henry VIII granting the Hall to his physician, Dr Owen. In the process, the Abbess of Littlemore is dispossessed. Cardinal Wolsey, his archiepiscopal staff inverted, shows his loss of power. On the right is Benedict Barnham showing a new Plan. At the back are alumni, including Speaker Lenthall with his mace. On the right of this group, Archbishop Laud recommends the Hall to the use of Merton Chapel.
2. Sir Henry Savile's portal of the Hall.



Lost, Little Known and Unbuilt Merton (22)

From St Alban Hall to St Alban's Quad

By the 14th century, there were some 125 halls (*aulae*) in Oxford. These, together with the *hospicia*, accommodated the senior members and the students of the University until the foundation of the first *collegium*, Merton, in 1264. Writing in the 17th century, antiquarian Anthony Wood thought that St Alban Hall was 'the ancientist Hall now in being and inhabited by Scholars'.

Soon after 1215, the property was given to Littlemore Priory, a small Benedictine nunnery, with which it remained until the Dissolution of the Monasteries in the 1530s (image 1).

As Warden of Merton, Sir Henry Savile, taking advantage of a legacy of £150 from Benedict Barnham, a former commoner, rebuilt the north range of the Hall. This included the twin pilasters, in the Tuscan Order, of the north portal of the Hall. This was the first – and remarkably late – instance of a Renaissance style of architecture in Oxford (images 2 and 3).

The acquisition of St Alban Hall by Merton was a long process

and not completed until 1882 (image 4). One of the reasons was for good order, since the Hall 'harboured, under the shadow of our own Warden's Lodgings, reprobates excluded from the College for disciplinary reasons' (image 5).

The newly built St Alban's Quad was to provide some 20 sets of accommodation besides some meeting rooms. Its architect, Sir Basil Champneys, was already well versed in the Arts and Crafts style. The result was a triumph, paying some slight tribute to the 'Dovecote' feature of the old Hall (image 6) but introducing the wrought-iron screen on the south side, with its views of the mulberry tree and meadows beyond (image 7). The felicitous combination of pebbles, turf, leadwork and stone courteously blend with what Max Beerbohm describes as 'the elder buildings' of the College. More than 20 coats of arms of alumni adorn the façade.

Alan Bott (1953)
Bodley Fellow



3. The arms of Benedict Barnham, 1599, above Savile's portal of the Hall.
4. Acquisition of St Alban Hall, 1881, showing Warden Brodrick and Dr H Robinson, of St Alban Hall. On the left is RE Knox, Sub-Warden; on the right is the Reverend GN Freeling, Chaplain.
5. *Oxford Transports or 'Albanians'*, by George Cruikshank. Courtesy of Getty Images.
6. 'Dovecot' of the Hall, by WA Delamotte/O Jewitt, 1858.
7. St Alban's Quad from the south. The then Crown Prince Naruhito (1983), now Emperor of Japan, was lodged in St Alban's Quad 4.



Records



Merton College 2024–25

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

David James Paterson, MA, DPhil, (MSc, DSc
Hon DUniv Waust, HonLLD Otago), FRSB,
Hon FRSNZ, Hon FPhysiol, MAE, *Professor
of Cardiovascular Physiology & Tutor in Pre-
Clinical Medicine*

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

Alan David Morrison, MA, DPhil, (MSc Lond),
*Intesa Sanpaolo Professor of Business, Ethics
and Finance, Secretary to the Harmsworth
Trust*

John Stuart Giers Gloag, MA, MRICS *Estates
Bursar & Land Agent* (until 31 March 2025)

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

Peter William Harold Holland, MA, (PhD Lond;
DSc R'dg), FRS, *Linacre Professor of Zoology*

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

Simon Martin Hooker, MA, DPhil, *Professor
of Atomic and 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 & Dominic Welsh
Tutor in Mathematics*

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

Michael Hilton Whitworth, MA, DPhil,
*Professor of Modern Literature and Culture &
Tutor in English; Sub-Warden*

Ian Maclachlan, MA, DPhil, *Professor of
French Literature & Tutor in French*

Béla Novák, MA, (MSc, PhD, Dr Habil, TU
Budapest; CSc DSc Hungarian Academy of
Sciences), *Professor of Integrative Systems
Biology* (deceased February 2025)

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;
Harassment Adviser to Junior Members*

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), *Professor of Music & Head of
Humanities at the University of Oxford*

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
at the 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; Principal of the Postmasters*

Radek Erban, MA, (Mgr RNDr Prague,
PhD Minnesota), *Professor & Tutor in
Mathematics; Senior Treasurer of the Junior
Common Room; Garden Master*

John Samuel Christopher Eidinow, MA, (Dip
Law City Univ; Barrister Middle Temple),
Dean and 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*

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

Matthew Kenneth Higgins, (BA (Hons) PhD
Camb), *E.P. Abraham Professor of Structural
Biology; Harassment Advisor to Junior
Members*

Madhavi Krishnan, (BTech Madras; MS, PhD Michigan), *Professor in Physical and 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 & Jessica Rawson Tutor in Modern Asian History*

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

Jane Charlotte Gover, (BSc Newc; PhD Bris), *Senior Tutor; Harassment Adviser to Staff*

Nathaniel Lane, (BA Mass, MA Columbia; PhD Stockholm), *Associate Professor of Economics & Tutor in Economics* (until 29 August 2025)

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*

John Richard Geddes, (MB, ChB, MD Leeds), FRCPsych, *WA Handley Professor of Psychiatry* (until 31 December 2024)

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

Naomi Waltham-Smith, (BA, MA Camb; MMus, PhD Kings), *Professor of Music & 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* (until 31 December 2024)

David Philipp Nadlinger, DPhil, (BSc, MSc ETH), *Early Career Researcher in Physics; Health & Safety Representative for Academic Staff*

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

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

Samuel Fletcher, (AB Princeton; MS, MA, PhD UCI), *Associate Professor of Philosophy & Tutor in Philosophy*

Rory Gregson, BCL, MPhil, DPhil, (BA Camb), *Associate Professor of Law & Tutor in Law*

Ted Tregear, MSt, (BA PhD PGCert Camb), *Associate Professor of English & Tutor in English*

Stanislav Živný, MA, DPhil, (Mgr, RNDr Charles; MSc Vrije), *Professor of Computer Science & Tutor in Computer Science*

The Reverend Canon Justin White, MEng, (MA Warwick; MA Camb), *Chaplain* (from 6 January 2025)

Paul Ronald James McGonigal, (MChem, PhD Edinburgh), *Associate Professor of Organic Chemistry & Tutor in Organic Chemistry* (from 2 May 2025)

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 (deceased August 2025)

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, (MMath Camb; PhD Lond)

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

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

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

Timothy Charles Guilford, MA, DPhil

Véronique Gouverneur, MA, (Licence en Sciences Chimiques, PhD Louvain), FRS

John Stuart Giers Gloag, MA, MRICS (from 1 April 2025)

Honorary Fellows

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, FREng

The Rt Hon Sir Brian Henry Leveson, MA

Sir Howard John Davies, MA, (MS Stanford)

Sir Charles Antony Richard Hoare, MA, FRS, FREng

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) FREng, 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, FCS

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

Frances 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 Category B Fellow

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

Julia de Lacy Mann Category C Fellows

Gabrielle Messeder, (BMus, MA, PhD Lond)

Andrés Bustamante Agudelo, (BA Yale; MPhil, MPhil Camb; PhD Yale)

Katharina Friege, MSt DPhil, (BA Sciences Po; BA UBC)

Raz Slutsky, (BSc Tel-Aviv; MSc, PhD Weizmann)

Sumali Bajaj, DPhil, (BSc Delhi; MSc Harvard)

Supernumerary Fellows

Susannah Katherine Orkin, MA, MPhil, DPhil, (BSocSci Cape Town)

Helen Barron, (MA Camb)

Michael Booth, (MChem S'ton; PhD Camb)

Wyliot Fellows

Charles Manby, MA, (MBA Insead)

John Booth, MA, CVO, DL, FSA

Peter Braam, MA, DPhil, (BSc, MSc Utrecht)

John Moussouris, MSc, D Phil, (AB Harvard)

Visiting Research Fellows

Joumana Medlej (Creative Arts — Book Arts),
Michaelmas term 2024

Christine Kraus, *Michaelmas term 2024*

Tünde Fülöp, *Michaelmas term 2024*

Paul Johnson (Creative Arts — Book Arts),
Hilary term 2025

Rut Carbadillo-Lopez, *Hilary term 2025*

Nancy Yousef, *Hilary term 2025*

Jonah Siegel, *Hilary term 2025*

Gareth Brookes (Creative Arts — Book Arts),
Trinity term 2025

Mark Carrington, *Trinity term 2025*

Anne Fernald, *Trinity term 2025*

Elections

To an Official Fellowship

The Reverend Canon Justin White, MEng,
(MA Warwick; MA Camb) (from 6 January 2025)

Paul Ronald James McGonigal, (MChem, PhD Edinburgh) (from 2 May 2025)

Eva Micheler, MJur, MLitt, (MJur, LL.D Vienna), *Travers Smith Associate Professor of Corporate Finance Law & Tutor in Law* (from 1 September 2026)

To a Fitzjames Research Fellowship with effect from 1 October 2025

Gabrielle Messeder, (BMus, MA, PhD Lond),
Fitzjames Early Career Researcher in Music

To a Junior Research Fellowship with effect from 1 October 2025

Andrés Bustamante Agudelo, (BA Yale; MPhil, MPhil Camb; PhD Yale), *Early Career Researcher in History* (from 1 October 2025)

Katharina Friege, MSt, DPhil, (BA Sciences Po; BA UBC), *Early Career Researcher in History* (from 1 October 2025)

Raz Slutsky, (BSc Tel-Aviv; MSc, PhD Weizmann), *Early Career Researcher in Mathematics* (from 1 October 2025)

Sumali Bajaj, DPhil, (BSc Delhi; MSc Harvard),
Peter J. Braam Early Career Researcher in Global Wellbeing (from 1 January 2026)

To a Julia de Lacy Mann Category B Fellowship with effect from 1 October 2025

Roi Holzman, (BSc Tel Aviv; MSc, PhD Weizmann)

To a Julia de Lacy Mann Category C Fellowship with effect from 1 October 2025

Lucy Brookes, BA, DPhil, (MA York), *Fitzjames Early Career Researcher in Medieval English Language and Literature* (from 1 October 2025)

Lewis Williams, (BA Warwick; MSc LSE), *Early Career Researcher in Philosophy*



César Fuster Llamazares, (BA Valencia; MA Carlos III), *Early Career Researcher in Politics*

To a Wyliot Fellowship with effect from 12 Feb 2025

James Buckee, DPhil

To an Emeritus Fellowship from 1 April 2025

John Stuart Giers Gloag, MA, MRICS

To a Visiting Research Fellowship in the Creative Arts

Rosângela Rhafaelle (from 1 October 2025 to 30 November 2025)

Nelton Santos (from 1 October 2025 to 30 November 2025)

Héloïse Werner (from 1 January 2026 to 30 March 2026)

Claire Booth (from 1 April 2026 to 31 August 2026)

The following Fellows resigned

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

Nathaniel Lane, (BA Mass, MA Columbia; PhD Stockholm), *Associate Professor of Economics & Tutor in Economics*

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

The following Fellows retired

John Stuart Giers Gloag, MA, MRICS, *Estates Bursar & Land Agent*

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

Fellows' Honours and Appointments

Nick Allard was awarded the 2024 Rhodes Trust George Parkin Service Award.

Alan J Barr was awarded the Breakthrough Prize in Fundamental Physics (2025) as part of the ATLAS collaboration.

Fra' John Eidinow was appointed Grand Officer of the Order *Pro Merito Melitensi* of the Sovereign Military Order of Malta (December 2024) and was also awarded the Commander's Cross with Star of the Order of Merit of the Republic of Poland (March 2025).

Radek Erban received a Springer Nature Editor of Distinction 2025 award for his exceptional service as an editor of the *Journal of Mathematical Biology*, which is the official journal of the European Society for Mathematical and Theoretical Biology.

Véronique Gouverneur was elected to the National Academy of Sciences in the US.

Daniel Grimley was elected a Fellow of the British Academy.

Matt Higgins was elected as a Fellow of the Academy of Medical Sciences; and elected as a member of the European Molecular Biology Organization (EMBO).

Simon Hooker was elected Fellow of the American Physical Society (October 2024).

Ian MacIachlan received the *Modern Language Review* prize for the best article published in 2024 for his essay on Nicolas Pesquès.

David Paterson was awarded an Honorary Degree of Doctor of Laws by the University of Otago, New Zealand; and was elected a Fellow to the Academy of International Union of Physiological Sciences (August 2024).

Jennifer Payne was appointed a Pro-Vice-Chancellor (without portfolio) of the University of Oxford; and was elected as an Academic Benchers of the Honourable Society of the Inner Temple.

Undergraduate Results, Awards and Prizes 2024-25

All academic results, awards and prizes are correct as of 18 September 2025

	Entry	Distinction/1st	2.1	2.2	3rd
Final Honours School	83	29	49	5	0

	Entry	Distinction/1st	Pass
First Public Exam	93	30	63

Undergraduate College Prizes

Abbott, L. FE Smith Memorial Mooting Prize (winner)
Aitken, P. Phillips Prize for best performance in Chemistry Parts IA and IB
Lootens, K. Phillips Prize for best performance in Chemistry Prelims
Nielsen, J. Wilder Penfield Prize in Medicine and Biology (joint winner)
Patterson, C. Conrad Russell Prize for best History thesis
Roper, E. Sam McNaughton Prize for best performance in PPE Philosophy Prelims
Saaj, A. FE Smith Memorial Mooting Prize (runner-up)
Tchernev, L. Wilder Penfield Prize in Medicine and Biology (joint winner)

Undergraduate University Prizes

Abbot, L. Law Faculty Prize for Overall Best Performance in Mods
Abbot, L. Law Faculty Prize in Criminal Law
Aggarwal, A. Gibbs Prize for Management
Aggarwal, A. Proxime Accessit Gibbs Prize for second-best overall performance in Economics papers
Aggarwal, A. John Hicks Foundation Prize for the best performance in Microeconomics
Aggarwal, A. Lubbock Prize for best overall performance in FHS Economics and Management
Aggarwal, A. Said Foundation Prize for Finance
Aiyar, M. The Department of Computer Science Group Project Prize for 2025
Bannister, B. Duns Scotus Medieval Philosophy Prize
Bannister, B. Gibbs Prize for Philosophy in Mathematics and Philosophy

Graduate Results, Awards and Prizes 2024-25

All academic results, awards and prizes are correct as of 18 September 2025

	Entry	Distinction	Pass	Partial Pass
Taught Course Results	46*	10	22	2

* 12 results outstanding

(continued)

Barclay, M, The Department of Computer Science Group Project Prize for 2025

Fu, W, Proxime Accessit Gibbs Prize for First BM Part I

Giroux De Foiard Brown, M, The Gibbs Prize for Practical Work

Guilloteau, A, The Ist De Paravicini Prize for best performance in the Latin papers in Mods 2025

Lootens, K, Shimadzu prize for excellent performance in the 1st Year Chemistry Practical Course 2024-25

Mardon, E, The Mary Snow Prize for Meritorious Work in Biology Final Honour School

Ong, E, Departmental prize for excellent performance in Prelims

Purchase, L, Shimadzu prize for excellent performance in the 2nd Year Chemistry Practical Course 2024-25

Segalini-Bower, M, The Mrs Claude Beddington Modern Languages Prize for the best performance in Italian

Sharma, D, Prize for Practical Work (Physics)

Tchernev, L, The Gibbs Proxime Prize for Meritorious Work in Biology FHS Part II

Tchernev, L, The Keymer Prize for best research project dissertation in the field of the biology of infectious disease in the 4th year of the MBiol in memory of Dr Anne E Keymer

West, H, The Vipul Patel Prize for outstanding Part II performance in Chemical Biology (runner-up)

Williams, L, The Cyril Jones Memorial Prize for the best performance in Spanish

Williams, L, The Lidl Prize for the best performance on the German beginners' course

Graduate University Prize

Zhang, R, Law Faculty Prize for constitutionalism in Asia

College Staff

Name	Position	First appointed	Name	Position	First appointed
Mr R Wiggins	Decorator	16/3/1987	Mr S Bowdery	Head of IT	1/4/2011
Mr J Lisle	Groundsman (in post till 8/1/2025)	17/10/1988	Mr T Cortes Rodrigues	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	Mr 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	Mr E Tesfalem	Servery Assistant	16/11/2017
Mr P Macallister	Sous Chef	22/10/2007	Mr P O'Keefe	Servery Assistant	27/11/2017
Mrs K Adamczyk	Senior Housekeeping Supervisor	1/11/2007	Ms V Parkinson	Resource Services & Support Librarian	03/1/2018
Ms S Hague	Head of Accommodation	2/2/2009	Ms H Campbell Longley	Deputy Librarian	26/2/2018
Mr I Knight	Accommodation & Conference Porter	13/7/2009			
Miss H Bednarczyk	Deputy Head Porter	4/1/2011			

Name	Position	First appointed	Name	Position	First appointed
Mrs A De Ostoja-Starzewska	Butler	16/4/2018	Mr J Clark-Johnson	Chef de Partie	07/03/2022
Mr M Carroll	Senior Chef de Partie	08/5/2018	Mr A Pereira Da Silva	Cleaner	22/04/2022
Mr K Lau	Lodge Porter	08/10/2018	Mrs A Ponting-West	Bursary Clerk	25/04/2022
Mr H James	Head Porter	07/1/2019	Ms P Yordanova	Cleaner	20/06/2022
Ms R Wilkins	Academic Officer	25/2/2019	Mr P Freitas	Weekend Cleaner	23/07/2022
Mr S Saprykin	Lodge Porter	08/4/2019	Mr P Bashir	IT Officer	22/08/2022
Mr L Fekete	IT Officer	09/4/2019	Mx J Crompton	Verger	06/09/2022
Ms J Barrett	Senior Welfare Advisor	01/10/2019	Mr S Jones	Maintenance Technician	12/09/2022
Ms E Casey	Chapel Office & Choir Manager	21/10/2019	Mr O Barratt	Lodge Porter	26/09/2022
Miss A Forrai	HR Officer	3/02/2020	Ms J Bell	Alumni Communications Officer	25/10/2022
Mrs E Ortega Palazon	Cleaner	13/07/2020	Miss A Yapp	Library Assistant	31/10/2022
Mrs S Meldere	Cleaner	6/08/2020	Ms M Latos	Cleaner	05/12/2022
Mrs J Reid	Clerk of Works	01/10/2020	Mrs E Irving	Academic Officer	03/01/2023
Ms H Kimmett	Governance Officer	05/10/2020	Mr S Crawshaw	Head Chef	03/01/2023
Miss B Sarkozi	SCR & Hall Assistant	07/12/2020	Mr C O'Connell	Gardener	16/01/2023
Mrs S Storey	Payroll Administrator	08/03/2021	Ms J Simanova	Lodge Porter	16/01/2023
Miss K Calvert	Deputy Events & Conferences Manager	16/08/2021	Mr S Chira	SCR, Hall & Bar Supervisor	12/02/2023
Mrs M Horanyi	Housekeeping Supervisor	16/08/2021	Mr R Greaney	College Accountant	13/02/2023
Mr A Pilendiram	Deputy Head of IT	13/12/2021	Ms N Cristea	Chef De Partie	01/03/2023
Mr D Lay	Cleaner	13/12/2021	Ms I Lewis	Housekeeping Supervisor	09/03/2023
Ms A Szymanska	Cleaner	13/12/2021	Mr D Janciauskas	SCR, Hall & Bar Assistant	13/03/2023
Ms S Hines	Cleaner	13/12/2021	Mr I Rivero Humanes	Chef De Partie	17/04/2023
Ms J Underdown	Academic Registrar	21/02/2022	Mr S Gurung	Chef de Partie	09/05/2023
Ms G Arroyo Payan	SCR & Hall Assistant	8/02/2022			

Name	Appointment appointed	First	Name	Appointment appointed	First
Miss L Madeira	Cleaner	22/05/2023	Ms G Beckley Manager	Data Insights & Operations	18/11/2024
Mrs O Vaz	Cleaner	22/05/2023	Dr S Gordon	Deputy Development Director	17/12/2024
Mrs S Wiggins	Cleaner	26/06/2023	Dr H Webster	Head of Welfare	02/01/2025
Ms R Stewart	Head of Events & Conferences	10/07/2023	Mrs S Tidy	Land Agent	09/01/2025
Miss R Wilson	Web & Media Officer	14/08/2023	Mrs M Coope	Administration & Governance Assistant	20/01/2025
Miss J Shaw	School Liaison & Outreach Officer	13/11/2023	Mr D Campbell	Deputy College Accountant	22/01/2025
Miss K Selwood	Admissions Manager	13/11/2023	Mr J Coles	Maintenance Technician	24/02/2025
Miss R Sanchez Ribeiro	SCR & Hall Supervisor	01/12/2023	Mr A Berry	Lodge Porter	27/03/2025
Mr C Leong	SCR & Hall Assistant	08/01/2024	Mrs V Giles	Lodge Porter	14/04/2025
Mr M Robinson	Chef de Partie	02/01/2024	Mrs J Osborne- Blyth	College Nurse	22/04/2025
Ms D Bistika	Events & Conferences Coordinator	04/03/2024	Miss S Reis Flores Marcelino	Cleaner	28/04/2025
Miss C Forest- Johnson	Gardener	25/03/2024	Mr D Tryner	Lodge Porter	13/05/2025
Miss R Day	Lodge Porter	01/07/2024	Mrs S Westell	Cleaner	28/05/2025
Miss E Maidstone	Development Associate	02/09/2024	Mr K Khadka	SCR & Hall Supervisor	02/06/2025
Miss G Taylor- West	Alumni Events Executive	02/09/2024			
Mr S Aghapour	SCR & Hall Assistant	20/09/2024			
Mr J Lau	Finance Assistant	01/10/2024			
Mrs M Da Costa Mal Gomes	Cleaner	07/10/2024			
Miss D Krupa	Cleaner	07/10/2024			
Mrs D Rys	Cleaner	07/10/2024			
Mrs F Sabau	Cleaner	07/10/2024			
Miss J Ciasnocha	SCR & Hall Assistant	04/11/2024			
Mr J Pietruszewski	SCR & Hall Assistant	04/11/2024			

Publications

Selected Fellows' publications 2024–25

Allard, N (2025). 'Law Schools are Field Hospitals for Our Wounded Democracy', *Southwestern Law Review* 54

Altehenger, A and AW Moore (eds) (2025). *How Maoism was Made: Reconstructing China, 1949–65* (Oxford University Press/Proceedings of the British Academy)

Altehenger, A (2025). 'How to standardize life in "New China": The case of furniture', in J Altehenger and AW Moore (eds) *How Maoism was Made* (Oxford University Press).

Bajaj, S, R Thompson and B Lambert (2025). 'A renewal-equation approach to estimating R_t and infectious disease case counts in the presence of reporting delays', *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society A* 383: 2024.0357

Chen, S et al. including S Bajaj (2025). 'Mass testing for discovery and control of COVID-19 outbreaks in adult social care: an observational study and cost-effectiveness analysis of 14,805 care homes in England', *BMJ Public Health* 3: e001376

Kamau, E et al. including S Bajaj (2025). 'The mathematics of serocatalytic models with applications to public health data', *Statistics in Medicine* 44(15–17)

Kraemer, MUG, et al. including S Bajaj (2025). 'Artificial intelligence for modelling infectious disease epidemics', *Nature* 638: 623–35

Barr, AJ et al. (2024). 'Quantum entanglement and Bell inequality violation at colliders', *Progress in Particle and Nuclear Physics* 139: 104134

Adhikary, J et al. including AJ Barr (2025). 'Science and project planning for the Forward Physics Facility in preparation for the 2024–2026 European Particle Physics Strategy Update', arXiv: 2411.04175

Aoude, R, AJ Barr et al. (2025). 'Decoherence effects in entangled fermion pairs at colliders', arXiv: 2504.07030

ATLAS Collaboration including AJ Barr (2025). 'Searches for direct slepton production in the compressed-mass corridor in $\sqrt{s}=13$ TeV pp collisions with the ATLAS detector', arXiv: 2503.17186

Brookes, L (2025). *Convention and the Individual in Medieval English Romance* (Boydell & Brewer)

Erban, R and RA Van Gorder (2024). 'Langevin dynamics for a heavy particle immersed within a flow of light particles', *Proceedings of the Royal Society A*. 480(2301): 20230851

Erban, R and S Winkelman (2024). 'Multi-grid reaction-diffusion master equation: Applications to morphogen gradient modelling', *Bulletin of Mathematical Biology* 87(1)

Craciun, G and R Erban (2025). 'Planar chemical reaction systems with algebraic and non-algebraic limit cycles', *Journal of Mathematical Biology* 90(6)

Fletcher, SC (2024). 'Causality in general relativity (and beyond): Heuristics from metaphysics', in P Illari and F Russo (eds) *The Routledge Handbook of Causality and Causal Methods* (Routledge). pp. 125–37

Fletcher, SC (2024). *Foundations of General Relativity* (Cambridge University Press)

Fletcher, SC and DE Taylor (2024). 'Axiomatization of an orthologic of indeterminacy', *Journal of Philosophical Logic* 53(6): 1441–62

Fletcher, SC and N Dewar (2025). 'Formal modeling of scientific theories', in SJ Veigl and A Currie (eds), *Methods in the Philosophy of Science: A User's Guide* (MIT Press). pp. 163–84

Gildea, R (2025). *France Since 1945*. 3rd edn (Oxford University Press)

Gregson, R (2024). 'Torts and unjust enrichments', in W Day and J Grower (eds) *Borderlines in Private Law* (Oxford University Press)

Gregson, R and T Pilkington (2024). 'Byers v Saudi National Bank: What's the wrong in knowing receipt?' *Modern Law Review* 87: 1347–59

Gregson, R (2025). *Subrogation and Marshallings* (Hart Publishing)

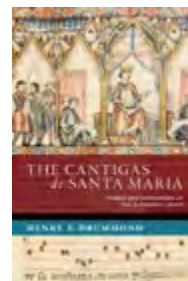
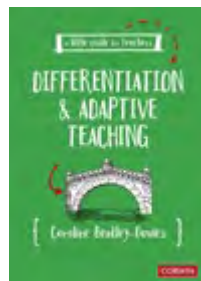
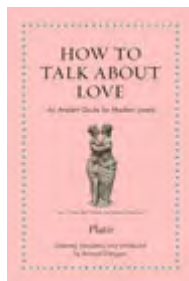
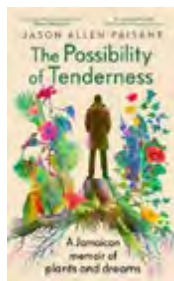
- Gregson, R (2025). 'The limits of Implication', *Law Quarterly Review* 141: 413–36
- Gunn, S and T Gromelski (2025). *An Accidental History of Tudor England: From Daily Life to Sudden Death* (John Murray)
- Kewes, P *et al.* including S Gunn (2025). 'Towards a history of parliamentary culture in the early modern world: concept, geopolitical scope and method', *Parliaments, Estates and Representation* 45(1): 27–52
- Harrison, TE *et al.* including MK Higgins (2024). 'Rational structure-guided design of a blood stage malaria vaccine immunogen presenting a single epitope from PfRH5', *EMBO Molecular Medicine* 16(10): 2539–59
- Wang, LT *et al.* including MK Higgins (2024). 'Natural malaria infection elicits rare but potent neutralizing antibodies to the blood-stage antigen RH5', *Cell* 187(18): 4981–95
- Sakoguchi, A *et al.* including MK Higgins (2025). 'RIFINs displayed on malaria-infected erythrocytes bind KIR2DL1 and KIR2DS1', *Nature* 643: 1363–71
- Twyford, AD *et al.* including PWH Holland (2024). 'A DNA barcoding framework for taxonomic verification in the Darwin Tree of Life Project', *Wellcome Open Research* 9: 339
- Hoile, AE, PWH Holland and PO Mulhair (2025). 'Gene novelty and gene family expansion in the early evolution of Lepidoptera', *BMC Genomics* 26: 161
- Lewin, TD *et al.* including PWH Holland (2025). 'Fusion, fission, and scrambling of the bilaterian genome in Bryozoa', *Genome Research* 35(1): 78–92
- E Archer *et al.* and SM Hooker (2025). 'On the localization of the high-intensity region of simultaneous space-time foci', *Optics Express* 33(4): 7645–60
- Walker-Gibbons, R *et al.* and M Krishnan (2024). 'Sensing the structural and conformational properties of single-stranded nucleic acids using electrometry and molecular simulations', *Scientific Reports* 14(1): 20582
- Behjatian, A, R Blossey and M Krishnan (2025). 'Surface polarization strongly influences electrostatics in a nonlocal medium', *Journal of Chemical Physics* 162: 064901
- Wang, S *et al.* and M Krishnan (2025). 'Chemical control of colloidal self-assembly driven by the electrosolvation force', *Nature Communications* 16: 2872
- Zhu, X *et al.* and M Krishnan (2025). 'Measurements of molecular size and shape on a chip', *Science* 388(6747)
- Habecker, BA *et al.* and DJ Paterson (2024). 'Molecular and cellular neurocardiology in heart disease', *Journal of Physiology* 603(7): 1689–1728.
- Herring, N *et al.* including DJ Paterson (2025). 'Neurocardiology: transitional advancements and potential', *Journal of Physiology* 603(7): 1729–79
- Menuet, C *et al.* including DJ Paterson (2025). 'Redefining respiratory sinus arrhythmia as respiratory heart rate variability: An international Expert Recommendation for terminological clarity', *Nature Reviews Cardiology* 22(5): 40328963
- Payne, J (2025). 'Protecting legitimate behaviour in the market abuse regime', in D Veil (ed.) *Regulating EU Capital Markets Union Volume II: Market Conduct and Corporate Disclosure in a European Code* Oxford University Press
- Payne, J and L Gullifer (2025). *Corporate Finance Law: Principles and Policy*, 4th edn (Hart Publishing)
- Payne, J and K van Zwieten (2025). *Corporate Restructuring Law in Flux* (Hart Publishing)
- Wadsworth, A, NJ Richardson, P Finn and M Kiely (eds) (2025). *Cantate Domino: A Commentary on the Liturgy of the Hours. Volume I. Proper of Time: Advent, Christmas, Lent and Easter* (Catholic University of America Press)
- Ewart, RJ *et al.* and AA Schekochihin (2024). 'Cosmic-ray confinement in radio bubbles by micromirrors', *Monthly Notices of the Royal Astronomical Society* 532(2): 2098–107
- Ewart, RJ *et al.* and AA Schekochihin (2025). 'Relaxation to universal non-Maxwellian equilibria in a collisionless plasma', *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 122(17): e2417813122
- Ivanov, PG *et al.* and AA Schekochihin (2025). 'Suppression of temperature-gradient-driven turbulence by sheared flows in fusion plasmas', *Journal of Plasma Physics* 91(2): e58
- Reichherzer, P *et al.* and AA Schekochihin (2025). 'Efficient micromirror confinement of sub-teraelectronvolt cosmic rays in galaxy clusters', *Nature Astronomy* 9: 438–48
- Ruiz Ruiz, J *et al.* including AA Schekochihin (2025). 'Measurement of zero-frequency fluctuations generated by coupling between Alfvén modes in the JET tokamak', *Physical Review Letters* 134(9): 095103
- Ciardo, L and S Živný (2025). 'Semidefinite programming and linear equations vs. homomorphism problems', *SIAM Journal on Computing* 54(3): 545–84
- Larrauri, A and S Živný (2025). 'Solving promise equations over monoids and groups', *ACM Transactions on Computational Logic* 26(1): 3

Selected Graduate Publications, 2024-25

- Adelmant, V et al.** (2025). 'The European Convention on Human Rights and Immigration: Informing the public debate', Bonaverio Report
- Adelmant, V. and J Raso** (2025). 'Data entry and decision chains: Distributed responsibility and bureaucratic disempowerment' Oxford Journal of Legal Studies 45(2)
- Alonso-Armesto, L, J Cáceres-Delpiano and VN Lekfuangfu** (2025). 'The impact of raising the minimum legal drinking age on academic achievement and risky behaviour: a difference-in-discontinuities approach', IZA Discussion Paper
- Batrakov, K et al.** (2025). 'ExoMol line lists – LXV. Mid-infrared rovibronic spectroscopy of isotopologues of NiH', *Monthly Notices of the Royal Astronomical Society* 536(3): 2572–80
- Bowen, JT** (2025). 'The Admirable Hugh: Force and violence in Woolf's Ethics', in *Selected Papers from the 31st Annual International Virginia Woolf Conference*, (Clemson University Press), 89–97
- Nicholls, H *et al.* including **RD Chatterjee** (2025). 'Self-limited tidal heating and prolonged magma oceans in the L 98–59 system', *Monthly Notices of the Royal Astronomical Society* 541(3): 2566–84
- Taylor, J *et al.* including **RD Chatterjee** (2025). 'JWST NIRISS transmission spectroscopy of the super-Earth GJ 357b, a favourable target for atmospheric retention', *Monthly Notices of the Royal Astronomical Society* 540(4): 3677–92
- Ji, X, **RD Chatterjee et al.** (2025). 'The cosmic shoreline revisited: A metric for atmospheric retention informed by hydrodynamic escape', *Astrophysical Journal*, arXiv:2504.19872
- De'Ath, C, MF Oliva et al.** (2025). 'Counter-diffusion studies of human transthyretin: the growth of high-quality crystals for X-ray and neutron crystallography', *Journal of Applied Crystallography* 58(Pt 1): 107–8
- Duncan, C** (2025). 'The transmission of Claude McKay's novels in the 20th and 21st centuries: Harlem Renaissance, world literature, fascist imagery?', *Journal of World Literature*
- Genolini, PB *et al.* including **A Lüscher** (2025). 'Toric gravitational instantons in gauged supergravity', *Physical Review D* 111(4): 046024
- Genolini, PB *et al.* including **A Lüscher** (2025). 'Equivariant localization for $D = 4$ gauged supergravity', *Journal of High Energy Physics*
- Dickerson, JL, **PTN McCubbin et al.** (2024). 'Doses for X-ray and electron diffraction: New features in RADDOS-3D including intensity decay models', *Protein Science* 33(7): e5005
- Peters, FS** (2025). 'Emerging market economies: Monetary spillovers in a DSGE framework', *Berkeley Economic Review* XIV (Spring): 58–90
- Schelfhout, JS et al.** (2024). 'Single-photon large-momentum-transfer atom interferometry scheme for Sr or Yb atoms with application to determining the fine-structure constant', *Physical Review A* 110(5): 053309
- Abdalla, A *et al.* including **J Schelfhout** (2025). 'Terrestrial very-long-baseline atom interferometry: Summary of the second workshop', *EPJ Quantum Technology* 12(1): 42
- Sisto, E** (2025). 'The practice and politics of mountain rescue on the French-Italian border', *Forced Migration Review* 75: 7–10
- Sun, K and S Sérafin** (2024). 'The nominalism of the new nominate torts', *Supreme Court Law Review, Third Series* 4: 119–74
- Sun, K** (2024). 'Trespass, campus encampments and the Charter', *Journal of Parliamentary and Political Law* 18(3): 795–814
- Sun, K** (2025). 'The coherence of constructive takings: A response to Peter Wills', *Alberta Law Review* 62(4): 961–1000
- Szakály, M et al.** (2024). 'Assault and battery: Evaluating the security of power conversion systems against electromagnetic injection attacks', *Proceedings of the 2024 Annual Computer Security Applications Conference*
- Szakály, M, S Köhler and I Martinovic** (2025). 'Current affairs: A security measurement study of CCS EV charging deployments', *Proc 34th USENIX Security Symposium*
- Szakály, M, S Köhler and I Martinovic** (2025). 'PiBuster: Exploiting a common misconfiguration in CCS EV chargers', *Proceedings of the 3rd USENIX Symposium on Vehicle Security and Privacy*, 243–49
- Tan, TE et al.** (2025). 'Artificial intelligence-quantified schisis volume as a structural endpoint for gene therapy clinical trials in X-linked retinoschisis', *Acta Ophthalmologica*
- Tan, TE et al.** (2025). 'Detection of center-involved diabetic macular edema with visual impairment using multimodal artificial intelligence algorithms', *Ophthalmology Retina* (April 2025)
- Ng, BW, **TE Tan et al.** (2025). 'Characterizing inner retinal changes in end-stage inherited retinal diseases that might be suitable for optogenetic therapies', *Translational Vision Science & Technology* 14(6): 2
- Quinodoz, M *et al.* including **TE Tan** (2025). 'Novel founder variant in the S-antigen visual arrestin gene SAG is the most prevalent cause of autosomal dominant retinitis pigmentosa in Singaporean Chinese', *Journal of Medical Genetics* 62(9): 573–80

Selected Alumni Publications 2024–25

Below is a list of publications by alumni in the 2024–25 academic year that we have been made aware of. If you have a book or book chapter due to be published in the 2025–26 academic year and would like it featured in the next edition of Postmaster, please get in touch at development@merton.ox.ac.uk



Jason Allen-Paisant (2011). *The Possibility of Tenderness: A Jamaican memoir of plants and dreams* (Penguin Random House, 2025)

Armand D'Angour (1979). Translator: *How to Talk about Love: An Ancient Guide for Modern Lovers* (Princeton University Press, 2025)

Caroline Bentley-Davies (1991). *A Little Guide for Teachers: Differentiation and Adaptive Teaching* (Sage, 2025)

Paul Blustein (1973). *King Dollar: The Past and Future of the World's Dominant Currency* (Yale University Press, 2025)

John Bowers (1973). Co-author: Peter Steffensen. *Tolkien on Chaucer, 1913–1959* (Oxford University Press, 2024)

Josef Chytrý (1967). *Mountain of Paradise: Reflections on the Emergence of Greater California as a World Civilization: 2025 issue* (Peter Lang, 2025).

John Cooper (1989). *The Lost Chapel of Westminster: How a Royal Chapel Became the House of Commons* (Apollo, 2024)

Peter Coveney (1982). Co-author: Shunzhou Wan. *Molecular Dynamics: Probability and Uncertainty* (Oxford University Press, 2025)

Caroline Crampton (2006). *A Body Made of Glass: A History of Hypochondria* (Granta Books, 2025)

Henry Drummond (2014). *The Cantigas de Santa Maria: Power and Persuasion at the Alfonsine Court* (Oxford University Press, 2024)

Abbey Ellis (2013). Co-editor: Emma M. Payne. *Ancient Plaster: Casting Light on a Forgotten Sculptural Material* (Liverpool University Press, 2025)

Simon Eyre (1976). *The Service Medal of the Order of St John: The Early Years: 1899–1925* (Orders & Medals Research Society, 2025)

Mark Geldof (2012). *Formal Medieval Combat and Performance: The Woodville-Burgundy Emprise of 1467* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2025)

Robert Gildea (1971). *What Is History for?* (Bristol University Press, 2024)

MacDonald Jackson (1961). *Shakespeare, Dramatic Poetry and Value* (Routledge, 2025)



Marc W S Jaffré (2005). *The Courtiers and the Court of Louis XIII, 1610–1643*. (Oxford University Press, 2025)

Wallace Kaufman (1961). *Grow Old and Die Young: A Naturalist In Life's Theater* (Signal Books International, 2025)

Theophilus Kwek (2013). *Commonwealth* (Carcanet Press, 2025).

John Latham (1959). *The Rice Trade in Asia* (Routledge, 2024)

Chris Lewis (1975). Co-authors: Stephen Baxter and Julia Crick. *Making Domesday: Intelligent Power in Conquered England* (Oxford University Press, 2025)

David Llewellyn Dodds (1981). Essay in a new critical edition of *The Terror* by Arthur Machen (Darkly Bright Press, 2024)

Graham Loud (1971). *Frederick Barbarossa* (Reaktion Books, 2025)

Nigel Middlemiss (1966). *Memorize French!* (independently published, 2025)

Nicholas Olsberg (1962). *The Master Builder: William Butterfield and His Times* (Lund Humphries Publishers, 2024)

Stephen Oppenheimer (1975). *Third Strike and Other Fascinations* (Kindle, 2024)

Nicholas Richardson (1968). Editor: *Cantate Domino: A Commentary on the Hymns of the Liturgy of the Hours. Volume I. Proper of Time: Advent, Christmas, Lent and Easter* (Catholic University of America Press, 2025)

Guy Shrubsole (2003). *The Lie of the Land: Who Really Cares for the Countryside?* (William Collins, 2024)

David Smith (1984). *Everyday Christian Teaching: A Guide to Practicing Faith in the Classroom* (Eerdmans, 2025)

Roger Tomlin (1966). *The Uley Tablets: Roman Curse Tablets from the Temple of Mercury at Uley* (Oxford University Press, 2024)

Robert Waller (1978). 'Walter Ulbricht' in I Dale (ed.) *The Dictators: Lessons from History* (Hodder & Stoughton, 2024)

Robert Waller (1978). 'Ashfield 77' in *British By-Elections 1769–2024: The 88 By-election Campaigns That Shaped Our Politics*, edited by Iain Dale (Biteback, 2025)

Chris Wickham (1975). Chapter 'Being Poor in Byzantium', in *Approaching Social Hierarchies in Byzantium: Dialogues Between Rich and Poor*, edited by Anna Kelley and Flavia Vanni (Routledge, 2025)

Peter H. Wood (1964). *Black Majority: Race, Rice and Rebellion in South Carolina, 1670–1740*. 50th anniversary edition (W. W. Norton, 2024)

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Mertonians





The Merton Society

Another busy year for the Society on all fronts!

We have had a fantastic programme of activities for Mertonians of all ages. All events have been enthusiastically attended by Mertonians and their guests.

We kicked off with the London Michaelmas drinks in November, followed by the Christmas Concert performed by the Merton Choir in Temple Church. In April 2025, the Merton Society Annual Lecture was given by Professor Steven Gunn (1979) about his forthcoming book, *An Accidental History of Tudor England* (now published). The event was again hosted by Patrick Long (1995) at the Lazard offices.

May 2025 saw the welcome return of the Merton Society London Dinner after the lacuna of lockdown, held at Vintners' Hall with guest speaker Andy Cato (1991). Andy gave a sell-out audience a fascinating talk about his own personal journey from DJ with Groove Armada to leading advocate of sustainable farming and accidental TV star.

In June we held the Garden Party in College, attended by more than 400, following the AGM. This was an opportunity to say a big thank you to Dame Philippa Whipple (1984) who has retired as Society President after six very active years. She leaves a lasting legacy in her contributions in the role,

particularly the Merton College Mentoring Programme. She has kindly agreed with her husband Sam Whipple (1983) to continue nurturing the programme, which is going from strength to strength.

Earlier in June, the new Career Insights working group held its inaugural gathering for current students, involving sessions on networking, confidence, coaching and interview techniques. Thanks to Pippa Shirley (1983) and the Senior Tutor, Dr Jane Gover, for leading this project.

I am delighted that John Booth (1976) has accepted the Council's invitation to be our new President and very much look forward to working with him over the coming months on the programme for the next years, hopefully with some exciting new venues for events, and building on all the current initiatives.

A big thanks goes to the Warden and team at the Development Office, my fellow executive members, John Booth 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



MC3: Merton College Charitable Corporation

MC3 at the Metropolitan Museum of Art

The North American based Merton College Charitable Corporation (MC3) community experienced another strong year. The warm friendships, conviviality, the effective collaborations with the College and the meaningful activities that MC3 members enjoyed have been a welcome contrast to the divisiveness and upset that are so prevalent in the difficult times in which we live.

An outstanding example of MC3 activities was the successful reunion that MC3 hosted in early November 2024 in New York City, just a few days before the contentious US presidential election. Over 60 Mertonian young and not-so-young alumni, from all corners of the US, Canada and the UK, along with accompanying guests, attended a truly remarkable reunion weekend. Aside from regular board meetings and individual receptions, the Fall gathering was MC3's first in-person full-scale multiday social gathering after a three-year hiatus due to the Covid pandemic.

The reunion committee led by Charles Scudder (1971) (who sadly died on 19 June 2025) delivered a weekend filled with exceptional events, including: a tour of the CNN Studios in Hudson Yards featuring a talk by Sir Mark Thompson (1976), Chairman and CEO of CNN Worldwide; a performance of *Rigoletto* at the Metropolitan Opera in Lincoln Center

preceded by small group dinners in nearby restaurants; a specially curated private tour of the Metropolitan Museum of Art American Exhibit on Saturday morning before the museum opened to the public; a reception and dinner at the University Club of New York; and a concluding Sunday brunch at Susan Cullman's beautiful Park Avenue penthouse. Susan (Board member and wife of the late John Kirby, 1962) is one of the most dedicated MC3 members. She deserves special recognition for organizing several of the key events at the November 2024 reunion weekend.

The Warden Jennifer Payne and the Development Director, Mark Coote, traveled to the US to attend the reunion and connect with stateside Mertonians. During the Saturday dinner reception, the Warden delivered an inspiring update on the College, with many highlights demonstrating that Merton continues to excel and thrive in all areas. Sir Howard Stringer (1961) offered heartfelt and hilarious after-dinner remarks. Mark Coote thanked MC3 members for their ongoing financial contributions and explained how our gifts make a difference to maintaining the College's position as 'the best of the best'. During the dinner we were particularly proud to welcome and recognize several Mertonians whose unwavering support for MC3 and the College has been invaluable, including Sir Howard Stringer, Reed Rubin (1957),

Susan Cullman, David Harvey (1957) and Margarete Harvey, Jonathan Clarke (1966) and his wife Amy Clarke, and new friends, 'honorary' Mertonians Steven and Cynthia Saboe.

The MC3 President concluded with a heartfelt tribute to the founder, heart and soul of MC3, Robert G 'Bob' McKelvey, whose selfless leadership and often unsung efforts behind the scenes have been instrumental in the success of the organization. On this occasion we ignored our humble friend Bob's aversion to being in the spotlight by reporting that we are honored to name a new fourth MC3 scholarship for Bob in grateful recognition of his unparalleled decades of brilliant work advancing the interests of the College.

We are also proud to report that MC3 has now completed its five-year pledge of \$624,000 to fund the Regius Chair in Mathematics and has done so ahead of schedule. In 2024, MC3 raised a total of \$1,149,883. Highlights of this recent fundraising activity include donor-designated gifts of \$457,000 for the Chapel and Choir, \$223,600 for choral and organist scholarships, \$110,000 for the Reach Scholarship, \$45,950 for the Refugee Scholarship, and \$26,000 for the New Library.

We are grateful to Reunion and Events Vice-Chair Jin Kim for stepping in for Charles Scudder, who was indisposed after major surgery, to organize and host the 2025 MC3 Board meeting on Sunday 18 May 2025, in New York City. Warden Professor Jennifer Payne and Development Director Mark Coote attended the in-person Board meeting which was also livestreamed. An early dinner at Wolfgang's Steakhouse on Park Avenue followed, and went on deep into the night.

On Monday 19 May 2025, a substantial contingent of Mertonians attended an Oxford University Evening in New York City with the Vice-Chancellor and former Warden of Merton, Professor Irene Tracey. The Vice-Chancellor offered a crisp review of the state of the University along with contemporary challenges and opportunities, and she led a discussion by an Oxford University expert on climate change. A similar but not identical event featuring the Vice-Chancellor was held in Washington DC at the British Embassy on Wednesday 22 May. Several Washington Mertonians attended that event, including some, like Marla Allard, who had been at the NYC event. Also in May, in New York City,



Amna Nasser (1997) and her husband Atul hosted a large reception in their gorgeous Greenwich Village brownstone home. Both the Warden and the Vice-Chancellor attended and spoke to the large crowd. It was indeed a big honor to have so much time with the Warden for the second consecutive MC3 weekend and to have the Vice-Chancellor dedicating an evening to her fellow Mertonians.

Notably, in addition to the usual suspects, the participants at this successful social event included a significant number, perhaps as many as half, who were newcomers to such alumni gatherings, and a large number of recent graduates. In addition, the organization and board activities of MC3 are increasingly undertaken by new leadership of more recent vintage. We remain fortunate in the 'always can do', cheerful, competent services of Executive Administrator Thom Yu, as well as Bob McKelvey's team, including Millie Amodio.

We were very saddened about the death of Charles S K Scudder (1971), who died after a long illness. A memorial of Charles' full and colorful life appears in this issue. Charles was a long-time member of the MC3 Board executive committee, and for many years was chair of its ultra-active Reunions and Events Committee. According to his son Whit, Charles regarded his volunteer work for Merton as the highlight of his retirement years. Jin Kim (1996) and Charles Tolkien-Gillett (2019) are stepping in as the new MC3 Reunion co-chairs.

Nick Allard (1974), Bodley Fellow
MC3 President



Merton Lawyers' Association

(L-R) Dan Schaffer (1986), The Warden Professor Jennifer Payne, Supreme Court Justice Philip Sales and Professor Paul Davies

The Merton Lawyers' Association (MLA) is open to all alumni who read Law or who practise law or who simply have an interest in Law.

The MLA has been expanding its reach and its activities to strengthen the alumni community, and to assist young alumni and current students. It posts on the College website, on LinkedIn and on WhatsApp communities.

On Thursday 7 November 2024, the annual gathering was hosted at the office of Dechert with a large turnout including current students. After an update from the Warden there followed a witty and engaging conversation between Supreme Court Justice Philip Sales and Professor of Commercial Law at UCL, Paul Davies. A drinks and canapés reception allowed attendees to mingle.

On 13 January 2025 the new Law Fellow Dr Rory Gregson gave a fascinating online lecture 'The Limits of Implication: When Parties are Silent and Why it Matters'.

The 2025 annual gathering will be held on Thursday 13 November at Sullivan & Cromwell's London office and will feature a conversation between Supreme Court Justice Vivien

Rose and Court of Appeal judge, Sir David Foxton. The 2026 annual gathering has already been organised with equally glittering conversationalists who will be announced in 2026!

After a very successful junior lawyers' alumni social event on 26 September 2024 at the Old Bank of England pub, Fleet Street, a second equally successful event was held in another London pub, The Argyle, ECI, on 22 May 2025. Please do contact any committee member if you would like to attend a future drinks event.

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), Jessica Kemp (2000), Alice Walker (2015), Niamh Herrett (2016), Katie Ratcliffe (2014) and Riya Bhatt (2017). The Committee thanks Steven Elliott (1997) and Adrian Burbie (2017) who have recently retired from the Committee.

Dan Schaffer (1986)

Chair of the Merton Lawyers' Association



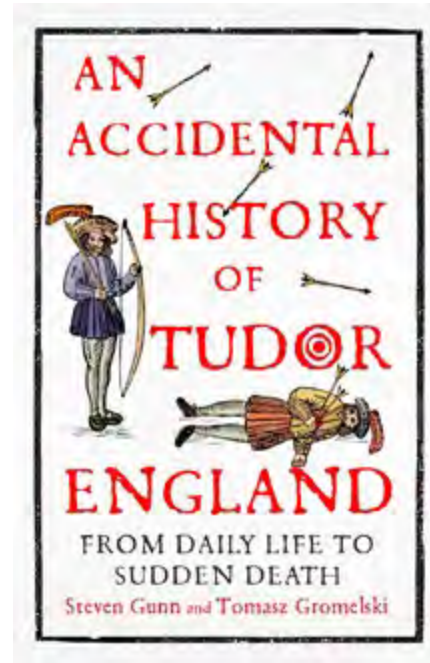
Merton Society Annual Lecture 2025

This year's annual lecture was given by Professor Steven Gunn (1979), Fellow and Tutor in History and Professor of Early Modern History. In his lecture, entitled *Writing An Accidental History of Tudor England*, Steven gave an overview of the hazardous realities of Tudor life as described in his book of the same name, co-authored with Tomasz Gromelski.

Held on Thursday 3 April in London, this event was kindly hosted by Patrick Long (1995) in the offices of Lazard in London.

Professor Gunn, or 'Stevie G', as he was fondly known by some of his former students in attendance, shared the findings of archival research which drew on nearly 9,000 coroners' inquest reports. Together, these reports reveal a lot about the realities of the daily lives of ordinary folk in Tudor times. He came to write a book about it and even to create the 'Accidental Tudor Deaths' Top Trumps cards!

Steven revealed that for ordinary sixteenth-century people, daily tasks proved to be more hazardous than you might



imagine, with chores such as fetching water, gathering fruit, or travelling by cart made perilous by slippery ground, fruit trees with tantalisingly high branches, and sleepiness after a long day of travel. Accidents in farming revealed working conditions that were anathema to today's health and safety laws: jammed mechanisms proved fatal to many a miller getting their sleeve stuck when unblocking them, and haystacks were not a good place to take a break during the working day. Deaths during leisure activities revealed everyday realities: would so many Tudor men have accidentally stabbed themselves while playing football if the knife they always carried was less valuable to them? Other activities were very relatable – Tudors danced in their kitchens, but small kitchens with an open fire were a dangerous place to cut a caper!

Fascinating, poignant and ruefully funny, Steven's lecture informed and entertained the many Mertonians in attendance. The book has since been published (by John Murray publishing house) and is available from the usual outlets.



Merton Society London Dinner

After the lecture. From left: Greg Lim, Mark Davison, Andy Cato, the Warden Professor Jennifer Payne and Dame Philippa Whipple

Vintners' Hall in the Society London Dinner on 15 May 2025. A welcome return to the Merton Society schedule after the break of the lockdown years.

With a full house dining in the splendour of the main hall, we were treated to a superb after-dinner speech from Andy Cato (1991), the Groove Armada DJ who is also a passionate pioneer of sustainable farming.

Andy described his progression from DJing in Ibiza to farming 750 acres of National Trust land outside Swindon. In his mission to improve the sustainability of farming and the quality of the food we eat, Andy has founded Wildfarmed, a food and farming business that grows regenerative wheat, avoiding the use of chemicals.

On the way back from a gig Andy had read an article about some of the consequences of the post-war food system. Farming based on the suppression of nature means that we

have lost two-thirds of all wildlife over the past 30 years. No species survives the death of its ecosystem. 'The article had a line in it which said: "If you don't like the system, don't depend on it".' This inspired his first (troubled) attempts at self-sufficiency which have (literally) grown today into being a leading advocate of a future of sustainable farming, including an appearance with Jeremy Clarkson on his farm series which garnered a '1,000-fold increase in selfie requests compared to 25 years as a 6' 8" musician'.

I would like to say a big thank you to Andy for joining us and talking so entertainingly about this important topic, to our President Philippa Whipple (1982) for introducing Andy and presiding over the proceedings, and to the Development Office for all their work in pulling the event together.

Mark Davison (1978)
Chair

Extracts from Andy Cato's speech at the 2025 Merton Society London Dinner:

'The long road to Greggs: A DJ's unlikely journey to bring nature-rich farming to the high street and the transformational potential of regenerative farming'

After a brief synopsis of his music career as DJ and one half of the band Groove Armada, Andy Cato spoke about how he became interested in food production, eventually selling the publishing rights to his music to fund the purchase of his first farm. This proved to be the beginning of a long and tough, and ultimately rewarding, road. Along the way, he has investigated how to foster rather than drain the ecology while farming – and has found other farmers with the same aims. The 'Wildfarmed' flour and breads that are now for sale in UK supermarkets are part of his mission to bring food to the table that benefits both people and the planet. Here are some extracts from his speech.

Defining regenerative farming:

'To be clear, regenerative farming – literally farming that regenerates ecosystems whilst producing food – is not simply back-to-the-old-ways stuff. It's a combination of indigenous wisdom, GPS guidance and systems science, made increasingly possible thanks to AI.'

On an unexpected collaboration:

'I was contacted by a potential new Wildfarmer, not far from me in Oxfordshire, concerned about the damage being done to his soil and fed up with the amount of financial risk on his farm relative to the return. He asked me over for a chat. I was surprised to find cameras rolling the moment I arrived, and Jeremy Clarkson and I walked out to look at his fields, swapping tales of our Doncaster youth. Diddly Squat (Clarkson's Farm) isn't the easiest environment in which to deliver nuanced and time-sensitive farming techniques. But my feeling was that if we could deliver a crop that was weed- and disease-free without pesticides, and a food producing field that was simultaneously full of bees, it would at least open the idea that there is another way.'

On progress with Wildfarmed:

'Wildfarmed farmers are now being paid directly by water companies because they have measured there is no pollution from Wildfarmed fields – and worked out a 6:1 return on investment from preventing agricultural pollution at source rather than cleaning it up later. Getting farmers paid for water and nature quality as well as for their grain, is how quality food from nature rich landscapes becomes affordable for all.'

On winning round food suppliers:

'In a recent meeting with the Chief Procurement Officer of a large food business, he began the meeting by saying, quite aggressively, "My customers aren't interested in regenerative farming". To which I said, "Well, that's probably true, because most of them will never have heard of the word, and the ones that have heard of it probably won't know what it means. But your customers will be interested in health and nutrition, in rivers that they can swim in, in water that's safe to drink, in being part of the climate solution rather than part of the climate problem, in understanding that David Attenborough's miraculous worlds can be secured only through their food choices.'"

The full transcript of the speech is available on the Merton Society Events page: merton.ox.ac.uk/alumni-and-friends/events.



The ‘Town and Gown’: Bidwells Oxford 10k

Merton has always had a strong tradition of participating in Oxford-wide sporting events, and the Bidwell’s 10k Run this year was no exception! Instead, we outdid ourselves in this edition, with impressively large participation from students, staff and Fellows.

Completed on Sunday 11 May, the ‘Town and Gown’ run serves as an important charity fundraiser to advance research and cures for muscular dystrophy, an erosive genetic disease that causes increasing muscular weakness. Over 50 Mertonians raced in Team Merton this year – the highest number yet – and it was wonderful to see such a great turnout supporting this important cause.

This was my second time running the race, and it was great fun to run alongside my fellow graduate friends, including Sebastian Dohnány (2023), Miranda Bate (2024), and Conor Walsh (2024), and to hear the full-hearted support from the Merton students attending on the sidelines. The large turnout of Fellows was also impressive to see, and their speed was not the least motivator for finishing! Kudos in

particular to Professor Jonathan Prag, a fellow Ancient Historian, for finishing one of the fastest; and also to Kieran Dewalt (2021), who came within the top 100 with a time of 39 minutes! The glorious sunshine and morning breeze at 10am kept us going strong as we snaked through the streets around Summertown, past Wolfson, Uni Parks, through Broad Street and High Street, criss-crossing up Holywell Street and Queen’s Lane, before a final sprint through the lusciously warm University Parks. More than finishing and attaining personal achievements, it was the opportunity of running with colleagues and our community as a College and House of Scholars which made this event so special.

The College fostered the community spirit by offering a lovely brunch in Hall afterwards for Team Merton. Thank you to the Development Office for organising Team Merton and equipping us with the Merton-branded running shirts, which did much for our morale!

James Hua (2022)

Merton MC3 Scholar, Merton Prize Scholar 2024-2025



Merton Golf Society

After a very wet winter, it was a great relief to get out on courses once again in the spring. Our Spring Meeting, held at the beginning of April, was at a new venue for the Society: Arlesford Golf Club in Hampshire. Being largely on chalk, it had wintered well and was in good condition. Nine of us took part, with Simon Constantine winning ahead of Paul Robinson. With a lunchtime start, the late start allowed many of those playing to have a very convivial supper at the club before heading home. This was appreciated by all and is something we shall seek to continue for future Spring Meetings.

Late June saw the third running of the Oxford vs Cambridge Alumni competition at Berkhamsted. For the third year running, we were blessed with excellent weather – albeit, too hot at times, especially slogging up the hill on the 18th! John Heaton and I came in fourth: missing a short putt on the 18th remains a haunting memory! Will Bailhache and Chris Mercer finished in the middle of the pack. Unfortunately, Cambridge ran out the winners to take a 2-1 lead in the competition.

At the time of writing, we still have two more events in 2025. Our Autumn Meeting takes place in early September at Oxford Golf Club. And, as in 2024, we shall be dining in College after playing. Then, in October, there is a revival of the Inter-College Competition, started initially by the Old Mertonian Tom Hennessy. Merton and seven other Oxford colleges are taking part. It is great to see this old competition being revived, even if it is necessarily on a smaller scale than before.

Regular readers of this entry may get the impression that the Merton Golf Society is a 'southern' society. Certainly most of our current members live in the south of the country, and historically that is where all of our meetings have been. The society is open to all Old Mertonians, students and staff – wherever they live. I am absolutely sure that there are many Old Mertonian golfers who live away from the southern area and for whom the time (and expense) to travel down for our Spring and Autumn meetings is just too much. As a result, we may have lost contact. However, I am sure that many would welcome the chance to get together to play under the Merton banner to play. There is absolutely no reason, however, why there could not be local MGS meetings – after all, most golf clubs welcome societies these days.

I would be very happy to coordinate such events, putting local golfers in touch with one another to start a local MGS 'chapter'. If such ideas work well with Cambridge colleges, there is absolutely no reason they can't work at Merton! If you would be interested in joining the Society and playing, whether it just be locally or also in one of our usual Spring or Autumn Meetings, please contact me either through the College or at play@mertongolfsoc.org.uk

Nigel Haigh (1971)
Merton Golf Society Chair

News of Members

Up to 1948

Year Representative: Michael Millard

Tel: 02476 414 776 Email: millardl72@tiscali.co.uk

This year, we had the sad news that **Brian Chapple** had died. His tribute is in the In Memoriam section. **Claver Toalster** got in touch with news that he is still walking, between bouts of bridge. **Martin Reynolds** writes to say he lives quietly and contentedly in a nice house with a small garden. Various members of his attentive family are in touch or visit from time to time. As for me, **Michael Millard**, I am pleased to report that, now in my 99th year, I am still walking.

1949

There is currently no Year Representative for 1949. Please contact the Development Office if you are interested in this role.

1950–54

Year Representative: Charles Dodd

Tel: +345 99773603 Email: charlesdodd@yahoo.co.uk

Most undergraduates at Merton in the 1950s were born in the earlier years of the Silent Generation (1928–1945). The characteristics of this generation are said to include resourcefulness and dependability. Perhaps they are ‘silent’ in contrast to the Baby Boomers who took over noisily in 1946 (the year when Donald Trump was born). My thanks to all of the year groups 1950–1954 who broke their silence and

wrote to me with their news. I am including a note of my own news in the following sequence.

John Mays (1951) sent his news by email and in a telephone call. He also sent a copy of an article he had written for the Wimbledon Society about the celebrations for VE Day and VJ Day. The events included a fish and chip supper (John says it was the only meal not rationed during the Second World War), followed by a service of remembrance at the village war memorial and the lighting of a VE Day beacon. South-east England was hard hit in the months leading up to the end of the war. Altogether 150 civilians in Wimbledon were killed and over one thousand injured; 14,000 homes were damaged or destroyed.

John Turvey (1952) gave a poetry reading of his work this year to a small group of ‘remarkably tolerant’ friends and neighbours. He has also written a brief handbook for those now in their nineties and awaits its publication.

In May I had a brief note from **John Shore** (1953). He said he had no real news except that he hoped to reach the age of 90 at the end of June. We look forward to a growing market for John Turvey’s guidebook for nonagenarians.

The representative of the quinquennium 1950–1954, **Charles Dodd** (1953) has been busy for several years with the Oxford University Society in Cyprus, but he has now handed over the chairmanship. He and Jenny continue to live in Cyprus with trips to England and occasionally to Ireland. He celebrated his 90th birthday in March with a small family gathering in London.

Sadly, **Peter John Westwood** (1954) died in January. He was 91 years old. His widow, Vimla, wrote in March to inform Merton’s Development Office of his death. She mentioned that Peter had read History and had kept in close contact with his tutor, Dr Roger Highfield. The College sent condolences to Vimla.

1954 was well represented with contributions to *Postmaster* from England and America. There was quite a long email from **Reg Hall**. ‘We go back and forth between Greensboro and Woodbridge in Suffolk but prefer the US because of

the weather though the Georgia summer, hot and sticky, is uncomfortable.' Reg and Helen had hoped to make their next trip to England on the *QM2* but 'the plan sank' when Reg dislocated his hip and hobbled around for weeks after three operations. He and Helen 'are more American than English now', but Helen's International Club thrives with a membership well over 400. Reg ends his message with some comments about American politics; he has bought himself a red cap with the slogan 'Make America Great Britain Again', but he says that is 'not an enticing prospect'.

Robert Paxton (1954) and his wife moved over two years ago from New York City to a retirement community on the banks of the Hudson River. They have 'splendid views of the river and interesting neighbors'. He says his health is 'good for 92, but Sarah has to be attached to an oxygen machine much of the time. She bears this indignity courageously.' Bob (as I remember we called him at Merton) ends his email with a forceful statement: 'We deplore the words and actions of Donald Trump.'

Since his retirement, **Adrian Esdaile** (1954) has been able to exercise his ordained ministry locally at St Martin's Epsom and at Epsom College, taking the occasional service and preaching 'a bit'. He says: 'I assume they will stop asking me if I start to ramble!' Since his wife's death last November, his two sons have been 'marvellously helpful'. Adrian still gets about and drives short distances.

1955–56

Year Representative: Richard Kenyon

Tel: 01926 859620 Email: delaroche37@gmail.com

I have to apologise that this year's report is put together late and therefore somewhat hurriedly. I hope, that though incomplete, it gives an interesting picture of Mertonians' lives as they approach or pass their 90th birthdays and other significant occasions. As is usual we note with sadness the passing of some contemporaries: **David Curtis**, **John Hamlin**, **Professor Sir George Radda** and **John Speaight**.



On a happier note, **Jay Keyser** writes from Cambridge, Massachusetts: 'I am a Retired Scholar. I'm not Retired from Scholarship.' He has been awarded the Wilbur Cross Medal for Linguistics. Like so many others, he will miss Milos Martinov and wishes him well in his new position. I am not sure whether this doodle was specific to Milos!

From the other side of the US, Rex Jamison contributed an obituary for George Radda. George's funeral was held in Merton Chapel where I had an interesting conversation with Mike Hawkins (1974). Mike had come to Merton from Bablake School in Coventry where his chemistry teacher was John Hamlin. At that time I was living in Kenilworth and knew several of his teachers but never discovered John's presence! John's funeral was held in Penrith, Cumbria. I tuned into the online service and related strongly to the quote from the eulogy, 'That smile we shall remember'.

Dermot Killingley has moved from Newcastle to Greater Manchester to be nearer his family and we discovered that we had both been born in Liverpool, though in different suburbs: Dermot in Mossley Hill and I in Great Crosby. To complete the coincidence, I have many relatives close to Cheadle Hulme, his new home.

Let me start with the royal picture. Readers may recall that in 2022 I displayed my magenta tie to Prince Charles, as he then was. This year, for my diamond wedding celebration, he and Camilla sent me and my wife a card with a picture of them both.

On the 1956 hockey front, I am still in touch with **David Bethell** and **Tony Wynn-Evans**. They were 'Occasionals' while I was the amateur. David has moved into a retirement home in Letcombe Regis while Tony is still in his home on the other side of Kenilworth. I recall meeting Tony in December 1955 when walking back to Merton from Christ Church where we sat the mathematics scholarship examination.

I must repeat my apology to my correspondents for abbreviating the rest of this report. Circumstances this summer have interfered with my compilation.

1957

Year Representative: Graham Byrne Hill

Tel: 0208 940 1281 Email: g.byrnehill@uwclub.net

1958

Year Representatives: Bryan Lewis

Email: kb.lewis@tazam.com

and Peter Parsons

Email: pijparsons@gmail.com

Now all of us who've made it so far are nearer 90 than 80, words of Laurence Binyon from 'For the Fallen' come to mind: 'Age shall not weary them ...', with our own postscript, 'Well it wearies me.' I hesitate to continue the verse lest it touch a sensitive chord. When asked 'How are you?' former government minister David Blunkett struck the right note for many of us I hope — 'I'm keeping going by keeping going.'

Hats off then to **Oliver Ford Davies**, who wrote: 'I thought I'd pretty much retired, particularly as my memory is deteriorating, but then I was asked to play Malvolio in *Twelfth Night* for seven weeks at Christmas at the Orange Tree in Richmond and somehow I survived. In fact one broadsheet said it was "probably the best Shakespeare you'll see in London in 2024". A good swan song. I totter on, sight, hearing, balance all going downhill but luckier than some.'

In August 2024 **Peter Doye** died. He was one of only two geographers in our year. His son, who read Jurisprudence at BNC, said Peter was proud of his modest roots, being the son of a train driver. In April we learned of the death of **John AD Mills**, who in College we knew by his middle name **Angus**. One obituary observation I read said: 'Friends and opponents were united about his greatest quality — it was impossible to dislike him.' Then in May this year **John Bradshaw** died in Melbourne, Australia. All of them are remembered in *In Memoriam*.

The death of Angus prompted an email from **Bryan Glastonbury** about what he, with understatement, recalled 'quite an exciting interlude' with Angus and Peter Moyes

(1959) in the long vacation in 1961. 'We were doing PPE and had chosen Developing Countries as one of the Economics courses tutored by Arthur Hazlewood at Pembroke. Arthur knew Hastings Banda, Head of the Malawian Congress Party, preparing for independence, though at that time Malawi (then Nyasaland) was still part of the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland. Banda wanted to put together a development plan for the time when Malawi became independent and let Arthur know that if some suitable students could get themselves out to his country he could find useful jobs for them to do.

'I seem to recall that quite a few people were interested but in the end Angus, Peter and I set off to get there on the cheap. We'd been told of a certain pub near Gatwick where pilots took their leisure and where we might find someone willing to give us a lift. We got a lift on a freight plane as far as Nairobi. All I recall of that trip was that we were one of the last flights to refuel at Aswan airfield because it was about to be closed as waters from the new dam encroached. From Nairobi we hitched by road to Salisbury, Southern Rhodesia (now Harare, Zimbabwe) and spent a brief time at the university there. Then another free flight in a WW2 Dakota to Blantyre, at that time capital of Nyasaland.

'By that time it had been accepted that Nyasaland was to become independent so we were met with friendliness on all sides. In Blantyre we camped in the extensive garden of the local manager of Imperial Tobacco. We did meet Hastings Banda briefly, just once. He was doing some work as a GP and we met him at his surgery ... On the table to his side were piles of coins, presumably in payment for consultations. I don't recall what Pete and Angus did but I went to the north of the country to find out how far the economy (rather than barter) had progressed into the rural economy. I can't recall how we got back to UK.'

Bryan says he is now comfortably looked after in a retirement village between Aberdeen and Balmoral.

Peter Parsons blames himself for the fact that his granddaughter Kate did not apply to Merton. She is a talented footballer who as well as reading Medicine has won a soccer Blue. He says: 'When as a young teenager I brought her to Merton she was clutching a ball. Her eyes lit up when she saw

the Fellows' Lawn. She kicked the ball on to it only to be told in no uncertain terms that she was way out of order. Merton was struck off her list then! She was snapped up by St Edmund Hall.'

1959

Year Representatives: David Shipp

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and **Roger Gould**

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We begin our report by acknowledging the death of our colleague **Bob Moore** in February 2025. A full obituary appears in the *In Memoriam* section. Thanks to **Niall Campbell, Anthony Fletcher, David Forsyth** and **David Marler** for their help with this.

Richard Allan writes: 'Diana and I are declining gently. I still make walking trips to Scotland, she still tends our garden assiduously. We enjoy our trips to Oxford in between. Most of the grandchildren have now been introduced to the joys of Merton and LMH where we first met.'

Graham Boulton says simply: 'Still enjoying life, so no real changes. New knee holding up well.'

John Dance writes similarly: 'Still here! Still functional (mostly). Otherwise not much to report.'

Alan Drinkwater writes: 'Now into my late eighties, with Merton seeming a lifetime away, Joan and I still enjoy good health. She plays tennis while I bumble about on my electric bike. Holidays are now limited to the UK or Cunard cruising. Excitement comes vicariously from keeping in touch with our two sons and their careers, and the six grandchildren. The eldest is at Jesus College, reading Engineering. His younger twin brothers are now both in Australia. They are very good at keeping their families in touch with their travels. The elder granddaughter has started a languages course at University of Leeds, while her brother and sister are still at school.'

Antony Ellman reflects: 'This year has been one of getting used to life as a widower for the second time, having lost my

first wife Ruth in 1997 and my second wife Constance in 2023. The matchmaking friend who introduced me to Constance 25 years ago offered to find me a third partner for my declining years, but at 85 years of age I think my dating days are over! I have kept myself busy executing Constance's will, acting in loco parentis to my two granddaughters, both at university in Glasgow, visiting my second son and his family in Barcelona, keeping bees, and growing fruit and vegetables. In addition I attend a weekly course on French Culture and Society at the Institut Français, make slow progress writing the story of my life, and continue saxophone playing in the St Margaret's Elastic Band. If any old friends are visiting Richmond, St Margaret's or Barnes, you are welcome to drop in to taste my honey and hear our music.'

David Forsyth writes positively: 'I'm doing very well indeed, out and about everywhere (no sticks) and now cleared to drive. The car has stood outside for nearly two years, but is now serviced, MOT'd, taxed and insured. In some ways, I'm better than before I was ill: fresher, more agile, thinner and vision very good.'

John Gardner explains: 'I continue to channel energy into preserving the stories of two very different families that came together through marriage. Several years ago, I wrote a book describing our pilgrimages through France and Spain to Santiago de Compostela. Now I am producing a book describing six decades spent backpacking through the mountains of New England and Europe to keep future members of my hybrid Spanish-Canadian family aware of their past. My seven grandchildren are scattered about, in Scotland, Mexico, Canada and Morocco. [Looking back] I grasped the opportunities offered by my wife Encarnita by involving myself in her country and with her family. I made certain the next generation of our family felt themselves as much Spanish as Canadian, and I wanted the traditions of both families to be embedded in their characters. All three of our children ended up as fluent in Spanish as in English and are likely better writers in both languages as a result.'

Hume Hargreave writes: 'We are settled in Wetheral, where I can have my regular chemotherapy nearby, and we can remain in touch with our friends in the Lune Valley. Chemo in Carlisle has become routine for me after nearly six

years. Mary Ann's heart medication slows her down, but she remains active in body and mind in the village and as a governor of the North Cumbria Integrated Care Trust. Our house and garden are as we wanted – no more moving!

Martin Hawkins notes: 'The passage of the years is marked by granddaughters doing their GCSEs in foreign lands and me wondering what visits to the GP or hospital appointments I can safely ignore on the list of pre-existing medical conditions for my travel insurance. In generally good condition, I can still put in some hard work in the garden to which there's never an end, though sad to say my pop-up croquet lawn these days is more crazy golf than Hurlingham. As with much of life, it's mostly a case of having left undone the things we ought to have done.'

Peter Hayward writes: 'Ann and I are both pretty well, as are our family. Four granddaughters all at secondary schools, the eldest in the middle of A levels and wanting to read Biosciences. We were supposed to be in the US as I thought it might be our last chance to see old friends and colleagues in Washington where we spent seven years with the IMF. But as we have been on holiday in Iran and Cuba, we need visas. Ann has got hers, but I was required to be interviewed, so the US trip was postponed to September. We have just returned from ten days in Mallorca. Palma first, a delightful city, then a few days in the mountains in the North, haunt of Robert Graves, and the monastery where Chopin and Georges Sand spent a winter.'

John Latham writes: 'We are well and life goes on as normal. I had a new academic book out a couple of months ago (probably time I packed it in). The book is *The Rice Trade in Asia* (Routledge 2025). It is a sequel to my book *Rice and Industrialisation in Asia*. My son George is in South Korea teaching English and my wife Dawn is a teaching assistant at the local school.'

John Watson comments: 'Life has slowed considerably. I am still enjoying it, however, and keeping up with my livery activities and various local clubs. My garden is also a source of pleasure, plus I count it as my physical workout. Chiefly, of course, having four children and ten grandchildren, and now one great-granddaughter. I have plenty to occupy my time. Two grandchildren are professional cricketers just starting

out, which makes for some great days out, if somewhat nail-biting at times.'

Bill Woods writes 'We are all here and things trundle on as usual. I am hoping that that we will have some reasonable weather instead of the monsoons of recent summers, so that I can go fishing without getting soaked to the skin.'

And your Year Reps:

Roger Gould has had a busy year, presiding at meetings of his village Probus Group, the last of which was entitled *A Good Death*, a relevant subject for all of us. We were reminded to do all we can to leave things as straightforward as possible for our families, as well as hopefully leaving them with some good memories. He and Cathy hope there will be one very good memory for all their family and friends, when their eldest granddaughter gets married in August, a few hundred yards from their home.

David Shipp continues walking and singing. 'Walking highlights were the completion of the Northumberland Coast Path in 2024, and five days on the Wales Coast Path this year. Singing highlight has to be Walton's *Belshazzar's Feast*, a joint performance by Oldham and Salford Choral Societies at the Royal Northern College of Music. Three of our grandchildren are at a new stage in life, one starting postgraduate medicine, one undergraduate engineering, and a third secondary school.'

1960

Year Representative: Keith Pickering
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Andrew Devine and **Nick Woodward** are still with us, but have nothing to report for *Postmaster*.

Keith Aspinall has no news from his country home, but hopes, as last year, that he might accidentally bump into Keith Pickering in a Kew restaurant in 2025.

Stuart Blume is planning to take disparate constituents of his wide family (Dutch, Italian) to Berwick-upon-Tweed for

a summer week. Academia continues apace: his work on vaccine-related topics is progressing and in November 2024 he co-organised a symposium at the Romanian Academy of Sciences, which was opened by the Dutch Ambassador to Romania. His book *'Immunisation'* was recently published in Buenos Aires in a Spanish translation. It's all still fun, so new vaccine-related activities are in the pipeline. Whether they amount to anything will be for next year. Hopefully.

Gerald Cadogan is leading a quiet life, taken up in part by looking after Lucy who is sadly suffering from permanent orthopaedic discomfort. In his ongoing external activities, he is delighted to report that he has been joined by Artemis Georgiou, Assistant Professor (Research), at the University of Cyprus. Artemis matriculated at Merton in 2005, followed by a DPhil supervised by Merton Fellow, Professor Irene Lemos. Artemis has teamed up with him for publishing his excavation at Maroni on the south coast of Cyprus.

Geoffrey Copland has experienced a difficult time, troubling the medicos with several different conditions, which have sadly caused him to curtail his attendance at a number of Merton functions. He has ended his Chairmanship of the Thomas Wall Trust after 25 years and elsewhere has been slowly handing over another of his trusteeship posts to a successor, hoping by mid-summer to have divested himself of all such previous responsibilities, enabling him at long last to sit back and take it easy.

John Cotton has had a busy 12 months, with a hectic work travel schedule, but luckily one primarily centred on Europe, which is less tiring to access than long-haul destinations. He did, however, have one particularly agreeable trip outside Europe to Wyoming in the US. He and his colleagues were able to find a day off, spent in the glorious Yellowstone Park, reminding everyone yet again of how much there is to discover in life. On a general note, he considers himself to be extremely lucky to be still working, with responsibilities which are not just interesting but most of the time enjoyable. At home he is very blessed too, with a wonderful and understanding wife and a great family. He was in Oxford late last year to visit the very impressive China Centre, where a UK/Hong Kong charity of which he is a director, is considering funding a lectureship or similar.

John Crossley managed to get to Oxford in June 2024 and was able to host his old and distinguished friend Charles Burnett (Warburg) to the Encaenia lunch at All Souls. The Public Orator's speech was 'translated', John preferring the original Latin. The Australian government said travel was not recommended to the south of the Philippines, so he was unable to make his annual trip there last year. He has sent off to OUP the final files for a new edition of *What is Mathematical Logic?* which he first published with friends in 1972. Two other projects are within sight of the end, and two others are in progress, all supposed to produce books – ridiculous at his age. By July, if all goes well, he will be a great-grandfather. A friend and contemporary John Bradshaw, (1958), a regular dinner companion, has alas succumbed to Alzheimer's, and is now comfortably settled in a home. He can talk about the distant past, but not what he had for breakfast. He and Sara are planning to go to the US in May for a nephew's wedding, followed possibly by a visit to the UK in June.

George Darroch has like many of us been in thrall to a variety of pills, for angina and atrial fibrillation, but now all seems well, touch wood.

John Davies is in good form, though he had two cataract operations early in the year. January began with a symbolic act, his deciding to resign from being an evaluator of research proposals for the European Science Foundation, on the all-too-appropriate grounds that he needed to concentrate on the long list of his still outstanding scholarly obligations. April, however, saw him back in Bologna to give one lecture and to do the summing-up job at the end of a *convegno* on Ptolemaic Egypt – both the newly appointed Professor of Greek History there and her predecessor are good and long-standing friends of his, and he values the connection immeasurably. In early May he and Nicky had a magical week in Dorset, based in a delightful coaching inn in Dorchester (the trigger being that his paternal grandmother came from Wareham – where there were mentions of members of her family with the very rare surname 'Vye'). In September they took another trip, this time to Tuscany, with stays in Pisa, Siena and Firenze. Otherwise, he remains at home writing away on overdue jobs and doing his bit every Wednesday evening in the chamber choir which he has been intermittently attached to since 1977. Altogether a reasonably busy year, though less so than in the past.

Leslie Epstein is still teaching because he can close the door, shut out the university along with the rest of the world, and start cracking jokes to his ten students – or tell them he will find out which one of them is a Republican. He continues to write and is occasionally selling a story; harder with novels at his age and complexion and proclivities and gender, but still trying.

Peter Fattorini responded from Australia, being there to visit family. He is irritated by an attack of gout which has struck just as they were planning some long walks in the Blue Mountains; still, as his 85-year-old friend says, every day's a bonus. Back home, he continues to cycle, though not as far these days. His old club folded during lockdown as all the cafés were shut – cafés are essential for cycle clubs. They now meet once a month at their regular cafe for a social, but unless it's fine weather most turn up by car. Should it be of interest he wrote a rather flippant letter to the *Times* last year, which they not only published but included in the annual *Times* book *Sir, The year in letters*. It's on page 48 if you see a copy anywhere.

Bruce Gilbert was very sorry to hear about David Fletcher, whom he remembers with warmth and affection in his *In Memoriam* for David elsewhere in this year's *Postmaster*. He and Dot are in good health, with plans to visit the lakes, Doxford in Northumberland and Bruce's brother in Maastricht.

Francis Glassborow is active, accompanied by all the normal problems of ageing. His mind is still fully functional, even if things like knees are deteriorating. In April 2024 he gave his planned talk to the annual ACCU Conference on the value of learning new (computer) languages and maintained his regular participation in their lightening talks (5 min maximum and not a second longer); plus being called upon at the last minute to deliver a 20-minute presentation to fill a spot where a speaker had had to drop out. This last was well received, as he gave an introduction to an old computer language (APL for those interested), by working through a couple of simple programming exercises live. Programming and talking about what one is doing at the same time can be a lot of fun. As with many of us he had his own medical disturbances but is now hopefully on the mend. Otherwise, he continues to read widely, spending time exploring the more esoteric of

computer languages along with forays into the structures of the weirder natural languages (for example, many of the Australian Aboriginal languages have no word order), playing computer games, pottering around house and garden, and writing two regular (six per year of each) columns for a computer developers' journal. So you see that life goes on.

John Hartnett is still alive and well and living in Effingham, and thanks to a plentiful supply of medication, regular exercise and Sally's good cooking, he has survived another year and is glad of it.

Philip Hawkes and Patricia are fine, still doing the same with a Château life in the country and Parisien interludes. Bien à vous, as they write in France, et à bientôt.

Arthur Hepher at 84 gets a lot of fun out of the grandchildren, eight at last count, old friends (amongst others making the long journey up to London several times a year to put the world to rights with **Keith Pickering**), Homer (in Greek) and bridge – in that order.

Alan Heppenstall still enjoys good health and continues to house Ukrainian refugees, two women, one of whom has her daughter living with her. The daughter is 15 towards the end of this year and it is amazing to think that she will shortly have been to a local secondary school for three years. He hopes for their sake that the situation in the Ukraine might be resolved sufficiently for them to be able to return to their home in the not-too-distant future.

Mike Hind is happy to report good news on the medical front, enabling him now to make plans to head off for a tour of the Wye Valley later in the year, and to see for the first time the area made famous in Wordsworth's lines written above Tintern Abbey. He and **Keith Pickering** and **Richard Thompson** will be meeting for their annual lunch at some stage in the year.

Alan Keat is in touch with your Year Representative via his daughter, Anna, who reports that he continues to live at home (in spite of progressing dementia), but still enjoys a sneaky fag or two and has the benefit (!) of regular visits from his daughters.

Roger Laughton CBE (19 May 1942–20 August 2025) was in touch via his daughter, Cathy Austin, who reported that he had been diagnosed with Alzheimers's in 2016 and had recently moved into Bramshott Grange Care home. His wife Sue lives in a little cottage opposite the home and his daughter and her family are close by. Roger remembered Merton fondly and was delighted that his granddaughter had been offered a place at Oxford with a choral scholarship this coming September.

Tim Phillips maintains as always that he has nothing to report, so **Keith Pickering** wishes it to be known that plus respective long-suffering wives all four shared an intellectual lunch together, interrupted by much merriment, in March 2025.

Keith Pickering would like for once to speak as would an Oscar winner, and thank every one of the 1960 Mertonians who have so kindly taken the time to respond to his annual request for news of their life and times. Particular thanks also to those mentioned elsewhere, who by accompanying him on various luncheon outings have kept his alcohol level from sinking to a dangerous low. Good food, good wine, good conversation – the reasons to keep on going.

David Price is still alive and enjoying life in his gilded cage, and though beset with the usual ear, nose, throat and eye engineering appointments, he has so far happily been able to limit his collaboration with colorectal surgeons to their song on the internet.

Nick Silk continues to potter along, maintaining his health and figure with golf two or three times a week, supported by bridge and thrashing around in his allotment

Glynne Stackhouse has decided to retire (again) at the end of July this year from being the regular organist and Music Director at Streatley Parish Church, but if asked he will carry on playing for the occasional wedding, funeral or other service. He was saddened to learn that Richard Mulgan had died towards the end of 2024, as they had been good friends at Merton, shared many of the typical conversations and discussions that everyone had in those days about life and its (lack of) meaning, and in 1963 they travelled round

Greece for about six weeks, together with Roger Laughton. He played the organ for Richard's wedding to Margaret Bedgood, and a few years ago he and Pat visited Richard and his second wife, Aurelia, in Canberra. He notes we are all at that sad stage in our lives when our contemporaries diminish in number and can only be thankful to have had so many good friends amongst them.

Richard Thompson spent a wonderful family holiday in Majorca with their daughter Eleanor, who arranged everything and drove the hire car in the mountains, where he and Jane would never have gone. They stayed in a lovely village in a hotel with a cosmopolitan clientèle, surrounded by beautiful flowers, and visited some spectacular nearby gardens. He continues with his efforts to master Italian. Son Toby has changed his career and now makes money from his music, not an easy life, but he is financially secure. He continues to support lost sporting causes – Derbyshire cricket club and Chesterfield FC, ever hopeful they will eventually excel. Perhaps it's overstating it, but is there something noble about supporting lost causes? He joins the group of us with arthritic knees, but otherwise is doing well, very much enjoyed his get together with **Mike Hind** and **Keith Pickering** in 2024, and is looking forward to the 2025 re-match.

Michael Thorn says that he and his wife, Stephanie, are well, and learning, courtesy of the ginger beast, something of what living in Germany in 1933 was like.

Jim Trefil is still actively professing on at George Mason. He has hooked up with one of his fellow academics, a GMU astronomer, to write a book about supermassive black holes, called, imaginatively enough, *Supermassive*. Otherwise, he is in good shape and continues to work out each day

Bruce Walter says that 'Though very well cared for and at great expense by the Greek NHS, a combination of COPD and amyloidosis now limit my mobility, but I bask in the reflected glory both of a granddaughter who has recently capped her Oxford First by achieving an MSt with distinction, and a guitarist grandson chosen for audition at the Amsterdam Conservatorium. I keep in contact with **Mike Hind** as well as **Jasper Holmes**' and **Steve Hazell**'s widows, the latter of whom I met up with in Athens a few months ago.'

Philip Webb says *Postmaster* should print that ‘After surviving one of the worst of the 52 consecutive winters he has spent in Ontario, Philip Webb (Toronto), like his fellow-countrymen, is suddenly confronted by a vicious unprovoked attack on his nation by its big unruly neighbour to the South. Fortunately, there are 40 million of us and we inhabit a vast and beautiful land with several centuries of experience handling such challenges. We are taking steps to remind them to treat us with due respect, while always remembering that there are many good people down there, including Philip’s bio-father. He himself continues to age a bit each year but remains in basic good health and last needed medical advice in 1965. Canada remains the World’s most successful country and Toronto one of the best cities to live in, currently taking delivery of another 60 new street cars.’

John Wood welcomed his first great grandchild, a grandson, last December, and is looking forward to a second granddaughter marrying later this year.

Jonathan Wright is sad to hear of Richard Mulgan’s death. He was a good friend and a distinguished academic in New Zealand. He has published on Stresemann again in German: a collection of essays. He is finding it good to keep his hand in, and to join the debates of the next generation.

1961

Year Representative: Peter Cope

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Alan Johnston writes: ‘I think I have little to report save that Catherine died shortly before Christmas – a long and slow decline till a rather rapid end. Allegedly sepsis. Because of Covid and caring there is little else. I find the treatment of individuals by large organisations increasingly callous – we are not all criminals; tell your robot. But perhaps the robots will eventually be able to sort out the goodies from the baddies; sounds like a would-be article by John Lucas ... I did publish a minor volume recently, on a collection of Greek amphora stamps destroyed in Cairo in 1882, but recorded by its owner, one of the Calvert brothers, best known by being squashed by Schliemann during his work at Troy. The

Calverts were an interesting family. The volume arose out of my finding the manuscript catalogue of the collection in the British Museum, in a box file. Its title is *Henry Hunter Calvert’s Collection of Amphora Stamps* (Archeopress, 2020).’

MacDonald (Mac) Jackson writes from Auckland, Aotearoa/New Zealand: ‘As it happens, a new book of mine was published in January: *Shakespeare, Dramatic Poetry and Value*. These days my wife Nicole and I no longer make our once-regular trips to the Northern Hemisphere.’

(Sir) Howard Stringer writes: ‘I have just returned from Los Angeles attending the AFI tribute to Francis Ford Coppola. I recently retired as chairman of the American Film Institute. Since leaving the management of Sony, I have been producing a radio drama for the BBC called *Central Intelligence* starring Kim Cattrall, which a few weeks ago won best radio drama of the year! You can hear it on BBC Sounds. I am now working on another about the astronaut Buzz Aldrin starring John Lithgow. Like you I am adjusting to the obstacles of old age and loss of comrades in arms. Retirement is not for the faint of heart but I have a first grandchild, Ophelia, to dote on!’

Bob Machin writes: ‘Sorry, I haven’t got any news for the next *Postmaster* – just creaking into my dotage. We’ve given up on selling this house. The house I bought for £400k 40 years ago is now on the market for £1,105,000. The present owners have thrown loads of money on it and the interior photos are unrecognisable as the same property.’

A few days after the 1961 News was completed, your Year Rep learnt the sad news that Marcia, Bob’s beloved wife, had died peacefully in her sleep. The whole family are in our thoughts and prayers.

Peter Richmond writes: ‘It is worth reporting that I have had both knees replaced in the last three years, and despite that I am still skiing. Indeed, I spent my actual 80th birthday skiing! I am grateful that I am still healthy enough to do this, and am planning to go again next February.’

Peter Lee writes: ‘As to news, I am now Lee version 02, having been restarted by the NHS. I am informed that I have the option of two further restarts should my heart go astray

again, which doesn't compare well with my brother, who, having had three in the UK, went to live in France and had three more. Most of my time, now that I am too old and stupid to do any serious research, is devoted to struggling with a school system which gave up its autonomy to political ideology a decade or so ago and is now treating children like battery hens. Of course, there are many schools that have resisted the nonsense, and teachers who go on genuinely teaching. But kids have a habit of being observant and informative (if anyone listens). One grandson, aged 12 at the time, was recently asked by his grandmother how many teachers he had. She asked because more than 30 members of staff had resigned that year, and expected to find out how many substitutes the pupils were encountering. The reply was slow in coming while the lad thought about it, and unexpected. "Only one," he said. "All the rest just know how to work the whiteboard." So now we are involved in trying to educate kids who are at best being schooled. Luckily one has found a place in a different (third) school, where education is still practised as a normal activity.'

Frank Kelsall writes: 'We are pretty well confined to London these days and look at our house to see how we can make it more suitable – a downstairs bathroom would be good. But we have no plans to move and don't yet need a stairlift. Diane will join me as an 80-something in the autumn. Fortunately I seem to be in reasonably robust health; I have given up being bowls captain and secretary of Finchley Victoria Bowling and Croquet Club to make more time for family commitments – though I still play bowls and dabble in all sorts of conservation and architectural history matters. I am now in my last year of a three-year stint as chairman of the City of London's Conservation Area Advisory Committee. On the Merton front I went to the London lecture earlier this year because it was given by Steven Gunn on a topic of interest to me. This coming Saturday I'm going to College to celebrate the repair of the Library windows to which I had made a modest contribution. I took the family and two other friends to stay in The Old Parsonage at Iffley in March (a Landmark Trust house – I had won a prize in the trust raffle which contributed to the cost).'

Ian Harrold writes: 'I have little to report. A couple of my Evening Service canticles have been done at Gloucester

Cathedral over the road, and I continue to flood the market with wind quintets – 21 as I write and counting! I still sing with the Gloucester Choral Society and the Three Choirs Festival Chorus and enjoy my daily intake of gin.'



Alan Slomson with the T-shirt he was awarded as an Outstanding Volunteer in the Team Maths Challenge of the UK Mathematics Trust

Alan Slomson writes: 'I'm pleased to say that I am still in good health and have a number of interests to help keep my mind off the terrible things happening in the world. My volunteering role for the United Kingdom Mathematics Trust (UKMT) still takes up a lot of my time. If you go the UKMT website and select 'Enrichment' and then 'Summer Schools' you will find our Summer School 2023 Highlights video which I introduce and then sum up at the end. Another of my UKMT

activities supports our Team Maths Challenge (TMC). Earlier this year I was pleased to be presented with an Outstanding Volunteer Award by Stephen Mulligan, a former student of mine from the University of Leeds who is now a head teacher in Bradford and heads up the group that runs the TMC.'

Tony Ridge writes: 'Nothing to report from me save that I am making valiant efforts to revive the York and North Yorkshire branch of the Oxford University Society, of which I am President believe it or not, but which has shrunk to a shadow of its former self post-pandemic. So if any of your readers live anywhere in the region (one Mertonian, Nick Ansell (1964), lives a few doors away and is very supportive), or know of any Oxonians who do (because clearly members of all colleges are eligible), they might like to look at the Branch's Facebook page and think of supporting some of our activities.'

Mike Dearden writes: 'I failed miserably to provide you with an update last year so felt that I could not do so again without starting rumours of my demise! Mary and I continue to enjoy life in Cheltenham and are now in our 12th year here. The festivals and our circle of local friends keep us busy and last season we became members of Longborough

Opera. We alternate our Christmases between my family in Gloucestershire and Mary's in Grand Cayman. This year it was the turn of the Caribbean, and we didn't return until April. Our health remains good apart from a few octogenarian creaks and we are fortunate to have good walking countryside on our doorstep. What has really made me feel my age is that my Mertonian son, Jonathan (*Modern Languages*, 1985), will be retiring from the WHO within the next year.'

Ian Packington writes: 'I am coping as well as I can with the emerging effects of a progressive lung condition. I do note with great sadness the passing of David Page, whose friendship and support were invaluable to me. Tony Ridge remains my principal Mertonian contact in York, although joint activities are increasingly restricted'.



Wallace Kaufman has revised his illustrated memoir, *Grow Old and Die Young*, whose title he hopes to continue demonstrating. He's also finished a second enlarged edition, tentatively titled *A Guest of Time*. Both books are illustrated with his own photos. He says that so many of his friends from school, undergraduate years and Oxford years are disappearing that he is beginning to have survivor's guilt. He has had many professions since leaving Merton: school teacher and wrestling coach, English professor, building contractor, resident advisor on housing and land reform to Kazakhstan, mediator, real estate appraiser, and, of course, journalist and writer. He says he has never been notable in any of these. It's called 'being a generalist'. It seems, he says, that his clearest success is living

— healthy at 86. He's still kayaking, and creating a series of sculptures he calls Ocean Aliens. Given his fantasy sculptures and all his irons in the fire as in his boyhood, he sees a lot of truth in Brian W. Aldiss' observation: 'When childhood dies, its corpses are called adults.'

Abdool-Hack Mamoojee writes: 'There is nothing of significance to report. Didn't climb Everest but still walk on two legs; didn't write a book but can still read one! Yes, I did receive last year's *Postmaster* and appreciated the inclusion of Tony Ridge's gracious article and the pictures featuring his visit to our place.'

John Sandercock writes: 'Jenny and I have just returned from a visit to northern Italy looking at rock carvings from the copper and iron age. We also visited the excellent Ötzi museum in Bolzano. A lot of walking but we are still managing OK. The company is doing well and survived lockdown with no problem — actually we were overloaded with orders from companies worried about later deliveries for the year ahead. Now we have to deal with the idiotic Trump tariffs, but fortunately the US only accounts for about 25% of our business. I am involved in a minor way in the European Virgo project for measuring gravitational waves. The system is being upgraded and we have been asked to develop an improved vibration isolation system for the laser. A very interesting project.'



Peter and Melia Cope at the Victoria Falls, for their 40th wedding anniversary

Finally, news from me, **Peter Cope**. Once again it has been an interesting experience putting this column together — going

from hardly getting a response to having to edit down the contributions and choose the photos. Melia and I told you last June that our house in Ludlow was up for sale – we are *still* looking for a buyer. In the meantime, our family continues to expand, with two more grandchildren by adoption in Cambridge, and one more expected in September in Nottingham (the reason for our move). We were delighted to celebrate our ruby wedding anniversary in February at the Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe, followed by a week in the amazing Chobe Game Park in Botswana, where the abundant elephant, hippo and crocodiles also reminded us of the wonders of God's creation.

1962

Year Representative: Martyn Hurst

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Martin Hall is continuing work on a book of translations of Latin documents about medieval universities and, together with Professor Jonathan Phillips, on a book about 12th-century Pisa. He has a new granddaughter and, when time permits, visits his daughter's house in Arles which faces the Roman amphitheatre.

Paddy Millard has finally retired to maintain his too large garden under the direction of his wife whose new knees are no longer equal to the challenge. He remembers the late **Jeremy Hummerstone** with great affection but would not have wanted to be his archdeacon!

Alan Eastwood is exploring Italy by rail. He recently took a trip on a meandering line from Rome towards Viterbo. The curves were so sharp the train had to slow to 20mph and still the flanges squealed. There were frequent stops for farm tracks and paths and the condition of the carriages left something to be desired. A case of 'Take the B Train'. Next stop Sardinia in September for the narrow-gauge lines.

Callum McCarthy has finally left his teenage years behind him – as a leap-year baby – and is about to be overtaken in age by his eldest granddaughter. He and Penny divide their time between London and France where he is almost the oldest inhabitant of their French hamlet.

Martyn Hurst is editing the monthly newsletter for the Wey & Arun Canal Trust which is restoring the canal which joined the two rivers through the stunning countryside of Surrey and Sussex – clearly the Trust has a demographic problem! Maintaining gardens in the UK and France, golfing, fishing and tinkering with classic cars still leaves a bit of time for opera and family gatherings.

John Keane has discovered that being 80 is less old than he thought it would be and takes advantage of the opportunities to keep in touch with Merton.

Stephen Wentworth is keeping busy not just with family gatherings of his seven grandchildren. He has walked the Thames Path but in small sections over a large number of years enjoying the idea that he was linking life at Oxford with working life around Westminster and his place of birth just across the river from Hampton Court Palace. Study with the Open University and Birkbeck has taken him into areas quite different from chemistry at Merton. He now has qualifications in literature, history and Japanese cultural studies. He was glad to see that the Emperor of Japan and his Empress visited the College last year. He now runs a small reading and poetry group to explore new areas with friends and enjoys theatre and music conveniently close at hand in London.

Michael Goodman was unable to stay away from Merton and returned from 1972 to 1975 to do his DPhil and complete his training as a gastroenterologist. He currently leads a francophone group at his local U3A. A keen walker together with his wife Janet, he has set up a shorter distance group with his club – only five to seven miles. Few over-80s would consider that short!

Nicholas Olsburg, having spent 30 years curating, exhibiting and writing about modern architecture, has turned the clock back for a while to work on a study of William Butterfield. He was the architect who (among other things) restored Merton Chapel and designed the Grove Building. This comprehensive and rather beautiful book finally came out last October. Hard on its heels comes a more informal documentary history of Richard Neutra's Lovell Health House of 1927. For his retirement, he has promised himself only to publish words – illustrated books are too much trouble!

Andrew Morton called a Merton crew together to take the sails off *Balerno* for the last time in his ownership. He is open to offers from any would-be Ancient Merton Mariners!

1963

Year Representative: Guy English

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It will not have escaped notice that the cohort of 1963 will have been celebrating a significant birthday recently.

Alan Malcolm took the opportunity to revisit St Andrews – memories of 70 years ago. He even hired a piper above the Royal and Ancient Golf Club to serenade his family. His younger daughter got married in the autumn and we were delighted that her godfather (**Guy English**) was there to celebrate. Alan enjoyed visiting the Orange Tree Theatre in Richmond (invented by Sam Walters, 1958) and admired the wonderfully sprightly Oliver Ford Davies (1958) as Malvolio. OFD had started his thespian career at Questors in Ealing where Alan's children and grandchildren first trod the boards.

'I decided to expand my cultural awareness and for a few days immersed myself in Art Nouveau in Nancy. This was followed by "Vienna in 1900", and then to Northern Greece to pay homage to Alexander, narcissistic, genocidal thug – could not happen now. Observers will have noted that Merton has lacked a 'Visitor' for some months.' Alan is a part-time volunteer at Fulham Palace and so is backing the current Bishop of London, Dame Sarah Mullally to take over. Watch this space.

Ralph Abraham writes: 'Soon after leaving Merton many years ago, in a car journey with my fellow Mertonian **John Arrowsmith**, I remember outlining a plan to start a unique one-stop private medical clinic where I could indulge my passion for medical excellence in diabetes, endocrinology and heart disease prevention. Thirty four years later, London Medical now continues under BUPA ownership and I continue in active medical practice.

'I am sorry to report that, along with the blow of losing his wife Carolina last year, John is currently seriously unwell though

he is recovering slowly. I am sure John's many Mertonian friends will wish him a speedy recovery and convalescence.'

Peter Hay has this to say: 'In June 2023 I finally sent off my album of memorabilia from our College days, only nine years after I first took some of the material to the 750th anniversary celebrations. I tried to get the album to Merton in time to show it off to the participants at the Diamond Jubilee '63, but it arrived one day late, so you will have to visit the Archives to see it. I described some of its contents in *Postmaster* 2022, and I reiterate my hope that some of you may find notes or letters from my pen which you could consider contributing. And I'd strongly advise you to preserve and donate your own College memorabilia, before your heirs dump them into the dustbin.

'I would also like to mention the Library/Archives Acquisition Fund which the College established after a failed bid to obtain a very special Max Beerbohm item at auction for the lack of a few thousand quid. As a decommissioned book dealer I urge – and beg – you to dispose of any spare cash to support this fund to enable future purchases. I was happy to contribute to the successful bid on another Max Beerbohm caricature this spring. You can get more details about the fund from Dr Julia Walworth, Librarian, or Mark Coote, Director of Development.

'Dorthea and I stayed a few nights at Merton in June 2024 and Milos Martinov introduced us to Nadiya Ivanenko and Taisiia Sazonova, two talented scholars from Ukraine. I was gratified to read that the College and the University had established scholarships for Ukrainian refugees. I myself came to Britain as a refugee following the failed Hungarian revolution of 1956, and my education during ten years in Britain, including four at Merton, was entirely paid for by scholarships. Merton has a long history of association with my birth country through the Kodaly Choir and distinguished scholars like Professor Sir George Radda who was a Fellow in our time.

'We spent this past winter (2024–25) in southern California, as usual, but under the unusual circumstances of the devastating fires followed by the political upheavals continuing to this day. Like most Canadians, we will wait and see whether to visit our southern neighbours any time soon. More likely we will come to Europe in search of old friends and lost time.'

Les Holborow says he is 'still living a life of great concerts and a little golf with overseas trips confined to Australasia this year'.

Richard Nottage recently lost his wife Heather; they were married in Oxford in 1964. All children and grandchildren were able to attend a memorial event.

Roger Garfitt writes: 'Margaret and I are fine but sadly I'm writing an elegy for our dear friend Carolina Arrowsmith, who died at their second home in France after a long battle with cancer. This has been devastating for **John Arrowsmith**, who is none too well himself. He is back in London, in the close care of his family, and we keep in touch by phone and email.

Adrian Bullock says: 'For the first time ever, I am submitting something about myself in the hope that it will be of interest to some of our contemporaries like **Richard Stokes**, **Roger Powell-Wiffen** and **Simon Milburn**, with whom I took to pieces and reassembled a dilapidated Ford Prefect so that it ran for miles afterwards, **Piers Rodgers**, to name but a few who spring to mind as I write.'

Patrick Scott writes: 'We are still in Columbia, South Carolina, near my daughter, son-in-law and family; hotter summers than they used to be, but no winters. Not been travelling much: we had a week in Edinburgh last summer and are just back from San Francisco seeing my son, daughter-in-law, and the newest grandchild. I'm still writing on Robert Burns, and did a Walter Scott exhibition for the library last summer, but this year I'm handing on Studies in Scottish Literature (which I've been editing and producing since 2012) to a younger colleague.

Peter 'Cassandra' Laurie.

Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,
W.B. Yeats 'The Second Coming' (1919)

Pete contributed a view of world leaders and the future which, for his safety, will be circulated privately. Briefly:

'While Trump 1.0 was an inept, bumbling idiot, Trump 2.0 is a threat to civilisation. He will now be guided by the MAGA

intelligentsia and tech billionaires, just as the megalomaniac Hitler was assisted by Goebbels, Speer and the German industrialists. The future international landscape will change dramatically. The international order fashioned after World War II will be dismantled. Transactional arrangements between the great authoritarian powers within spheres of influence will prevail over any other form of international cooperation.'

As for me, **Guy English**, it's been another year of lotus-eating on the coast of Cornwall. I invested in new sails and went slower, but was later told that was normal. Highlights were my best birthday ever, spent in London with **Alan Malcolm** (a great celebration organiser) and **Lawrence Fenelon**, and rowing my Pilot Gig in the Great River Race, Millwall to Twickenham; 22 miles. I didn't even notice the Boat Race course. The training for that set me up for the winter. Recommended.

Best evening: All Souls' at Merton, stunning Requiem Mass and dinner afterwards. Unforgettable.

John Allen says: 'There isn't actually that much to report save that the year has been one of anniversaries, as it no doubt has been for others. First has been my 80th birthday, closely followed by our 50th wedding anniversary for which the younger members of the family arranged a very happy series of celebrations. Domestically, we had a year of upheaval which initially consisted of rectifying structural problems to the house, before continuing with a sorely needed new kitchen (anyone who's lived for nearly three weeks with a microwave etc. perched on the sideboard will know what that means!). And still more to come ...

Health-wise things seem as good as can be expected and I have been able to continue work on my planned new website on English church artists and architects. This is far from finished but I hope to have it available online in a usable form within the year. I think I may have said much the same last year but a lot has been completed since then and the necessary brainwork helps to keep me active, as my doctor-daughter repeatedly stresses I should do.

Lawrence Fenelon celebrated his 80th birthday with **Alan Malcolm** and **Guy English** by at last dining at Merton High Table last November. In fact it was at the familiar long tables

because the Hall was completely full of dons and their friends and a few OMs but no undergraduates. Lawrence remains in good health, having given up playing for his local Rutland village cricket team at age 75 (he describes them as 'down to his level'). Lawrence continues to complete his travel bucket list. Last year, he managed the Swiss rail tour he has been longing for. This included a stay in the delightful and beautifully preserved small town of Murten to the west of Berne. Apart from feeling phonetically at home, Mertonians can walk around the original town walls and visualise how the 2,000 locals managed in 1475 to save a large part of Switzerland from becoming part of Burgundy and eventually France.

Having retired from 20 years or so of raising grants and funding for early stage biotechnology companies, Lawrence spends his time as Chair of the Friends of the local museum defending it from potential closure, running a stand for the Historical Model Railway Society at seven exhibitions a year, organising events for the Rutland Wine Society and opening his large garden for the National Garden Scheme, which does wonders for keeping fit.

Gordon Whatley reports that he is still in Trumbull, Connecticut, 'deafier than ever, but still enjoying a daily three-mile jog on astroturf at our local high school. I also enjoyed, this past April, driving home solo, from Palm Springs, California: 2,700 miles over a leisurely six days. Mary flew – she hates long drives.'

Michael Taylor reports that he is living in São Paulo, helping to administer his wife's real estate business. He is active in an English-speaking Baptist church leading a Bible study, and travels twice a year to visit his son in Miami and daughter and two granddaughters in Azeitão, Portugal. He continues to be fit and healthy. He may be visiting the UK next year, around the time of the Merton party, and would love to re-establish contacts.

1964

Year Representative: Richard Burns

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One of the pleasures in preparing this note each year is that from time to time an email appears from someone who has not responded to my feeble requests for information for a long time or, indeed, ever. This year I am glad to say that I have had three such responses – from **Roger Dawson**, **Jonathan Peacock** and **Peter H. Wood**.

Roger Dawson has spent most of his post-Oxford life practising law in Vancouver. Following retirement he moved to France for four years and then returned to the UK and is now living in Lincolnshire. There he got involved in local politics and became a district councillor two years ago. In the May elections this year he stood as Labour candidate for Boston West in the county council election. He wasn't optimistic about his chances and sadly this proved to be an accurate forecast.

Jonathan Peacock, by contrast, has spent his life in the north of England, spending 30 years in chemical manufacturing ('huge fun'), where his achievements included gaining the first patent for controlling Legionnaires' disease, followed by 20 years as a business consultant. He has been married twice, his first wife having sadly died, and has two children and three stepchildren. In retirement he has followed his passion for history, currently as chairman of the Durham Victoria County History Trust. Before that he was a trustee of the Bowes Museum, where he also curated three exhibitions and published several books, one of them being about the surveyor Jeremiah Dixon (of the Mason–Dixon line), who gave his name to the term 'Dixie' for the Southern states of the US.

Peter H Wood, a Rhodes Scholar from Harvard who studied under John Roberts and Roger Highfield, returned to America to pursue an academic career, first at Harvard (PhD) and then as a professor at Duke and latterly at the University of Colorado Boulder. He specialised in early American History and is best known for his book *Black Majority* about the rice-growing industry in South Carolina and its African roots. The white planters specifically sourced their slaves from the 'Rice Coast' of West Africa, which stretched from Senegal to Sierra Leone, to take advantage of the long experience of rice cultivation which the inhabitants of that area enjoyed. The rice plantations were situated on the coast

and the offshore 'Sea islands', whose climate was conducive to mosquitos and tropical diseases, which meant that white people weren't keen to live there and the Black Gullah of West Africa culture was able to survive. This highly influential book was first published in 1974 and was re-issued in a new and expanded edition in 2024.

Peter is now hoping to work with the Rothermere American Institute in Oxford to encourage the new Alain Locke Collection at the Vere Harmsworth Library there. Locke was the first Black US Rhodes Scholar in 1907 – and the only one until 1963. Peter is insistent that he be known as Peter H Wood to avoid confusion with another Peter Wood (Peter W), a historian much more in tune with the politics of the current US Administration than himself.

My more regular correspondents have little news to share. **Andrew Curtis** is no longer able to drive and has sold his car. **Richard Peel** brought his wife and younger daughter from Norway to Oxford in April and were lucky enough to enjoy hearing the Merton Choir rehearsing for a concert in the Chapel.

Tony Webster has provided this snapshot of his year. 'I continued to make music with two bands. The big band was saved from decline by a Cambridge Doctor in Astrophysics. I spent some time with **Mike Robson** in Bordeaux and managed also to visit Italy to see **Ken Segar** in Lucca. He was having a break from his time gallivanting around Europe in search of good singing. My personal highlight was gathering my family around me in a joint celebration of birthday and Christmas. We hired a house on Pevensey Bay where the younger children failed to find any permanent records of William the Conqueror's landing. Our regular visits to Normandy were highlighted by the work being done to create a replica of the Conqueror's flagship in Honfleur. I hope to see the boat landing at Pevensey but that will not happen for a further five years.'

I myself had a nasty fall down some Georgian stairs in the spring of 2024, cracking my sacrum, and managed a grand total of three holes of golf in the year. That is three more than I have achieved so far in 2025.

1965

Year Representative: Jonathan Zamet

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To begin my first effort as a Merton year representative, I must tip my hat to **Peter Robinson** who played this part for many years. I was happy to receive this response from him: 'We have recently returned from a cruise to Madeira, Lisbon and the Canary Islands. Next month we look forward to a trip to Roses in Catalonia from where we will be taking daily trips by train out into the Pyrenees, and coastal Southern France.'

I did wonder, since we are all getting on quite a bit, how athletic, you might say, the responses would be.

Hugh Paget at least is doing pretty well. 'As long retired, I can only report that last year was much like those before. Eleanor and I live in a delightful village in the Cotswolds, and are very active in our garden and myself in a small wood getting firewood out. I am fit and still hugely enjoy long walks over the hills (18 miles the other day). And we make frequent visits to London for opera, theatre and Arsenal (season ticket holders) and friends and family. I have been dragooned into being the church treasurer and am also a trustee of a charity Friends of Ibba Girls' School which has built and supports a wonderful school for over 300 girls in South Sudan, which is tough going.'

Ray Miles also remains active despite serious surgery. 'I am back in the saddle both literally and metaphorically following triple heart bypass surgery three years ago. Later this year I'll be making a nostalgia trip to Japan (my first in more than 20 years), where I worked in broadcasting in the 80s and 90s. Meanwhile, I continue to divide my time between my house in San Miguel de Allende, Mexico, and my studio flat in the Barbican, London.'

John Dryden is another energetic septuagenarian. 'As the years tick by it wouldn't be unusual for the Niagara of gongs, honours, publications etc. for our cohort to slow to a trickle. For me, it's a case of no news being good news. I'm enjoying a peaceful retirement at the foot of the Surrey

Hills, punctuated by bike rides and cultural excursions. I'm hoping to make it to the summit of Mt Ventoux again this summer if I can find a bike with a low enough gear. Last time it took me about four times longer than the Tour de France peloton. I rarely get to Merton — only twice in the last 12 months: for the Memorial Celebration for Dominic Welsh, my old tutor; and for the garden party at the 50th anniversary of Bannister's four-minute mile. Both nostalgia-evoking of course, but rather uplifting in their different ways.'

Bill McGrew, one of our Rhodes Scholars, appears to be only partially retired. 'At age 80 years, not much to report. Still keeping a foot in the academic door, as Hon. Prof. at Univ of St Andrews. In retirement, am working on a sequel to my book *Chasing after Chimpanzees. The Making of a Primatologist* (2021). As with it, all proceeds will go to sanctuaries for chimpanzees.'

Peter Southern, a fellow historian, is obviously keeping busy. 'I don't have anything which could qualify as news but I just want to say hello. I'm part of a group of about ten 1965 matriculands which keeps in touch a few times each year but my connections with Merton directly are very infrequent. However, the lunch on Sunday 29 June caught my eye and I hope very much to be there and to see you. However, I cannot yet be sure about the date which falls in a welter of grandchildren commitments and may take a bit of juggling to commit to fully.'

David Barker brought a smile to my face. 'Nothing much to report I'm afraid. Ageing ungracefully in California — proving the latter part of Wilde's dictum "With age comes wisdom, but sometimes age comes alone." I seem to have plenty of company in DC! For me, major losses this year, apart from those in my retirement accounts, were limited to an earlobe (melanoma) and 12 inches of hair (a Covid-inspired ponytail — it seems the hair will be used by a local potter to make designs on his pots during the firing process!). I finally had to acknowledge senility last year at Dublin Airport when I was refused a rental car because of my age. Oh well, at least our generation will have witnessed the death knells of two empires, the British and the American, both pretty much self-inflicted! I am considering imposing a tariff on all goods coming up our driveway — apparently it is the key to making the Barkers Great Again!'

David Madden's response initially disappeared into the ether, but Julia Bell rescued it. 'For the *Postmaster*, I am an Honorary Antonian, i.e. a senior member at St Antony's College, Oxford. I continue to work on South East Europe at the European Studies Centre there. I am also Vice Chair of Compassion in World Farming, an international charity which promotes the welfare of farm animals round the world. No shortage of work and opportunities there!'

For my own part, I remain active. Married off #2 son on a sparkling day on the shores of Lake Tahoe last October. I can still swing a golf club though from the ladies' tees these days. I continue to indulge my passion for making pottery. I have managed to persuade Merton to allow me to offer a couple of small summer grants to enable undergraduates who might be interested to experience working in a craft environment. I find that I am three-quarters of an inch shorter and four pounds heavier than I was at Merton which, I suppose, signifies a certain regression to the midriff. As I write this, I am looking forward to the Diamond Jubilee luncheon in a few weeks' time. Several of my classmates have promised to come.

1966

Year Representative: David Holmes

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Chip Filson says that in his retirement he continues to write a blog about credit union cooperatives, his professional interest for 40 years. He enjoys the live Merton Chapel services on the internet and is hoping to make one more return visit if circumstances permit.

Christoph Harbsmeier shared with me a little article on himself in the *Peking People's Daily* from 21 April 2025 (all in Chinese). Christoph is still in Copenhagen beaver away at his ancient Chinese texts.

Michael Hebbert says he has less and less to report as the years roll by in retirement. He splits his time between a house in Oxford and a flat in central Manchester, two vibrant and youthful cities connected by hourly trains.

Roger Tomlin, who retired from his Oxford lectureship some years ago, still edits *Roman Inscriptions of Britain*, in which capacity he has just published a large collection of Roman curse tablets written on lead, *The Uley Tablets* (2024). He has given a copy to the College Library.

1967

Year Representative: Rhoderick E. Khilkoff-Boulding

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Colin Frazer writes that he continues to teach Latin and Ancient Greek at Marlborough College and also English (of sorts) to Ukrainian friends. His wife, Maria, is a Ukrainian child from the Second World War diaspora, and – naturally enough – speaks the language fluently; he, he says, plods by. They have family fighting (and dying) for freedom. (We wish all of them well in this existential struggle).

After 30 years, Colin and Maria have sold their village house on Naxos, so **Andrew Hobson** is now Merton's only representative on the island. But he has the presence, charm and chutzpah to do a brilliant job, in Colin's view.

At home, six grandchildren keep them busy. One battered Oxford's bowling at Lord's this year. However, he writes that nothing can replicate the buzz of the Merton Mayflies and asks: 'Whatever happened to that uniquely splendid tie? And do the Mayflies still grace the Kirtlington Lamb and Ale Feast?'

Jonathan Hodgkin is now officially emeritus as an Oxford Professor of Genetics but remains somewhat research-active in the Department of Biochemistry, pursuing puzzles and finishing last papers. Frequently he visits Bristol and there sees **Tim Grice** and **Fergus Macbeth**, who are similarly semi-retired from law and medicine, respectively. As a trio (almost a quartet, but **Michael Macdonald** couldn't make it) they celebrated the 55th anniversary of the Merton Floats production of *Edward II*, by going to see the recent RSC production of this play in Stratford. They all took part in the 1970 Floats performance, which was put on in the College gardens next to the lime trees (sadly, long gone).

Richard Allen speculates that when one reaches one's 70s, there is less on which to report, while being relieved that one is still able to report no news of any significance. Apart from finally giving up his work helping small charities improve their business analysis, he reveals that he is still writing, running (considerably more slowly), making regular trips to the family flat in Deal, and enjoying being a grandparent.



The 'Carpe Diem' group at the top of the Chapel Tower



The 'Carpe Diem' simnel cake of the Modern Linguists

Nigel Middlemiss, **Mike Zollo**, and **Mike Lewis** provided a joint report (via Nigel) on behalf of the remaining Merton Modern Linguists. Their 'Carpe Diem' group had a wonderful reunion at Merton in April this year. They climbed (slowly?) the narrow spiral staircase of the Tower to see the glories of Oxford

spread below them as evidenced by the photograph. Later they viewed nostalgic videos and feasted on Simnel Cake topped with the College crest, made and decorated by Nigel (photo below). They drank to absent friends **Stuart Jack** and **Prisca Middlemiss**, gone but never forgotten. With them still were, happily, Carol Zollo, Carol Lewis and Mari Jack.

Ever productive, Nigel has just published on Amazon a 200-page study aid: *Memorize French!*, targeted at, for example, second homeowner expats in *La Douce France*.

Clive Richardson is now a member of the Worshipful Company of Blacksmiths and working on the membership and craft committees. Plenty of opportunity for work and the pleasure of dining at halls of many City Livery Companies. (I think that there are three of us now, who are members of City Livery Companies; if there is anyone else, please do let me know).

Clive and Anne were given medals by the borough for their charity work as 'Active Citizens' and are still involved with their twinning work with Chantilly (near Paris). This is ever more precarious due to the changes in management in Surrey which removes Epsom and Ewell as a borough. It has been great to go to several events arranged by Merton during the last couple of years. As Rotarians Anne and Clive played an active part in arranging their local Centennial Spring Ball which raised over £6000 for two local charities – 'Action for A-T', and 'My Time for Young Carers'.

Family-wise they seem stable at four grandchildren – two locally and two in Bristol. He asks, as a matter of interest, what was a pi-meson? (Answers from fellow physicists on a postcard please...)

Martin Sands reports that he still keeps in touch with former colleagues from the Ministry of Defence and makes good use of the Oxford and Cambridge Club in London, most recently for a VE Day dinner. He also tries to attend London-based Merton events as well as those at the College where possible.

The highlight of the past year was the opportunity for Martin and his wife Carol to return to Singapore and Malaya where they had lived in the 1950s and 1960s respectively when their fathers were serving there with the RAF and RN. Not surprisingly, much had changed in the intervening decades, particularly in Singapore, but they were able to see their former houses on what the British bases were then, as well as some of the well-known landmarks from the colonial era such as the Raffles Hotel. They also visited a new museum at Changi which was a very fitting memorial to the prisoners held there during the Second World War and the war cemetery at Kranji. Thanks to the kind assistance of the Merton Development Office, they were able to meet up with fellow Mertonian Whang Shang Yin (1983) and had

a very enjoyable and interesting day visiting museums and discussing life in present-day Singapore and in the past.

Christopher Hill has been an Emeritus Professor of International Relations at Cambridge for eight years now, while also a Senior Associate Fellow of the School of Advanced International Studies, Johns Hopkins University at Bologna. He and his wife Maria (Somerville, 1967) spend as much time in Italy as they can, although they live principally in Duxford just south of Cambridge. These days he only teaches by supervising the occasional Master's student, but he is still writing – the latest project is a jointly edited history of Chatham House due to appear at the end of 2025. He is joint editor of *The European Review of International Studies* and a Life Fellow of Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge. His main interest is in the interplay of domestic societies and international politics. His memories of Merton, not least of his friends and tutors there, remain clear and affectionate.

Keith Wade informs us that his health is revitalised following successful knee replacement surgery two years ago, and he is now once more able to let fly his occasional top-spin forehand and 30 mph serve, and successfully to respond to the challenges of stiles, six-bar gates and electric fences faced during his weekly country walks with friends.

Keith is hoping to publish within the next ten years his long-awaited book on the history of the pubs, inns and taverns of Sevenoaks 10th century to the present day – but more research is needed and is continuing intensively. He is still rejoicing in the public exposure and approbation after his two minutes and ten seconds of fame when appearing as 'a local historian' in the first series of BBC's *Hidden Treasures of the National Trust* (back in June 2023.); here he did his best to explain the likely origins of a 'Black Boy' inn sign, and the various reasons given for the name. His research has led to several articles, newspaper features, sampling, and provision of information and advice to owners on the history of the heritage pubs in Sevenoaks.

At the invitation of his youngest daughter, Keith is writing his memoirs – including of course the highlights of his four years reading Classics at Merton and, inter alia, brief notoriety, with rest of 'The Knickers Eight', as a one-time rower.

He continues voluntary work for the local civic society (the Sevenoaks Society), as Publicity Officer, Keeper of Archives, Spokesperson on Trees, Contributor to Exhibitions and various other projects, and co-author of its publication *Sevenoaks - a Remarkable Town*; all fitted between hobbies of gardening, allotment work and photography. He and Sandie are obviously enjoying spending time with their three children and their partners, and grandsons – all of whom fortunately live within easy reach.

John Dixon affirms that he is ‘still kicking’ (which is good, for there are some as aren’t) and is doing lots of reading and thinking.

Richard Edwards, safely ensconced in Luxembourg, after a busy and rewarding professional life between 1972 and 2016 teaching English and History in Cardiff, Algeria, London, Rome, Nice and Luxembourg (twice) has only had fleeting contact with Merton over the last 25 years, although he is in regular contact with **Hugh Miall**, whom he meets biannually. Intense classroom activity, running school drama productions, football teams etc over 44 years has been a satisfying if draining experience, but over time it can do things to a chap:

It has been survivable only with the support and companionship of his second wife (Diana Brown, LMH) who worked as a translator at the European Parliament. They have two children: Rose in Luxembourg, and Tom in London. He and Diana intend to remain in Luxembourgian retirement where he hopes the impact on the wider world of the current US Administration, about which he is rather less than optimistic, might be more muted.

John Walsh reveals that this year he celebrates 10 years of retirement from law, and 20 years of quiet living in Macclesfield with his wife, Lyn. Both of them are still on the Committee of the Macclesfield Literary & Philosophical Society and are now its Joint Treasurers. Additionally, they are both members of the Committee of the ‘Friends of the Northern Chamber Orchestra’ (a funding support for that brilliant orchestra), and he has become the Committee’s Chair.

John has also become a member of the ‘Club Franco-Britannique de Macclesfield’; the main benefit of his attending

its meetings (where use of the French language is *de rigueur*) is to keep towards the front of his mind how little French speech he can understand beyond coping (*pour la plupart*) with ordering food and wine in restaurants in France. Still, his attending did, no doubt, help the two of them to have an 18-day French holiday in May/June; highlights of this included very much enjoyed stays at two hotels they had booked to stay at for a 2020 holiday but had had to cancel because of Covid-19.

Russell Sleigh advises that everything is good for him and his family in Vermont. (We hope that things will stay that way in the wonderfully verdant and wooded Green Mountain State). Janet’s bookshop is going along very nicely. It is focused mainly on tarot and spirituality in general. Russell and their older son take care of one corner which is devoted to philosophy and poetry. Quite apart from the stimulus of learning a new trade, he finds it very rewarding to meet the stream of interesting people who come through the shop, including some well-known authors, and to feel embedded in the affairs of the beautiful village of North Bennington. (This is a lovely and friendly town I knew quite well, and it is close to the famous Bennington College).

Russell notes that **Sir Brian Leveson** and his wife Lynne visited some 18 months ago and stayed for three lovely days. They talked and talked the whole time.

Sir Brian Leveson is very much still working flat out as a lawyer. He is still serving as the Investigatory Powers Commissioner which, as can be imagined, plays a vital role in keeping us safe, and is absolutely no sinecure. But on top of this now, as all Merton lawyers will have noticed, he was in December 2024 assigned an additional mega-task to review the functioning of the entire criminal justice system in England and Wales, which is clogged with several tens of thousands of backlogged cases to be tried. His task is to assess why this has come to pass and also to recommend how on earth to deal with it and to prevent it happening again. He follows in the (largely unsuccessful) footsteps of Lord Justice Auld’s review in 2001.

Although I (Rory) have not done criminal defence work for some two and a half decades and have only personal and anecdotal

experience of the world of criminal law, my view is that this may be a Sisyphean rather than a Herculean task for Sir Brian. No government of any stripe seems to want to do more than comment on the criminal court problem when it explodes from time to time and most certainly is always reluctant to provide the resources to remedy a systemic administrative malfunction. The first part of Sir Brian's report has already been released to much instant hand-waving from various interested quarters; the second part is to follow later this year.

Sir Brian's continuing contribution to the rule of law in this country over some 55 years has been and continues to be well above and beyond the call of duty. We can all be very proud of him.

For my part, I am still working from home in East Sussex with my wife Marina (St Hilda's, 1968), our son and daughter-in-law, and 12-year-old grandson. As, I think, the only other still-practising lawyer from our '67 cohort, I must first apologise for being 'off-line' for the last three *Postmaster* years. This is absolutely not my fault of course; I blame it entirely on certain specific clients and the Civil Court system (which could also do with a really good and proper review, but I am not volunteering), and in particular the Chancery Division. I have been wholly absorbed and immersed in these during this period. It is the only court division to which Charles Dicken's famous *Bleak House* advice has actually been cited long ago with express approval by the House of Lords (now the Supreme Court). To be fair it does now, however, have a very good, computerised case administration programme indeed. But my own personal bandwidth and juridical error tolerance are not quite what they used to be, so I have fellow feeling with **Richard Edwards** above.

Rory and Marina at Glyndebourne



In order to decompress, Marina and I auditioned last autumn and were accepted as part of the Community Chorus for a new opera at Glyndebourne (*Uprising* by Jonathan Dove) in February and March this year. It was a wonderful experience; intense concentration on musical

precision is a very good antidote. It is the third (and probably the last) time we have participated in this way at Glyndebourne and, for amateurs, to be surrounded again by top-notch and skilfully demanding professional musical and theatrical trainers by one of the country's leading opera houses is a huge privilege, opportunity and pleasure. We are resolved to spend more time on musical activity to help keep us sane in these currently 'interesting times'.

1968

Year Representative: Ian McBrayne

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A good haul of replies this year. Many thanks to all concerned. That means a degree of abbreviation in this report, but I must give plenty of space to **Des Shaw**, who has contributed for the first time, at least on my watch, making up for previous silence with a potted biography of the past 50 years.

After Oxford, Des stumbled into the engineering world of process control systems with an American company called Combustion Engineering Lummus, which built turnkey ethylene plants around the world. In 1983, he was invited to the head office in New Jersey for three weeks to present a design for a control system simulator, which led to being offered a six-month assignment there to project manage its creation. He was able to take his whole family, and with his wife and three kids had a great time exploring New York City at the weekends. The place grew on him. The fact that his salary doubled while the cost of living halved was a plus, but the main reason was finding the place more congenial to a person of his working class, mixed Irish ancestry. So when he was offered a permanent job he accepted, and they have been there ever since.

In the 1990s petrochemical engineering relocated from New Jersey to Texas, but Des and Geraldine decided not to uproot the family, and Des became one of many engineers who took their skills to Wall Street. He ended up as a software development director for Thompson Reuters. After retirement, he went back to college and qualified as a certified financial planner, but the prospect of long hours on the phone and

calls at 2am from panicking clients put him off. He now prepares income taxes every winter, finding it a great way of meeting lots of different people, and gets a kick out of giving them financial advice.

Des and Geraldine Shaw



Des loves hiking in beautiful Rockland County where he lives, just 20 miles north of New York City yet more than 30% public parkland. He has been on the board of worship of his local Unitarian Universalist church for many years, is treasurer of the cooperative apartment complex in nearby Nyack where he and Geraldine may well end up, and sings in a choir supported by his local library, where he also discovered a creative writing group. This last has inspired him to write his memoirs. He has sent me a sample chapter, with permission to pass it on to anyone who cares to email me and ask for it.

Stewart Morgan has also surfaced after several years of silence. He now finds that contact with friends tends to start with a discussion of ailments, what one friend describes as getting the organ recital out of the way. His own health has been a rollercoaster since he last reported, including a bilateral hernia operation, four broken ribs, an emergency appendectomy and throat cancer surgery. He was pleased to find himself still functioning reasonably well at the start of this year, until a fall while skiing in Canada in April took him back into surgery for a rotator cuff repair of his left shoulder, which seems to have gone well. He was sorry to miss the Merton London Dinner as a result.

Stewart fears he may be deterred from skiing again after 47 enjoyable years, but he and Rosemary hope to continue to enjoy travelling. A wonderful extended trip to New Zealand and Australia in 2020 was brought to an abrupt end by the Covid crisis; they grabbed the last two seats on a flight which got them back to the UK the day before lockdown. With their daughter increasingly settled into a life in Mexico, they will continue to venture there periodically, while this summer they are planning to tick Svalbard off their bucket list, travelling back by boat along the Norwegian coast to Bergen. Like Des, Stewart is writing a personal memoir; he says he is re-evaluating his personal stories and finding that the exercise needs quite a lot of self-forgiveness.

When **Kelvin Roberts** wrote last year about taking part in a flying rally from Toulouse to St Louis in Senegal, he was just embarking on his next great post-retirement adventure. He had been invited to take part in a ten-day Harley Davidson motorcycle tour of the national parks west of Las Vegas. He hadn't ridden a motorcycle with gears for 40 years, but says that after a refresher course he had a great time. The guide had researched old roads over mountains and deserts. One day they left Death Valley in the morning at 38°C and rode over the mountains to Lake Tahoe, dropping at one stage to -5°C with snow on the roadside. Kelvin covered over 2,500 miles in ten days, and says he hopes this shows that Mertonians do not lose their sense of adventure as they age (in his case, 80 in September).

Kelvin Roberts on his Harley Davidson



Another man with a sense of adventure and an American national parks habit is **Alan Harland**. When writing, he and



Alan Harland dwarfed by the world's largest Czech egg

Jude were 2,000 miles into their latest campervan trip, spending Memorial Day weekend with their daughter in Colorado, hiking still snowy trails around the many alpine lakes on the Grand Mesa, the world's largest flat-topped mountain. Their main destinations on this trip were the mountain parks of the north-west, with an incursion into Canada and back to Minnesota and the Great Lakes. Musical interludes on recent trips have included the Jazz Museum in Kansas City,

the Museum of Pop Culture in Seattle and the Motown Museum in Detroit. Alan adds that no trip would be complete without some silly tourist attractions, including, in Kansas alone, the world's largest Czech egg, largest easel (with a 32-foot rendition of Van Gogh sunflowers) and largest ball of twine.

Last summer, Alan and Jude made a long-overdue return to the UK to visit family and friends, and to serve as tour guides to Philadelphia neighbours who were renting a house in the Cotswolds. Making up partially for missing the 50th reunion, Alan was able to enjoy his own travelling Gaudy, rekindling old and treasured friendships at the homes of **Tom Head**, **Lou Henderson**, **Neil Loden** and **John Reynolds**. Life is good, he says.

Also still on the move is **Kit Heasman**, whose recent treks include the Sentiero del Inglese in Calabria, the Cathar Way in southern France and the Great Elba Crossing, as well as coastal and mountain walking in the UK. The most important part of Kit's message, as a two-time sufferer, was a warning to beware the ticks which cause Lyme disease. His advice is: read the entry on the NHS website, wear long trousers with the legs tucked into your socks if walking in undergrowth, check for ticks after walking, carry tweezers to remove them, and if bitten go to a GP immediately and get some doxycycline. And, he adds, enjoy your walking!

Always trying to use his time constructively, **Steve Drinkwater** says he is spending more time with family and friends, more time walking in the countryside and more time in the garden (not liking gardening but liking the results). He still walks with local rambling groups, leading occasionally; is now a non-executive trustee of the Friends of the Pembrokeshire Coast, having handed over the chair to a younger person with lots of fresh ideas; organises walks for the Pembrokeshire National Trust Association; and is a trustee of the local community and sports association. He continues to hear children read each week at a local primary school, and in the past year has visited Cornwall, South Devon, Mid Wales, Newark, Oxford and the Cotswolds.

Alan Taylor is still enjoying his new role as chair of the Teachers' Pension Fund. He too remains active, completing the Three Peaks Challenge in Yorkshire in May, although even he finds that the hills get a little higher and steeper each year.



Tresco. No wonder Nick Bicat found it utterly beautiful

Some of our year retain a creative streak. **Nick Bicat's** main project of the last year was a musical-dramatic account of the life of Ignatius Sancho (1729–1780). Born on a slave ship, he rose to become a prominent abolitionist, writer and composer and was the second black man to vote in Britain. Nick found the project fascinating. Following its premiere for the Royal Parks in Greenwich, he is planning its evolution into a larger production. In April, Nick and his wife spent a week on Tresco in the Isles of Scilly, which he found utterly beautiful, full of plants flourishing in the wild which we would struggle to grow in greenhouses on the mainland. Amen to that, Nick: the Scillies are wonderful and a favourite McBryne haunt!

Nicholas Richardson has another publication to his name as joint editor of *Cantate Domino: A Commentary on the Hymns of the Liturgy of the Hours. Volume I. Proper of Time: Advent, Christmas, Lent and Easter*.

George Daly is enjoying working on *Zen and Now*, the life of Siddhartha, looking at using AI for talking books to be narrated by the voices of dead authors, and drawing on the old days of PPE for his work with the Justice Defenders charity in Africa. He and Angela are still living happily ever after in Brittany, enjoying time with their nine grandchildren and often seeing Peter Bibby's widow Anne. When he wrote they were about to start a 100-kilometre sponsored canal-side walk for Hospice Africa.

David Bell and **Tim Cole** are now to be counted among the retired. David says everyone asks what his plans are, but with travel, golf and ten grandchildren he doesn't have time for any more major activities, except reminiscing with fellow Mertonians. Tim finally left UCL in September 2024 with a jolly afternoon celebration where he talked about his career and colleagues said nice things about him. The event can be seen on YouTube: search for 'Statistical storytelling: 55 years mulling the mystery of human growth'.

Despite wondering each year whether he should retire from work and (expensive) play, **Simon Orebi Gann** continues to be called on by company boards for advice, often about technology, particularly now that cyber attacks are so high profile, and has inexplicably signed on for a 31st year of racing his beloved 1961 Morgan SLR, egged on by having won a major award for the previous season. He is encouraged by his wife Kate on both counts, possibly fearing what he would do if he really retired, as he is a dangerous gardener. Simon also enjoys regular lunches with a small group of college contemporaries, and recommends the practice.

Martin Wainwright and Penny suddenly have lots more time, as their three grandchildren are in school and preoccupied with two new kittens. Thus evolution and the stages of man run their well-designed course, says Martin. They continue attempting feats of fundraising while they can, including a river walk to Haslemere, clipping seconds off their Bannister Community Mile timings and playing fancy dress fives. Fans of the Lettuce Memorial should note that it is now in its third

incarnation, high up in a Mesopotamian tree with lodgings for a guardian bird. By the time you read this, the shrine will have been twinned with Truss's Island in Staines at a suitable ceremony.

Several mentions of grandchildren by our respondents already, but is **Nicol Webster** the first in our year to be on the point of welcoming a great-grandchild? With his own great-grandparents all born in the 1840s, in the days of sailing ships and railway mania, when photography and the electric telegraph were emerging technologies, he reflects: will he seem as antiquated to this new generation?

The high point of **Chris Simmons'** year was digging at Vindolanda and Magna, the two Roman sites along Hadrian's Wall in the care of the Vindolanda Trust. He spent a week at each and carted away many a barrowload of soil and stone. At Magna, he excavated a well. The construction technique was fascinating, but the risk of collapse meant they didn't get to the bottom of it. It turned out to be post-Roman, though the Romans used the same method. The other high point was a week spent in Bradford, City of Culture 2025. Chris says that fans of local lad David Hockney will find plenty and more to enjoy.

For **Danny Lawrence**, life in Manchester continues to please, especially as at the time of writing Manchester City seemed to have recovered from the slump of some weeks before. As a regular at the Etihad, he was looking forward to the Cup Final. (Subsequent history reveals, of course, that recovery continued in the league but the Cup went less well.) Danny continues to travel, recently enjoying trips to France, Estonia, Latvia and Finland, as well as his usual crazy time in Edinburgh at the Festival.

Alan Sked reports that he became a member of the Athenaeum in December and in January celebrated three years with his partner. **Alastair Northedge**, still living in Nanterre outside Paris, observes that people of our generation are called *soixante-huitards* in France, a reference to those who took part in the demonstrations which marked 1968.

Scirard Lancelyn Green's year has been overshadowed by two oil leaks, necessitating the digging up of rather a

lot of soil and the evacuation of a flat in the main house because of air pollution. The work took about six months, with contractors appearing on site for about one week in five, leaving closed off areas for the next four. Apart from that, he has done four solar PV systems on shops and had another four refused by planners. He has kept up choral singing (twice doing two different concerts on the same day because of clashes) and skiing, and for now the ice dance.

In February, **Steve Powell** and Jill attended **David Gadian's** 75th birthday party in Barley near Cambridge, where they also met **Geoffrey Grimmett**. For Steve's own birthday in March, Jill organised a short break to tick off a bucket list item by visiting Bletchley Park. At the end of April, they were caught by the widespread power outage in Spain: their cruise ship was temporarily stranded in Gijon because the port's navigation systems were out of action. Power was restored later in the evening and they made the next destination on schedule.

Several correspondents alluded to survival, perhaps most picturesquely and poignantly **Richard Hofton**, who wrote: 'I'm still vertical, an achievement of sorts given the recent disappearing act staged by several of my friends and contemporaries; a sad cabaret, but inevitable at our age.' Richard has become enslaved to an energetic young dog, so is again pounding the parks and pavements of Solihull. He continues to enjoy Merton hospitality via the Founder's Society Lunch; he says the event is usually blessed with delightful spring weather and this year's was particularly rewarding. 'Come in, class of 1968: the water's fine!' A suitable note on which to end this report.

1969

Year Representative John Symes

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I was pleased to receive the same number of responses as last year – with many (but not all) faithful correspondents continuing to keep in touch. In our 'no news is good news' section, I can record the following: **Will Barton, Jonty Boyce, Jeremy Cooke, Robert Elam, Howard Davis, Tony Hansen**

(still offering his guest apartment to Mertonians coming to Berkeley, either for academic reasons or personal vacation), **Anthony Harris, Martin McNeill, Christopher Moore** (still living in Normandy), **Andrew Perrins** (well and living in Sheffield), **Michael Prather, Patrick Traill, Brian Witherden** (living in Bangor County Down, where he has joined a group writing memoirs – tales of old Merton days?). We are also sad to note the passing of **Tony Millns** – his obituary is in the *In Memoriam* section.

Duncan Campbell Smith is full time writing a history of the Royal Bank of Scotland and clocking up the air-miles on trips to and from Edinburgh – the archives of the bank are all held in a depository close to its HQ at Gogarburn.

Alec Emmerson continues to practise from Dubai as an international arbitrator in the Middle East, London, Europe and Asia. He is a member of the Global Advisory Committee of the Saudi Centre for Commercial Arbitration and its Court. He has a grown-up daughter Sarah-Annie, two grandchildren, and two children of his own of a similar age: son AJ (11) and daughter Olivia (8). The children are resident with his wife, Marjorie, in Skipton and attend Giggleswick School. If anyone wishes to be in touch they can email him at alec@emmersonarbitrator.com

The news from **Peter Forster** is his impending move to Macclesfield, which is strategically placed for his four children, all in England. It is a former silk town, where the North begins. He will miss Scotland (his wife was brought up there) but not the increasingly toxic public and political culture.

Gareth Glyn (Gareth Glynne Davies) is still composing to order – mainly choral music – but was mightily relieved that the second of his three operas, *Tanau'r Lloer / Fires of the Moon*, emerged at last from years of Development Hell to receive its world première in the Edinburgh International Film Festival in August this year. Soon to be released in cinemas and on Channel 4 and S4C, it will be the first Welsh-language opera ever to have been broadcast on UK-wide television.

Bill Hedley is still President of the Federation of European Philatelic Associations and will continue for a couple more years until his term comes to an end. They are constantly

on the lookout for ideas on how to make this subject seem interesting and worthy of further exploration for potential collectors under the age of 70. Contrary to popular opinion it is not just about Penny Blacks or sticking pretty pictures in albums. It can open a window on just about any topic one might care to investigate, from earthquakes to mediaeval history, so offers a relatively easy route into lifelong learning. If any readers are interested or have ideas to offer, they are welcome to get in touch.

John Newsome continues to live in Seligenstadt, a beautiful small town in Germany near Frankfurt which boasts many half-timbered houses and what claims to be the only Carolingian church north of the Alps which still functions as a church. He is now fully retired, having relinquished all honorary duties in the Anglican Diocese of Europe, the last one being Area Dean of Germany. He enjoys travelling and last year experienced the midnight sun at the North Cape – quite splendid and always a dream of his. When at home he keeps up his biblical Hebrew and listens to a variety of novels, particularly Thomas Mann in this the 150th year of his birth.

Ian Rattray has taken the plunge to downsize from a large house to an apartment. This involves the pain of 'de-cluttering' 35 years of hoarded 'stuff' – undoubtedly the hardest task he and his wife have ever undertaken. All being well, the move should be complete by September.

Roger van Schaik and wife Sue are enjoying retirement in Nottingham: Roger plays sax and herds cats in a local jazz/blues band and grows fruit and veg. They both support local refugee charities, watch cricket at Trent Bridge and go walking in the Peak District and Lakes. Grandchildren in London and Oxford are a joy. For Roger, supporting Derby County has to be a secret vice in Nottingham.

Hedley Stone is still teaching economics with the Open University; playing electric violin in various bands and at 'open mics'; and running (ever more slowly). He had a prostatectomy three years ago having been diagnosed with aggressive prostate cancer (gentlemen – get tested!). With his wife, Pauline, he is taking a small part in the upbringing of four grandchildren and dividing time between Warwickshire and the Dorset coast.

John Symes is happily retired and living in Hampshire with Ann. Two of their children have moved out of London to Winchester, and one has gone to live in Sydney, Australia for two years. John has continued mentoring sixth form students at Havant and South Downs College (through the Oxford University Society) and is encouraged by the attitudes and aspirations of this generation of young people.

Richard Underwood is now working one day per week at Castle Hill Hospital in East Yorkshire, where they have excellent cardiac imaging facilities, and is active in the private sector at the Cromwell Hospital in London.

1970

Year Representative: Nick Skinner

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This autumn will see 55 years pass from when we first came up to Merton. It is good to hear that many of us are still flourishing and enjoying life.

Hugh Davies writes: 'I'm now fully retired from a post as paediatric consultant and latterly research ethics advisor at the Health Research Authority and am now living in Oxford. I'm delighted to have renewed contact with **Stephen Goss** and through a neighbour I also see Steve Mills (1971).'

Tony Sharp reports not much change other than medical issues. 'I had a new knee for Christmas (on 19 December, with the result that the most painful days after surgery were days 5, 6 & 7 – Christmas Eve, Christmas Day and Boxing Day. That's the only time I took the morphine . . . honest). It's all gone well, and I'm off on another battlefield tour tomorrow. When I get back, I'm having permanent seed brachytherapy for prostate cancer, fortunately caught in the early stages, and without symptoms. It won't be the first time I've been radioactive, but I've not been banned from being cremated for 18 months before! Catherine continues at UCL, managing open access for them and our Russian Blue cat Izzy for herself. And we're finally getting rid of the last carpet we inherited when we bought the house 18 years ago. Soon everything in the house will be our fault.'

Richard Horton writes: 'Last June our granddaughter (Mia) was born to my son and his partner. We now have two grandchildren, Noah and Mia. Noah was born in 2021. We spend every Tuesday looking after Noah which is tiring but great fun. I started flying lessons at a local school last year and have made steady progress. I am close to my first solo flight. I have found learning to fly a real challenge. I am also completely retired now although I expect the ad hoc piece of consultancy now and then. In good health, swimming and cycling regularly.'

In recent years, little has changed for **Les Hewitt**. 'The walks, cycle rides, occasional very slow runs and daily Tai Chi continue, as do the cinema visits and bread baking.' Unfortunately, his football team Warrington Town had a poor season and was relegated back to the Northern Premier League. A highlight of Les's year was his visit to Merton for the Passiontide Festival, hearing the wonderful Merton choir in person for the first time.

Peter Curd sends greetings from the South of France (Provence).

Your correspondent, **Nick Skinner**, continues to keep himself ticking over with a mix of church activities, tennis, badminton and chess. My kindest regards to you all.

1971

Year Representative: Paul Le Druillenec

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After only two of their number made it to the 2023 Gaudy, **Martin Bould**, **Harry Bush**, **Robert Gildea** and **Graham Loud** decided that, instead of waiting seven years for the next Gaudy, they would simply get together without black tie. They now meet twice a year, either in Oxford or in London, for a cooperatively cooked bachelor lunch to catch up with news and reminisce about the Glory Days of the 1970s.

Painfully aware that they have signally not contributed to the 1971 slot for Old Members' News, they have decided to venture a few thoughts.



The 1971 historians Martin Bould, Robert Gildea, Harry Bush and Graham Loud

Martin Bould retired in 2018, after careers in the voluntary sector and mental health service management, on the commissioning side. Since the 1980s he has been an adopted North Londoner, and now spends his time with family and grandchildren, rekindling his interests in literature and history, and playing walking football. Walking is a favourite retirement activity, including the Capital Ring, the London Loop and the Via Podiensis – that is, the French part of the Camino de Santiago.

After a 23-year career at HM Treasury, nearly ten years at the Civil Aviation Authority and a decade of consultancy work, **Harry Bush** restricts himself to a seat on the board of NATS, the UK's air traffic control service (no complaints about aviation delays please) and to helping the College on its development committee and with the Founder's Society. That leaves plenty of time for a life split between London and Hove and for overseas travel, usually including a lengthy winter break in the Far East and, this year, trips to Ljubljana, Naples and Venice. It's a tough life!

In honour of the 1970s **Robert Gildea** now does a three-day week, spending Thursdays and Fridays with Lucy-Jean (1982), going for long walks training for the Land's End to John o'Groats Way, which they have nearly completed, and looking after their granddaughter Eve. After a career writing histories of other things, ending with his answer to E.H. Carr, *What is History For?* (2004), Robert is now writing a memoir provisionally entitled *History Hurts*. Research in the College

archives has revealed this gem of a reference by John Roberts written for the Merton History Tutorship in 1979: 'You will know as well as I that there must be a question mark over his personality. I only wish to say that I believe him to have mellowed and to be continuing to mellow as he has had experience of teaching, and that we should remember that anyone appointed to this job is flanked by two very experienced and genial tutors.'

Since retiring as Professor of Medieval History at the University of Leeds in 2019, **Graham Loud** has continued to write history. His latest book, *Frederick Barbarossa* (2025), about the most famous of medieval German emperors, has garnered some media interest, with a series of podcast interviews for BBC History, 'History Hit' and the US-based 'The Medieval Podcast', as well as Leeds' 'Voice of Islam' radio station. He is now finishing an English translation of the 12th-century south Italian Chronicle of Montecassino. And he has also been keeping busy by giving lectures at international conferences, as well as spending time in his home town of Lyme Regis and following the fortunes of Yorkshire at Headingley cricket ground.



Paul Le Druillenec and family

Your Year Rep **Paul Le Druillenec** contributes this photo with the note: 'Aware as I am of the esteem in which I am held from study of the JCR Minute Books displayed at the 2023 Gaudy, I thought you might like to see a photo of me with my wife Catherine and our son Alexander (13).'

1972

Year Representative: Mark Signy

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Milestones keep arriving, seemingly in a rapidly accelerating fashion: it is now astonishingly 50 years since most of us suffered Finals.

I hope everyone is flourishing as much as possible among the hip and knee replacements etc. that seem to plague everyone I speak to. Many thanks for the (unfortunately rather few) bits of news I've had. Please keep them coming.

First, I have to share the sad news that our friend and contemporary **Graham Hill** died earlier this year. His close friend **David Hogarth** writes: 'It's hard to think of Front Quad without visualising Graham making his way across it, whether to Hall, the College Bar, or the Lodge on his way to the science area. He was a great personality and had a love of life that manifested itself in his cheery disposition and his tendency to get on with everybody. After Oxford, he had a successful career as an IT networking specialist, eventually retiring after many years at IBM. He leaves behind his widow Gillian and daughters Katie and Emily.' I know we all send our condolences and love to the family. David has written a fuller obituary for the *In Memoriam* section.

Hervé Gouraige has sent his warm regards. 'I am enjoying my near-retirement years. I am blessed with a wonderful wife, Carla. We are both fortunately healthy, and we are looking forward to the birth of our first grandchild in late June or early July. I am spending more time reading what I enjoy reading rather than what I must read. I hope to do more of that in the years ahead. Perhaps I will get a chance to travel and visit Merton. I have wonderful memories of my two years at Merton. I wish I had spent more time at Oxford.'

John Millard wrote (2 June): 'I've chosen today to reply because 2 June 1975 was also a Monday, and it was the start of my Finals. Where have those 50 years gone?! I remember this day for another momentous event: it snowed in Buxton, and the second day of the cricket match between Derby and Lancashire had to be abandoned! It didn't get that cold in Oxford, but I remember the rain and consequently cool weather which was great for taking exams.'

Michael Lewis (our only archbishop!) has sent the following. 'After retiring at the canonical age two years ago from running a diocese and overseeing an Anglican Province, I'm still mostly living in Cyprus, with a flat in Lichfield, and still (unpaid) one of the bishops in the Near East. I chair the International Anglican-Orthodox Theological Commission

and we publish from time to time. There's an Oxford Society on the island and I'm its hon president.'

Andy Trotter, John Heaton and **Mark Signy** played in the newly resuscitated Merton golf day in September, followed by a terrific dinner in College. Andy and John played well; Mark should probably stick to singing with the Sussex Gruffs. There has already been another spring event and a further autumn meeting beckons: the more the merrier – the standard certainly isn't off-putting!

1973

Year Representative: Gary Backler

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Graham Andrews reports that the five members of the Maths & Medics group have had a relatively uneventful year and seem to be tottering their way through their early seventies. In April, they greatly enjoyed the English Song Festival organised by fellow Mertonian Iain Burnside in Ludlow. They plan to go again next year, and invite fellow Mertonians to join them. They also had a great get-together at Roger and Gail Urwin's house last summer. **Rob Lewis** continues to support various charities with business consultancy and governance. His latest project is nature photography and he is attempting to master the intricacies of a newly acquired mirrorless camera. **David Melville** is still working part time in the NHS. **Bill Souster** works in London several days a week and **Roger Urwin** continues his work with pension funds and sovereign wealth funds. Graham himself is still a director of a number of companies, and with emails and video conferencing, he reports that he hardly moves from his house in south Devon.

A subset of the 1973 Modern Historians met for their annual reunion lunch in London. This comprised **Mark Atherton, Ned Holt, Andrew Lean, Ted Powell, Denis Thorn** and **Gary Backler**. Memories of the 1973–76 era appeared hazier as the afternoon wore on. Future historians may differ in their view as to whether this was a consequence of age or alcohol.

Paul Blustein's seventh book, *King Dollar: The Past and Future of the World's Dominant Currency* was published in

March by Yale University Press. Paul is especially proud of the dedication: 'To my grandchildren, whom I will always love unconditionally, even if they grow up to like crypto.'

John Bowers has resisted the temptation to retire so that he can continue as Professor of English at University of Nevada, Las Vegas. For one reason, the state budget for UNLV does not guarantee that he would be replaced with a medievalist specialising in Chaucer. For another, to quote Dolly Parton: 'And do what?' He has an article entitled 'The myth of the poor, homeless poet: Revising the Chaucer biography' forthcoming in *The Chaucer Review*. His latest scholarly book *Tolkien on Chaucer, 1913–1959*, his second from OUP after *Tolkien's Lost Chaucer*, has been selling well with good reviews, and he remains grateful to Merton College for providing him with accommodation as a Visiting Scholar, allowing him to research among the Tolkien Papers at the Bodleian Library. That research visit allowed extra discoveries that led to his article 'Durin's Stone, Ruthwell Cross, and the Dream of the Rood' published in the journal *Tolkien Studies* with Tolkien's own translation of the great Old English poem 'Dream of the Rood' which John unearthed in the Bodleian. All goes well with his health after double-bypass surgery, and he continues to divide his year between Las Vegas and Santa Fe, in both places dividing his week between the gym and the yoga studio.

Crispin Drummond is in his third year of chairing the Oxford alumni association for Hampshire & the Isle of Wight, organising local parties for local people. Last month saw a departure from their usual formula of a little bit of culture with drinks to follow, with a visit to HMS *Queen Elizabeth*, to learn about her readiness for action. She has six fitness centres but no library: John Lucas, the son-in-law of a distinguished Naval officer, would weep. The association's big initiative is to provide one-to-one mentoring services for Year 12 state school pupils who are able but disadvantaged. With 100 volunteers in action, the effect is transformational.

Peter Ghosh is just putting the finishing touches to a book on Max Weber's politics for OUP, and generously offers that anyone in the 1973 year group or thereabouts who has a sleep problem might like to consider this as an alternative to chemicals. Peter reports that Max Weber himself had a

severe sleep problem from an early date, but as yet Peter hasn't gotten around to writing about that.

Sebastian Swann and **Denis Thorn** (both Modern History, 1973) have recently reconnected after a break of about 40 years. Sebastian has lived in Arlington, Virginia, USA for many years, and Denis in Melbourne, Victoria, Australia also for a long time. They met up in Venice in March 2025 because they both thought that they might have discussed Venetian art in the 1973–76 period, and should consolidate that knowledge with a site visit. They covered and really enjoyed all the main attractions including a few glasses of local wine. The only setback was an unsuccessful search for a particular Titian that Sebastian remembered in a church near the Jewish quarter which Denis mistakenly believed must be the Assumption of the Virgin in Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari. But other than providing an excellent reason for a return visit, their failure to find the Titian paled into insignificance compared with the magnificence of the palaces, churches and museums that they were lucky enough to enter (sometimes virtually all to themselves), the friendliness of the Venetians and the glorious spring weather that accompanied them day after day. Contrary to their expectations, Venice in March was not at all crowded and it was a wonderful visit.

Mike Waters is still practising law in Birmingham, Alabama, his home state. He grew up in the small town of Cullman, a German settlement in the late 19th century to which his maternal grandfather, a German, came. Mike's focus is on banking law with an emphasis on bank acquisitions and capital formations, in which he has practised for over 40 years. He attended Oxford as a Rhodes Scholar. Merton College was his first choice, and he feels very lucky to have experienced Merton. When he took his degree in PPE (1973–75), Merton had economics and philosophy professors but no professor in politics. As a result, Mike had politics tutorials at Christ Church, Pembroke and All Souls. At Pembroke, his tutor was Zbigniew Pelczynski, a Polish refugee from the Nazis as a young man, and a tutor of Bill Clinton when he was at Oxford. At All Souls, his tutor was Michael Howard, who often left the meeting to go to London to consult with the Foreign Minister; in a recent biography of Winston Churchill, it was noted that Michael Howard was a military attaché for Churchill soon after Churchill became Prime Minister.

Gary Backler is continuing his local social historical research project and his weekly pain-management course, aka Parkrun. This year has seen some remarkable PBs, achieved largely by the adoption of a pair of performance-enhancing (enabling?) knee supports.

Thanks to all of you who took the time to share news with your contemporaries. Nil returns are always welcome too, from any 1973 Mertonian who feels they have no specific news to share.

1974

Year Representative: **Mike Hawkins**



After the enjoyment of meeting so many of you at either our Gaudy or the 50th Golden Anniversary Lunch last year, this spring I had the pleasure of visiting my son in North Carolina for the first time since 2020. Circumstances prevented a swifter return but Sara and I were also able to catch up with a number of friends from our time there. Nothing had changed one bit and it still felt like home.

Nick Allard writes that his energy and purpose are stoked daily by younger people including his children, seven magnificent grandchildren, students and by the faculty and staff of his thriving new law school in Jacksonville, Florida. His work in higher education and various volunteer gigs, such as serving on the board of the Shakespeare Theatre Company in Washington, and various alumni activities

relating to the Rhodes scholarships, Princeton and Merton keeps him merrily active.

'During our Rhodes global class reunion our economics tutor Vijay Joshi led a lively tutorial on international monetary policy. Then, as our guest at the concluding dinner in Rhodes House, Vijay triggered a big laugh from the large crowd when Marla asked him, in her clearly audible 'stage whisper': "Mr Joshi, back in the day when Nick was your student, would you have guessed that fifty years later you would be attending an Oxford dinner where he would be receiving an award?", and Vijay replied emphatically: "Never!"

'It is not true that recently in the TS Eliot Theatre I slept through the entire 42nd Occam Physics Lecture on the past, present and future of the theory of relativity. My 11-year-old grandson Nicky asked me to take him, and I did. He has favourite physicists and mathematicians and Einstein is his idol. Nicky was taking copious notes in his ever-present journal. I was, admittedly, dozing now and then.'



Nick Allard's grandson
Nicky with the Warden

John Davies writes that he was sorry to hear of the deaths of **Rod O'Brien** and **Chris Madell**. He had been in touch with Chris over the last few years and much enjoyed his anecdotes: rowing a full marathon in a pair with Father Daly and, once his ardour for chemistry had cooled, being greeted by Courtenay Phillips when he turned up for tutorials with 'Gin and tonic, Chris?'. John was also interested to see the picture in the

2024 *Postmaster* of Merton's First VIII in 1958, submitted by **Richard Harvey** to whom John was articulated at Slaughter and May in 1978. 'Naturally the Richard Harvey in the 1958 picture is rather fresher faced than the Slaughter and May partner 20 years later. While Richard told me that he had been at Merton, he was too modest to say that he had been in the first eight which finished third in the Head of the River race.'

Neil Downie says that he and Di enjoyed the Golden Jubilee Lunch with Mertonians. He was also in Oxford for a physics

symposium with Oxford Professor Brian Foster and others in particle physics. Decades ago, he and Brian had fun playing fiddle and accordion at the Hamburg Scottish Dance Club. They were at DESY research in Hamburg working on the discovery of the gluon particle. Current DESY researchers joined them, describing the hunt for the particles that make up the Dark Matter of the universe. Their four grandchildren are growing up and it is fascinating to see them develop: the youngest Ivan (4) already counts and calculates everything, while the eldest, Tiernan (7), can play piano and sings in the Hexham Abbey choir.

David Hamer writes that he and wife Jane continue to enjoy life in Toronto with their two daughters' families of four grandchildren nearby. David enjoyed his first ever Merton Gaudy in March 2024, followed immediately by a week in Bermuda with Jane, visiting old friends. 'Summer was passed largely on Lake Huron. Most of September was taken up with the 1974 Rhodes Scholars reunion in Oxford, followed by a most pleasant road tour of old cathedral favourites in the southwest, along with a few new places: Wells, Exeter, Avebury, Sherborne Abbey, Salisbury, Winchester and, of course, Stonehenge.'

November brought David to New York for the North American Merton Reunion just a couple of days before seeing Donald Trump elected again. David maintains his low-level involvement in Liberal politics and campaigned for the party in his old hometown near Toronto. He was delighted to see his candidate win an absolute majority of the vote and even more overjoyed to see Mark Carney returned as Prime Minister.

Ed Humphreys should be proud that he 'secured another degree in January, a BA(Hons) First Class in Community Governance, after six years of study while working full time'. He adds: 'Hoping to get my life back now!'

Graham Kemp is 'still semi-retired, working part-time as a professor of clinical research imaging at the University of Liverpool. I was sorry that a bout of Covid-19 kept me not only from our Golden Jubilee Lunch, but also from the previous day's funeral of Professor Sir George Radda. Working for him in 1989–96 set the course for my whole academic career.'

Giles Maskell is 'still working as a consultant radiologist in Truro'. He, sadly, attended **Chris Madell's** funeral a few months ago and was able to share some stories of his time at Merton with Chris' nieces and other family.

David Moskowitz has pledged to make the world dialysis-free by 2030 using his pharmaceutical protocol that has been safe and reliable since 1994. He would welcome any help spreading the word.



Jeremy Pemberton outside Orthez, on his Camino route

Jeremy Pemberton says: 'I am continuing my Camino in stages and am now ready to embark on the Spanish part, having walked from Vézelay in Burgundy, equivalent to Land's End to Holy Island. In the photo you see me on the road outside Orthez. The eagle-eyed may be able to make out the snow-capped Pyrenees in the distance. I have wanted to do this walk since I was 21 and it is in memory of **Philip Endean SJ**, who died in 2023.

One of our confrères who was not able to make last year's celebrations in College for health reasons was **Ruairidh Milne**. Seeing old friends feels more important the older we get. An opportunity presented itself in March and I visited Ruairidh and his wife Min in Romsey. A stroll around the beautiful old town and abbey filled the morning and I left after a splendid lunch with a real sense of thankfulness for the time we had together.' He adds: 'If there are Mertonians who have never visited Romsey then I would be happy to meet them for coffee and a tour of the Minster.'

Will Stackhouse contacted me for the first time, as I recall. He may be the most senior of our year group having been a 'mature student' in 1974. His career spanned 31 years in the military: F-4 Phantom jet fighter pilot, twice a USAF Academy faculty member, helped build satellites and finished with high leverage technology with a shorter period in and around industry. He finishes: 'Other than the usual aches and pains that come as we age, all is well at this end.'

John Sykes is 'still working, mainly as a guide to Cologne Cathedral, the Romanesque churches of the city and the 1,700-year Jewish history of Cologne'. When in Britain he spends time in his hometown of Southport, that peaceful seaside place where nothing much ever happens, or so we thought until last year. He continues his walk in stages around the edge of England. Starting in Southport, it has taken him so far to the south coast of Cornwall and is recorded with texts and photos on 'Beating the bounds' (www.beatingthebounds.eu).

1975

Year Representative: Robert Peberdy

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In the 1240s or 1250s Stephen Chenduit, a member of a minor noble family, inherited several manors in Hertfordshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire. For unknown reasons, he borrowed heavily from Jewish money-lenders, using his manors as security. He was only able to escape indebtedness by granting some of his manors, in return for clearance of his debts, to an acquaintance, namely **Walter de Merton**, formerly chancellor to Henry III (1261–3). The relinquished manors included Cuxham, about 11 miles south-east of Oxford (transferred in 1268). In 1271 Walter de Merton granted Cuxham to his new collegiate foundation in Oxford, and it has remained part of Merton's landed endowment for over 750 years. In the Middle Ages the College's administration produced a considerable archive which enabled Dr Paul Harvey to write an outstanding book: *A Medieval Oxfordshire Village: Cuxham, 1240 to 1400* (1965). Since 1928 Merton's principal tenants have been members of the Nixey family. On Saturday 12 October 2024 a notable day occurred in Cuxham's history when **Dorian Gerhold** and **Robert Peberdy** turned up, while touring south Oxfordshire. Through a contact, they were able to meet the current farmer, Frank Nixey, and his father Nicholas Nixey. They visited Cuxham church, the village hall (former school) and Merton's farmstead, and enjoyed discussing farming practices and Merton's management of its estates with the Nixeys.



From left: Dorian Gerhold, Robert Peberdy, Nicholas Nixey and Frank Nixey in Cuxham Village Hall. Photo: Charles Dickerson

About five months later, on Friday 28 March 2025, **Chris Mann** (and Ann), **Ed Martley**, **Ed Myers** (and Lisa), **Robert Peberdy** and **Malcolm Price** joined a large congregation at St Mary's church, Stalbridge (in Dorset), for the funeral of **Neil Smith** (see the *In Memoriam* section). Afterwards a wake was held in a local pub. Neil's family and local friends were aware of the special place of Merton in Neil's life, and appreciated the presence of college contemporaries and friends.

Arif Ahsan reports that the 'highlight' of recent times was the Gaudy in March 2024 when he enjoyed catching up with old friends (including **Neil Smith**, who was a neighbour, along with **Robert Peberdy**, in 22 Merton Street in 1975–6). In October 2024 he and Chris Rowland-Hill (1976), and their spouses, visited Pompeii and Herculaneum; and in January 2025 – continuing the theme of antiquity – he visited Rome and Ostia Antica. (Arif's travels would no doubt have interested **Tom Braun**.) And in March he went to Florida where there was 'great weather and no sight of Donald Trump'. Arif also continues to hold clinics at the Trent Cardiac Centre in Nottingham. In July 2025 **Simon Babbs** and wife Sue (St Hilda's), based in Chicago, were due to re-visit Madagascar with members of their local church.

Glenn Bacal, in Scottsdale, Arizona, remains a hard-working and prominent intellectual-property lawyer. Despite being of retirement age, he is keen to help his profession cope with artificial intelligence. This new wave of technological change with profound legal implications reminds him of the

advent of the internet in the 1990s when he was prominent in understanding and promoting the law of the internet. Glenn and former classmates at Columbia University are concerned about anti-Western and anti-American biases that have become prominent in courses in US universities; he hopes that Oxford is strong enough to resist dubious cultural pressures.

In Birmingham, **John Claughton** sustains an industrious life in so-called retirement. He continues to work on his WoLLoW ('World of Languages, Languages of the World') project which develops language teaching mainly in primary schools. He also teaches Latin and Greek online to both youngsters and adults, and he is working on an A-level Greek textbook. The last task sometimes involves consultation of **David Mitchell**. Although **Alan Dolton** recently had to give up competitive athletics when he was fitted with a pacemaker, he remains a successful coach: five runners from his training group at the Croydon Arena won gold medals at the Surrey Masters Championships in May 2025. As a keen reader of history, he recently enjoyed *Endgame 1944: How Stalin Won the War* by Jonathan Dimbleby. Historian **Ian Doolittle** recently enjoyed reviewing a major new book on Oxford, *Enlightened Oxford: The University and the Cultural and Political Life of Eighteenth-Century Britain and Beyond* by Nigel Aston (OUP). His article will appear in the 2025 edition of *Oxoniensia*. Sailing and golf continue to fill the life of **William Ford**, the latter sport including competing on behalf of Merton. At Christmas 2024 he and his wife Celia travelled to the French Alps to meet their first grandchild (a boy).

Musician **Stephen Gardiner**'s latest special experience was a visit to a remote part of Romney Marsh where he heard three turtledoves purring in hawthorn hedges and a nightingale singing nearby. Two more nightingales in the vicinity were singing a constant dialogue. Stephen has read somewhere that the nightingale has over a thousand musical motifs. He also visited Oxford in early 2025 to meet Professor Susan Wollenberg whose lectures on Schubert impressed him back in the 1970s. Their conversation inevitably included mention of 'dear **Edward Olleson**'.

Dorian Gerhold is currently serving as 'Brother President' of the Essay Club, a London-based dining society founded in

1907 whose members are Fellows of the Society of Antiquaries. The club has other connections with Merton. Its membership includes Alan Bott (1953), Sarah Bendall (Fellow, 1994), Paul Harvey, and Tim Ayers, author of *The Medieval Stained Glass of Merton College, Oxford*. During Alan Bott's presidency, members of the FSA visited Merton. **John Harrison** continues to teach history at Eton and to manage its Debating Society. In May 2025 he was delighted to run into **John Cloughton** at the annual Eton–Harrow cricket match at Lord's. In 2022 the Revd Dr **Gordon Jeanes** co-edited *Lively Oracles of God: Perspectives on the Bible and Liturgy*, essays about the presentation of scripture to worshippers. He is now toiling in his scriptorium on a new substantial scholarly work.

When **Chris Lewis** left Merton in 1978 he joined a UK domestic bank but soon realised that banking was not his vocation. Seeming to detect siren calls from Merton, he corresponded with **Roger Highfield** and returned in 1979 to undertake a doctoral thesis based on research in Domesday Book. Not long afterwards he published his first article on Domesday, the iconic 'Herbert the Jerkin-Maker: A Domesday Tenant Identified' (1981). Forty-four years and many Domesday-related articles later, he is now co-author (with Stephen Baxter of St Peter's and Professor Julia Crick) of the monumental work *Making Domesday: Intelligent Power in Conquered England* (OUP). (Attendees at a launch party included Professor Henry Mayr-Harting, 1954.) Although none of Merton's 1975 undergraduate historians became an academic historian of a conventional kind, they have nonetheless published many historical writings, and it is moving that some are likely to prove enduring contributions to scholarship.

Steve Marsh is getting close to completing the refurbishment of his new home in Shrewsbury. Golf enthusiast **Ed Martley** revisited Sandiway Golf Club in Cheshire, 'one of the best inland courses in the north [of England]', in spring 2025 though found that it had suffered from bad weather. He also plays regularly in Ayrshire and Lanarkshire. Over at Florida State University, **Ed Myers** and his colleagues are worried about the political situation in the USA. So far, they have not been affected by executive orders from the Oval Office, but this could change.

In early 2025 Professor **Stephen Oppenheimer** left Baltimore to undertake another visitation of the Old World

and particularly Merton. In Oxford, on Sunday 9 March, he assembled his local *comitatus* — **Gordon Jeanes**, **Robert Peberdy** and **Robert Pitkethly** — and led a charge into chapel, where it pleased him to meet **Lyndon Webb** (hitherto observed from the USA), and then onto High Table, where he supped and took counsel with the Warden. His literary talents continue to blossom profusely: he has recently published *Third Strike and Other Fascinations*, a collection of atmospheric and ingenious stories, including two set in a familiar Oxford college.

On Saturday 23 November 2024 **Robert Peberdy** presided over a day-school on the History of Oxford, which he had organised, at the Oxford University Department for Continuing Education. Lectures ranged from the city's origins to recent times, and included one about Oxford and de-industrialisation (by Professor Simon Gunn of Leicester University) which started with dramatic photographs of police in riot gear at the Blackbird Leys housing estate in 1991. **Crispin Poyser** continues to work with the Canal and River Trust in West London on the Sisyphean task of trying to keep the Paddington Arm of the Grand Union Canal in good shape. In spring 2025 **Malcolm Price** and his wife Helen visited Japan (under Mertonian rule) for three weeks, staying in Tokyo, Kyoto and Nara, and undertaking a day visit to Hiroshima ('a sobering but uplifting experience'). Highlights included an excursion to Mount Fuji on a stunningly clear day, rides on the 'bullet train', and cherry blossom festivals. Professor **Chris Wickham** (Lecturer in Medieval History 1975–6) remains active in historical studies. In 2025 he published 'Being Poor in Byzantium', a chapter in *Approaching Social Hierarchies in Byzantium* (edited by Anna C Kelley and Flavia Vanni).

Recently a near-contemporary disclosed a classic example of Mertonian wit which deserves to be set in the historical record. Back in 2013 the singer and actor Kris Kristofferson (1958) performed songs in Merton Hall at a dinner for former Rhodes Scholars. Nick Allard (1974), who was then due to speak, wondered how he could follow such a unique Mertonian. Ever resourceful, he informed the audience that he was going to tell everyone back home in the USA that in Oxford his opening act had been Kris Kristofferson. (Over dinner Kristofferson had told Nick that he had loved his time at Merton.)

1976

Year Representative: John Gardner

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Laurence Ormerod (Levens, Cumbria): 'Still active in the energy technology sector, but progressing along the retirement off-ramp. Sold last year one of the businesses I chaired, so just one more to go now. But recently took on helping a spin-out at Heriot-Watt University, where I advise the Institute of GeoEnergy Engineering, so still keeping my hand in. Now treasurer of the local running club – a part-time job in itself – and looking forward to a 50-mile fell race in October. Also sailing, with the boat currently in Spain, and trying to improve my swimming. I'm in regular touch with **Jon Marsh**, who is selling his Cumbrian smallholding and moving to a more conventional house in the Lake District. I was also in the Scottish Highlands recently with **John Bland**.'

John Bland (Hope Valley, Derbyshire): 'I go walking at least once a year with **Laurence Ormerod** and this time we completed my top 50 Munros. (He's got one or two more to do before reaching the same milestone.) I'm a compulsive knitter and have this year been doing my bit to resurrect the dying skill of knitting with a sheath, aiming for fast rates (rates of 200 stitches a minute are recorded; I'm now up to 60 per minute) and have just completed my fourth gansey (aka Guernsey). This is all stimulated by the flock of 30 sheep (Whitefaced Woodlands) which I've kept since retiring ten years ago and shear using hand shears, another traditional technique I've learned. In addition, I run sheepdog trials across Derbyshire, play the cello for the Sheffield Chamber Orchestra and the Birmingham Christadelphian Choral Society, go ballroom dancing with my wife, and continue to enjoy cycling and cycle touring.'

Shepherd Nyaruwata (Zimbabwe): 'I lecture on tourism for master's students at the University of Zimbabwe. This is now on a part-time basis as my time is increasingly spent on consultancy projects on tourism development in South Africa, for private and public sector clients. In recent years I have also published several books on the topic.'



John Bland and flock

John Booth (London): *This entry was sent by another 76er.* 'Congratulations to John on his appointment last year as a Commander of the Royal Victorian Order (CVO), an order of chivalry that recognises service to the British monarch. And on becoming Merton Society President. And being renewed for a second term as chairman at the National Gallery. Also, recognising his age, on his election as a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries.'

Ian McVeigh (London): 'Now in its eighth year, the annual "history trip" I make with **Andrew Pettegree**, **Peter Truesdale** and friends was this time a four-day tour exploring the history of the Hanseatic League and the art and architecture of Hamburg and Lubeck.'

Andrew Pettegree (St Andrews): 'Hopping aboard the McVeigh History Tours charabanc this year was my first trip back to Hamburg since living there in 1982–4. Still teaching at St Andrews, I have just finished the text of a history of bookselling, due for publication in 2026.'

Peter Truesdale (London): 'Another enjoyable trip with McVeigh History Tours, this year to Germany. Last year's visit was to Belfast where I acted as tour guide, having spent time there during the Troubles. Retirement activities now include writing book reviews, helping the Liberal Democrats with candidate selection and chairing the local parish primary school.'

Simon Congdon (London): 'I retired from an interesting and (mostly) enjoyable law practice with Holman Fenwick & Willan

(now HFW) ten years ago. Since then I have spent most of my time helping out at St Helen's Bishopsgate, a busy City of London church. Part of this has been running groups for enquirers, explaining to them that Christianity is a good thing, and why there is good evidence for believing it. Another part has been leading studies in books of the bible. This leaves slightly more time than legal practice for watching cricket, failing to catch fish and listening to music. I have also managed to end up as secretary to the Madrigal Society, which was founded in 1741 and has a claim to be the oldest private musical society in Europe. We are looking for new members, so if any Mertonians enjoy good company, good dinners and singing madrigals, they would be welcome to get in touch.'

Simon Eyre (Eastbourne): 'Update since I last wrote in 2020: I spent much of that year, and the next one, working for NHS III as part of the Covid-19 response. A member of the Church of England General Synod since 2021, I continue as a churchwarden at St Elisabeth's in Eastbourne. Ann and I will celebrate our golden wedding next year, *Deo volente*, and now have 12 grandchildren. We visit Oxford regularly, as our two sons and their families are based there. David is Professor in Infectious Diseases at the Big Data Institute and Toby a consultant haematologist at the Churchill, specialising in non-Hodgkin lymphoma. I'm still writing books about two topics – naval history and the medals issued by public service organisations – and my seventh book, *The Service Medal of the Order of St John*, was published this year.'

Guido Montgomery (Berlin): 'Healthy and happy, I have retired from gardening and taken up yoga teaching. Now that I have two partners, I'm also learning to be more flexible and mindful in everyday life. Hermeline has been teaching yoga for 20 years and practising polyamory for six, so I'm able to draw on her experience. Sarah is living half-time in Berlin, working in political education, and has a special interest in queer activism. Daughter Iris (20) is studying biology at Freie Universität Berlin and Ruby (16) has moved to Berlin and into a mainstream school. I continue to live full time in the country and have found a new Zen teacher, Tatsudo Roshii, who is a great source of inspiration. "Pain is inevitable. Suffering is optional".'

Kevin Parkes (Letchworth Garden City): 'My pharmaceutical consulting is gently tapering down and retirement gently

tapering up, with the timeline to being fully retired not yet defined. I'm still very active orienteering, both as an 'also-ran level' competitor and as a volunteer. The high point last year was being part of the IT team delivering results for the World Sprint Orienteering Championships in Edinburgh in the summer. A fun but fairly gruelling week, arriving early at each venue to set up and then tearing down after the event, sometimes twice in one day when there was a qualification race in the morning and a final in the afternoon. This year should be quieter but planning is already under way for IT at the British Night Orienteering Championships next year.'

Geoff Lee (somewhere in France): 'Glad to be in peaceful rural France where rambling in all its forms – roses, thoughts, roads, walking, giant courgette plants – is the meandering way of life. Nothing to report, and long may it remain so.'

Dan Rickman (London): 'Still working for BAE Systems and doing bike rides for charities, including North London Hospice and Alzheimer's Society. The latest pedal this year involved four days in beautiful (but mountainous) Sardinia. This was for Norwood, a charity which helps neurodiverse people. Wife Gill, Professor of Psychiatry of Older People at University College London, continues to keep a wether eye on me.'

Robert Hannah (Otago, New Zealand): 'New Year's resolutions around physical and mental keep-fit have seen me going to the gym and committing to research projects again. The latter involved agreeing to write three separate book chapters for people this year, and to examine a local PhD. I know that one of the chapters must be OK because the editors have returned it for final checking before it goes to the publisher. I'm not sure about the other two yet. A mysterious fourth book chapter made me smile. It arrived around the same time as the others, but from a different editor asking for some minor changes. Sent in error, I thought, but I began to read it and found myself liking very much what the author had written. Before long I realised it was a chapter I had submitted four years ago.'

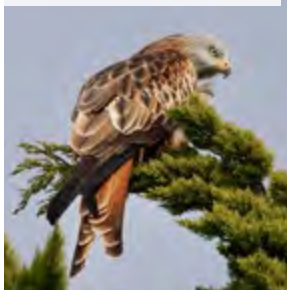
Alister McGrath (Oxford): 'I continue to be academically active after retiring in 2022 from the Andreas Idreos Professorship of Science and Religion at Oxford. Recent monographs include *The Nature of Christian Doctrine* (OUP, 2024) and *C.S.*

Lewis on Science and Religion (OUP, to be published in March 2026). I'm also still active as a conference speaker, with one of this year's addresses being to the Hungarian Academy of Sciences Memorial Conference on Professor Sir George K. Radda (Merton), focusing on my time working in Radda's Oxford research group from 1974 to 1977.'

Ken Fleming (Oxford): 'The big event for me this year was the launch of the Global Diagnostics Coalition at the World Health Assembly in Geneva, something for which I've been lobbying for years. This, I hope, will be my legacy to address the 50-year problem of little or no access to diagnostics for 50% of the world's population. Next year I'll be chairing a review of the Faculty of Medicine at the Chinese University of Hong Kong. Should be interesting!'

Neil Craggs (Great Missenden): 'Am writing this en route to the London Business School's 60th anniversary reunion weekend, which I helped to organise. When less hurried I'm keeping busy as a trustee of Missenden Walled Garden, a local charity providing "social therapeutic horticulture" (aka gardening!) to adults with learning difficulties, where my main project to replace and upgrade the charity's greenhouses and other infrastructure nears completion. A keen interest in wildlife photography, which after 50 years' practice now shows a degree of competence, has taken Fran (St Anne's, 1976) and me on a number of memorable trips to Costa Rica and Spain.

1976 Cake thief. Photo: N Craggs



'The photo here, however, was taken in the garden this year. This red kite swept in and picked up Fran's cake from the plate in front of her. With a wingspan up to two metres it was quite a shock. The cake, being soft, crumbled and fell in the flower bed. So he hung around in the garden long enough for me to grab this shot.'

1977

Year Representative: Edmund Wright

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1978

Year Representative: Paul Curtis Hayward

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Having posted a second plea for news I've had some good responses. It's good to hear some new voices and some reliable old ones.

Martin Milton reports that it is now 13 years since he moved to Paris to be the Director of the International Bureau of Weights and Measures. This year will be his last in Paris before retirement back to the UK. It has already been a notable year; he has led the organisation through its 150th anniversary celebrations and he has been awarded an OBE in the King's Birthday Honours list for his services to measurement science.

Robert Waller (Senior Scholar 1978) contributed a chapter on 'Ashfield 1977' to *British By-Elections*, edited by Iain Dale. It's due to be published in September.

Michael McNish is making up for his past silence. 'Not having submitted anything for publication in *Postmaster* over the past 44 years, maybe it is my turn to attempt some "news". Above my desk still hangs our Freshmen's photo – so hello to all of you quite serious-looking and well-dressed exclusively white and male lot (as far as I can make out). (I'm the one with the specs on the far right of the centre row.) Like surely all of you I much appreciated my three years at Merton – though did find myself somewhat distracted from my PPE studies on occasion; I'm sure Oxford has since found ways to make it much easier for undergraduates to concentrate properly. Anyway in 1981 I arrived in our great metropolis to train at one of those now-lost great accounting firms, starting to reside in SW11. All those years on I'm still here (well SW4, actually) but together with my remarkable wife

Sally Jones (St Edmund Hall, 1982), four entertaining grown-up daughters, one labrador and I suppose some of the other trappings of suburban professional life. Am sorry to say I haven't published any learned books, though I like to think I've read a few – indeed I'm looking forward to dipping into the *Accidental History of Tudor England* which has recently dropped through my letterbox (I'm sure you all know the text I mean). I could possibly be described as "retired" – but that I am definitely not, as my wife certainly is not retired. So I look forward to those delights in due course. Please do be in touch if you wish – I'm sure the College can be prevailed upon to provide my email address. Good wishes to all.'

As for me, your Year Rep, I'm off to cut some hay and look after two boisterous little grandsons, not at the same time I hasten to add.

1979

Year Representative: Noel Privett

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Some of us have been naming cities, wondering at the marvels of the universe, winning poetry prizes and publishing books. Others have been playing Lego, pottering around, gardening and grandparenting. And one of us has had 16 million people trampling through his garden. But that's just seven of us. The rest remain silent.

Armand D'Angour tells me that one of the highlights of the year was an invitation by Chris Tanfield (1980) to play a cello recital in the Saxon Church of St Laurence at Bradford-on-Avon. 'The acoustic was marvellous for the choice of two Bach suites and some romantic short pieces with piano accompaniment – in this case accompanied by portable speaker with pre-recorded piano. I was particularly gratified to learn that the audience included the wonderful pianist Philip Fowke, who lives locally. I have been invited back to play two further suites in August 2025.'

Meanwhile, Armand has found time to publish his fourth book, *How to Talk About Love: An ancient guide for modern lovers* and record the first ten episodes of his podcast

with Jimmy Mulville, *It's All Greek (and Latin!) to Me*. This has attracted around 20,000 listeners (about the same as Portsmouth FC's average attendance last season). A second series will shortly appear.

Simon Petherick attended Professor Phil Cavendish's inaugural lecture at UCL's School of Slavonic and East European Studies in London. The lecture was entitled 'The return of the ghost: An excursion to the Kunstammer of early Soviet colour film and photography' and according to Simon 'was absolutely fascinating. Free wine at the end too.' Simon has been toiling away ghostwriting books for various people and has managed to become a grandfather which, he says, 'has been more of a joy and pleasure than I can say'. Hear, hear to that.

Mark Fiddes is still based in the Middle East with Maribel, although spending more time in her hometown of Barcelona. He has spent the past few years creative-directing a national pavilion for the World Expo in Osaka and, as he says, 'naming things – like a new city and a cruise line'. I wonder what the city is called? Mark also won the Ledbury Poetry Prize this year and has a fourth collection of poetry being published in 2026.

John Girkin reports that since October 2024 he has started working reduced hours at Durham University, but goes on to say that this has just meant more full-time work in the garden, woodworking and singing in multiple choirs. His so-called spare time 'has been employed in my role as a grandparent with Brio and Lego building skills returning'. Skills, no doubt, honed at Merton.

Noel Privett (that's me) has at last retired. I've been waiting for this moment since the day I started work, on my own personal Black Tuesday (13 March 1984; Nena's 99 Red Balloons was number one, but that had nothing to do with it). Very kindly, Frank Dean has invited me to visit him now I'm no longer employed, but rather unkindly has added a rider: 'However, since you have not shown any evidence of ever having worked, I will request a certificate of retirement.'

And then, suddenly, out of the blue, **Jonathan Deane** pops up. 'Well, maybe it's time, nearly 46 years after coming up, that I contributed something,' he muses. After leaving Merton, he taught for a year in Edinburgh and then worked for three

years at the European Patent Office in The Hague. He then came back to the UK to do a PhD at the University of Surrey and stayed on as an academic, first in electronic engineering and then in the maths department. Three years ago, he retired, but as an emeritus reader. 'I have very good benefits in kind – even an office – and continue to be research active, on my terms. Much better to do research because you want to rather than because your research outputs are being weighed, measured, diced and sliced.'

This gives him more time for gardening and cycling. 'Not having had a car since 1999, cycling, for me, is transport, but also a pleasure. Last September, I tackled the Marmotte route in the French Alps, which is over 100 miles and includes a lot of ascent. A long day.'

As for Jonathan's garden, 'it's had 16 million visitors over the last year or so: virtual ones, I'm glad to say. A guy who makes his living putting up short science videos on YouTube contacted me about the water-powered Wirtz pump I constructed to put in the stream at the bottom of the garden and the resulting video of me pottering around seems to have caught people's imagination.'

And finally, **Frank Dean**, anticipating the lack of contributions this year, says: 'If you are short of copy, please could you report that I have decided to continue to wonder at the marvels of creation.' Will do, Frank.

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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Most of us in the 1981 year group marked 40 years since leaving Merton in the last year or so and are either contemplating retirement or are already retired. Nevertheless, it was

wonderful to hear that so many are still busy with varied activities and making contributions to their communities.

For example, **Jon Cooper** is still editing *Crystallography News* for the British Crystallographic Association and writing a few articles, as well as reviewing papers and theses. He looks after six ageing and dependent motor cars, and volunteers at a steam railway. 'I mainly do gardening for them but anyone can learn to drive a steam engine, if they want,' he writes. 'The only catch is having to be there at 6am on a Sunday morning.'

After contributing a liturgical essay in the new edition of Arthur Machen's novella *The Terror*, **David Llewellyn Dodds** reports his continuing attention to Tolkien is being further 'syncopated' by work on two Arthurian editions: Charles Williams's *Advent of Galahad* poetry cycle and Ralph Adams Cram's verse drama *Excalibur*.

It was great to hear from **Julian Fosh**, who retired from his job as fund manager at Liontrust at the end of last year. He is now spending his time indulging his passions for family, attending ballet and opera, playing bass guitar in a couple of bands, and re-discovering tennis, croquet and board games including Kingmaker. He says these last two bring back happy memories of his instruction/introduction at Merton in the company of Steve Gunn (1979), **Geoff Bones**, Julian Dagnall (1980), and others.

Mike Guyote is happily retired and performing at some theatre organ presentations locally (Colorado Springs has three restored Wurlitzers). His last work before retirement involved drone research at the USAF Academy. 'My cherished USAF Academy organ has been totally rebuilt and is awaiting the completion of some work on the Academy Chapel,' he writes.

Like many, **Jackie Martin** has now settled into her retirement, and is enjoying spending time in the garden and walking in the countryside. This year she is again involved in habitat surveying for Gloucester Wildlife Trust – very much a spring/summer activity. The winter months were occupied with sewing and taking up going to the gym.

Taking a break from his punishing schedule touring the medical equipment factories of Europe and beyond, **John**

Mills stopped off to visit **David Clapp** in the eternal city (and environs). David is still teaching adolescents. David says they reflected on 'the fleeting decades of endoscopes and obstinate youth,' reminisced on the golden years from 1981 to 1984, and raised a glass to the fast-approaching prospect of being put out to grass.



David Clapp (left) and John Mills meet up in Rome

Having retired from running wildlife workshops, **Susanna Ramsey** (née **Sheppard**) now spends much of her time walking, swimming and reading natural history books. She has also done more of the online courses run by Oxford University Continuing Education department on archaeology and animal behaviour. Last year, she created a photographic guide to the tiny bones of small mammals (voles, mice, shrews and rats) found in barn owl pellets for the Mammal Society. She is now working on a similar guide to the prey remains found in otter spraint. 'Nature is a great retirement hobby as there is always another page to turn,' she writes.

Based in Venice, **Robin Saikia** is the author of *The Venice Lido* and *Drink & Think Venice*, both published by Blue Guides. Last April Robin opened an art gallery in Venice, Vert de Venise Contemporary Art, which shows work in a variety of media by Katia Margolis. The gallery will participate in Venice Glass Week 2025 in September with a new exhibition by

Margolis, 'A Woman is an Island'. Robin is always happy to meet Mertonians in Venice and welcome them to his home and gallery.

Graham Tebb reports almost no new additional travels to add to his bird list since last summer's trip to Madagascar. Unfortunately, we missed each other around that time when I passed through Vienna. He says the rest of this year promises to be more rewarding and he is booked to go to Brazil (twice), the Solomon Islands, and Peru before putting his feet up at Christmas and then dashing off to Colombia ('all places you don't really want to be visiting in your advanced age'). He is continuing to play league hockey, although he says the younger players in the team are running faster each year. He was looking forward to a few days of relaxation in August, when he will go to Glyndebourne with **Peter Phillips**. When at home, he is still working at the University of Veterinary Medicine in Vienna and the Medical University of Innsbruck and, like a lot of us, starting to think about retirement.

As of writing, **Ivan Viehoff** was about to go on his first cycle tour since, he says, Covid damaged his lungs, cycling for two weeks in Scotland, including the Outer Hebrides. Due to what he called inadequate planning, he has to ride 60 miles one day, when 50 miles is the furthest he had ridden in a day in the last five years. 'But at least it's mostly flat or gentle slopes in comparison to the undulations here in the Chilterns,' he writes.

Tira Wannamethee performed as an honorary amateur in a Royal gala charity performance in August 2024 in the presence of the King and Queen of Thailand to raise funds to build two ceremonial royal arches to commemorate the King's auspicious 72nd birthday (sixth 12-year cycle). 'This was my first time ever performing Chinese opera in the Thai language and was a fascinating experience,' he writes. 'We were trained intensely for two months by professional teachers and I learned a lot about the history and different movements and expressions of Chinese opera,' he writes. The ceremonial arches in Bangkok were opened by the King in January 2025 in a grand ceremony. Tira and his wife both received a special commemoration medal from the King that day, in recognition of their contribution to the successful completion of the arches.

Tira writes: 'It was a pleasure last year to meet up with one of my Oxford tutors, **Andrew Wathey**, during his one-year fellowship at All Souls. I greatly appreciated receiving from him a tour of All Souls, since it was my first time inside that college, as well as the chance to catch up after 40 years. After All Souls, Andrew has continued to pursue his non-executive activities, as an external member of Council of the University of Cambridge, Chair of the Board of the National Archives (where he was renewed for a second term from April), and as an independent member of Council at Royal Holloway. He is also continuing to do some musicology.'

Meanwhile, **Adam Zeman** recently relocated to Edinburgh where he works as a neurologist, mainly as an expert witness these days, researcher and author. He recently published *The Shape of Things Unseen: A New Science of Imagination* (Bloomsbury).

As for me, I am still working at the Asian Development Bank in Manila, despite threatening to retire during each of the last few years. I gained a new lease of life in transferring last year to ADB's East Asia Department, work that has taken me back to China and Mongolia last autumn. I continue to perform professionally as well as record Baroque music as a sideline. As always, I would be delighted to welcome any visitors who are heading to Manila.

1982

Year Representative: Nick Weller

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Thank you very much to everyone who's been in touch. There's been quite a variety of news this year.

David Brown has retired from university work after 36 years, his first law tutoring having been at Merton. David is enjoying travelling and spending time with his children and dog.

Edward Collier was pleased to report that Copleston church, where he is vicar, is flourishing. The church is seeing a growth in numbers and its community centre maintains a busy and ambitious programme of activities. Securing funding

for buildings continues to be a challenge, however. Edward and his family welcomed the birth of a daughter, Dilys, on 15 October 2024. Her brother Emmanuel is growing into his new responsibilities as older sibling.

Peter Coveney was made a Member of Academia Europaea in 2020 and a Fellow of the Royal Academy of Engineering in 2022. A paperback version of Peter's book, *Virtual You*, will be published by Princeton University Press this autumn (the hardback version was a *Financial Times* book of the year). Peter has recently been working on his latest book, *Molecular Dynamics: Probability and Uncertainty*, which was published by Oxford University Press in May 2025, and takes a very different approach to previous books on molecular dynamics as a computer simulation technique. The book is available in print or online on OUP's *Oxford Academic* platform. A 30% discount can be obtained on the book using promotional code AUFLY30.

John Holland writes that as an older dad with a second family, he is still dealing with challenges that most of the 1982 year group have put behind them. John's twins have started GCSEs. His son Sam has passed his driving test and A levels are looming next year, so John has been on university visits with him recently. John is still at the Home Office, now trying to set strategy for the national police technology systems. John continues to study maths and new technology, while enjoying prog rock concerts and music festivals, regularly meeting up with Merton friends at these. John was going to the annual summer gathering in Oxford with **James Thickett**, **Stephen Walsh**, **Richard Ryder**, **David Holbrook**, **Chris Edwards**, **Martin Giles** and **David Parkinson**.

Michael Jary is celebrating the tenth anniversary of marriage to his husband Jonathan this year. Michael and Jonathan keep sheep, chickens and bees in Kent, and spend about half their time in their home in the south of France. Michael is busy with a portfolio of charity, social enterprise and commercial board positions, plus some consulting and advisory work. He has been experimenting with teaching at Oxford's Blavatnik School of Government.

Virginia Knight went on Gloucester Choral Society's tour of Transylvania.

Randall Martin has a book out shortly: *Shakespeare, St Paul, and Dramatic Emancipation: disability, gender, race, ecology*, published by Oxford University Press. Randall has been awarded a Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada Insight Development Grant. The grant will support the preparation of a new book, *Shakespeare and Critical Theories of the Anthropocene*, to be published by the Arden Shakespeare, London.

Mark Shuttleworth moved from Hong Kong Baptist University to the Hang Seng University of Hong Kong in September 2024 to take up the role of Professor and Dean of the School of Translation and Foreign Languages. September 2025 will mark seven years since Mark moved to Hong Kong. This means that he will soon be entitled to apply for permanent residence, which is considered to be a significant milestone in the life of any expat in Hong Kong. Mark's son Andrei is coming to the end of his undergraduate studies in Hong Kong and his younger daughter Alex is about to enter her GCSE year there. Mark's elder daughter Maria is based in London; his wife, Tanya, continues to live between the two countries.

Chris Villiers completed his 60-mile off-road ride round Essex in September 2024 and is now in training for tackling some big climbs in Mallorca in autumn 2025 on his road bike. His guitar lessons have been going well and he has been rehearsing for his first gig since student days, a medley of Beatles songs, to be performed late summer 2025. Chris is planning to retire from his GP practice at the end of 2026.

Stephen Walsh continues to see the usual crew in the usual ways (see **John Holland's** news).

I'm still doing much the same things connected with exams. I had an enjoyable lunch with **Philip Waller** in Cornwall in May.

1983

Year Representative: Meriel Cowan

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I wonder how many 1983 Freshers' photos there are hanging in Mertonians' downstairs bathrooms? I went to pull mine off

the wall to see who I was missing — were there really only 98 of us? This year has been a 'big birthday' for several of us and that has been an excuse for many to catch up in person, so my newsgathering has been more face to face than usual.

I was really happy to catch up with **Ian Andrews** and his wife Helen both in Oxford and London. Ian has now been retired for three years, and they divide their time between London and Greece; 'We have a house on the island of Paros and shortly will have a small Bauhaus style house in Athens, the only place I now get paid to do anything (as a director of Athens Airport). The job there is a real pleasure, a reason to be in Athens and very much related to the work I used to do in the City, but this time as a doubtless rather tiresome client.' Ian is enjoying London much more, having the time to savour its extraordinary variety and culture in a way he never could when he used to be confined to Moorgate. This is much assisted by his positions on the board of the English Concert and the Advisory Council of the British Museum. He and Helen are much enjoying the freedom to travel, 'climbing to the summit of Mount Olympus in May and going somewhere new for us each November to avoid the greyness of Europe (this year Bhutan).'

It was great to see **Chris Edwards** at a celebration for Ian's 60th in February along with some other Oxford friends. Chris and I remembered watching the World Cup Final (West Germany vs Argentina, since you ask!) in 1986 while on a narrowboat navigating the Oxford canal. **Sarah Crofts** was also on that trip and played her flute on the roof of the boat while we chugged along through the Oxfordshire countryside. Sarah and her husband **Michael Everett** are based in North Oxford, and Sarah makes the most of the music scene, singing in the Oxford Bach Choir, with the schola at St Barnabas, and playing flute with friends. In Trinity 2025 the choir is tackling among other pieces Tallis' 40-part motet *Spem in Alium* and a piece by Cecilia McDowall first commissioned in 2012 for Merton. They recently acquired some of Priscilla Tolkien's piano sheet music which Michael has been playing in spare moments. Michael continues to advise on international tax at KPMG focused on shipping rail and energy markets, which he still (thankfully) finds very interesting.

James Collings was another participant in that distant boating holiday. He's spent some of his second year of

retirement catching up with **Paul Chavasse**. In August, James (and his two lively spaniels) visited Paul and Sonia (1980) in their beautiful home in the Somerset countryside, and had some lovely walks on the edge of Exmoor and the North Devon coast. This was followed by a skiing trip in February, in part to mark James' 60th birthday. The all-male ski gang comprised James and his son, brother and nephews and Paul plus one of his sons. 'We travelled by train to the French Alps to be climate-friendly, but pity the other travellers who had to share a carriage with us as we picnicked on baguettes, fromage, charcuterie and red wine (without glasses). All the Piste Artists (as our WhatsApp group was called) enjoyed the slopes without injury.'

Paul and Sonia are enthusiastic rail travellers in line with Paul's role at the Met Office where he's head of governance and has formulated and delivered its Net Zero strategy. Paul is retiring at the end of the year and has plans for installing a heat pump at home which requires extensive work. I have immense respect for Paul's demonstration of commitment to a more sustainable lifestyle, but relying on European trains can be frustrating!

Michael Roller has recently retired as CFO of Niox Group plc and is starting to focus on possible charity roles, improving his French and Spanish as well as watching lots of cricket. **Susan Roller** continues with her Citizens Advice voluntary work, learning more about art and tending to her garden. Susan spent a few lovely days in the company of **Daniel Seymour** and his wife Adria on a trip to New York in April.

I always enjoy hearing news from the North American contingent. **John Oetjen** (based in Seattle) has had a busy year. 'At the Berlin Film Festival we made progress on making the film *My Culinary Love Story* based upon the book by Pauline Parry. It's a wonderful story about a young British chef who achieves great success professionally and personally through her love of food. We plan to film in Somerset next year. One of the unique features of this project is that we plan to support the Scottish-based Mary's Meals with a portion of profits from the film. Mary's Meals provides life-changing school meals to children living in some of the world's poorest communities. The organisation feeds more than 2.6 million children daily. On another note,

I am developing an immersive concert experience called "Opera Girl" with original music from legendary Hollywood composers. Our plan is to have an unplugged version of our show in Merton Chapel later this year.' I hope we hear more about this from Merton.

Rupert Vessey and his wife Laura are now settled in Michigan, dividing their time between Kalamazoo and South Haven on beautiful Lake Michigan. Rupert continues as chief scientist for Flagship Pioneering as well as an advisor to Arsenal Capital and a board member for Bio-Techne. Laura is still leading early development clinical operations for Johnson & Johnson oncology. They have four children: Katelyn lives in Kalamazoo and works as an HR director for a Chicago based IT company. Sarah is moving to Ireland to work for Merck in HR. Jonathan lives in LA and is working on future plans, and Daniel is at Columbia in NYC where he is studying political science and playing Ivy League basketball.

Richard Weaver retired from PwC in 2019; he continues to spend a good deal of time in his role as a charity trustee, where he sees a different side of life. 'I'm in contact with several Merton alumni, who all seem to be flourishing in their different ways.' Richard Baxter is the founder of Desucla, a fintech specialising in tax compliance execution. He is based in Lisbon. We spent a very relaxing few days with him exploring the coast up to Porto and savouring some wonderful food. Sam Whipple (1983) has been supporting his wife **Philippa Whipple** (President of the Merton Society) to build the Merton Mentorship scheme which is now established with support from the College. This has been very successful and much appreciated by new Merton graduates. **Pippa Shirley** has been chairing the Career Insights working group for the Merton Society, looking at ways in which Mertonian alumni can support students as they enter work. She and Sam Whipple attended the first pilot event on Sunday 15 June where the students had a series of sessions on applications, interviewing and networking. Look out for future opportunities or consider becoming a Merton Mentor if you are interested in helping Merton students.

Simon Cowan has been at Worcester since 1989 and is retiring next year, so we are looking forward to more time to travel and see family. Our eldest son Alex is getting

married in September, Richard is working at CERN for two years and Charlie continues as a software engineer at the BBC. I work two days a week in safeguarding and as a GP at Luther Street Medical Centre which provides primary care for people experiencing homelessness in Oxford. I marked my 60th birthday with a dinner at Worcester and several Mertonians celebrated with me; it was very lovely to welcome people back to Oxford.

1984

Year Representative: David Clark
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As always, it's been great to hear from some of you with your news. Thanks to all those who responded to my annual request for contributions to this update.

Congratulations to **Andrew Phillips** and his wife Amanda (né Braddock, 1985) who were delighted to become grandparents for the first time in January. Andrew continues as finance director at the Duchy of Cornwall and further congratulations are due as he was made Lieutenant of the Royal Victorian Order in the 2025 New Year Honours list for services to the monarch and members of the royal family. Andrew and Amanda split their time between London and Somerset. Amanda is now teaching Latin and Ancient Greek at Cambridge University. Like many in our cohort, Andrew turned 60 last year and was pleased to catch up with **Ruth Taylor** at various parties to celebrate.



Duncan with his sons John (left) and James

Alison Nichols (1986) got in touch with a photo of her husband, **Duncan Gilchrist**, and their two sons. Both have followed Duncan's early career by becoming army officers: John is in the Royal Signals and James is in the Royal Engineers. The photo was taken at last year's Remembrance Service.

Mark Rhys-Jones took the decision a year ago to step back from private practice as a solicitor. He is still sitting part time as a civil judge but is also enjoying filling his time with new interests such as learning to play bridge, learning Italian and finally (after about a 40-year gap) playing the piano again. Gill (his wife) has also retired so they are also planning more travelling together.

David Smith wrote from the USA to inform me of his latest book, *Everyday Christian Teaching: A Guide to Practicing Faith in the Classroom*, published by Eerdmans in February 2025. 'Otherwise,' he continues, 'life goes on amidst political and social chaos.'

Adam Levitt also contacted me with the news that he has trimmed his work down to two days per week, which should allow more time for boating activities!

For my part, I continue with a four-day week, working from home 95% of the time, which suits me and Barbara very well.

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)
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As it's now 40 years from our matriculation, I suppose it's inevitable that retirement should begin to be figuring in annual reports. I retired as CEO of the British Academy of Management at the end of 2024 after seven very intense but enjoyable years, and am enjoying getting back to the world of history as a volunteer steward at Winchester Cathedral on its Kings & Scribes exhibition where I can share my love of the wonderful 12th-century Winchester Bible with the visitors. We get wonderful development events, so it's a bit like being a student again – all the fun of intellectual stimulation but, thankfully, no essays to write! Gary and I are also travelling more, including an amazing wildlife tour to Costa Rica in March this year, with Botswana planned for

2026. Our kids (Tess, Florian, Becca and Susie) are all busy 20-somethings and enjoying life in London.

Gary and I went to Vienna in December and met up with Christine Biggs (née Winzor) (1986) where her husband Ian is the Australian Ambassador; Christine is enjoying life in Europe, which is keeping her extremely busy. More recently, Julee Greenough (1986), **Tony Trowles**, **Sonia Johnson** and I got together in London, where we spent a delightful afternoon reminiscing, looking at some old photos and feeling as though we had seen each other much more recently than we have. **Diana Altegoer** and I catch up online on a more regular basis; she is well and still very much enjoying life as Executive Director of Corporate and Foundation Relations at the University of Pennsylvania in the US. I also recently narrowly missed meeting up with **Chris Green** at a recent choir concert – I'll manage that better in future!

Prasenjit Saha writes: 'I am working at the University of Zurich as Professor in the Department of Astrophysics, still working on my DPhil it sometimes feels like. Still getting to meet new and very nice people in interesting places.'



Chris Aston sent a short update from the Staffordshire Moorlands. 'Since the last news it's mainly been a period of consolidation. Our three sons continue to be happily married or partnered, progressing in their chosen careers and enjoying life, and I continue to keep helping to improve the commercial performance of businesses in the multinational building materials group that I have been with for a number

of years. The big news is that my wife Marion has retired from a lifetime of teaching, a massive step which took a lot of courage to do. One of the spin-offs is that we are no longer tied to the school calendar for holidays so we've taken advantage by going to Antigua, where one of our daughters-in-law comes from, and most recently Cyprus. We also have more flexibility to go away in the camper van for long weekends. The next stage is to plan how I can retire too. There must be a way of doing that in the next year or two.'

Chris Green writes: 'I'm enjoying (early) retirement from IBM, with lots to keep me busy. I volunteer as concert administrator for Romsey Abbey, coordinating 20 or so performances a year. I still sing in the Abbey choir and several other choirs. One choir tours to cathedrals in the summer – it's St Albans this year – and the other, consisting mostly of choral scholars from Cambridge, has more exotic destinations: last year we thoroughly enjoyed a tour to Egypt, and this year we sang in Izmir in Turkey. I've also enjoyed visiting some old friends, including coming back to Oxford to see **Marcus Green**, who is enjoying himself as Chaplain at Worcester College, where one of our Abbey choristers is currently studying.'



Andrew Reed FRS writes: 'Since it is 40 years since matriculation, perhaps time for my first entry in *Postmaster*. For reasons I do not fully understand, I find myself as Senior Vice President for Research at Penn State University, responsible for ensuring our \$1.33 billion annual research expenditure is spent safely, legally, and for maximum impact. Not something I ever aspired to (indeed, quite the opposite), but when the offer came two

years ago there was so much potential. Oh, those before times. Now (May 2025), the Trump 2.0 administration is dismantling the government–university research partnership that powered so much of America’s prosperity, health and security over the last eight decades. Here’s hoping things will one day be re-built to make America great again.

‘Pleasures? Just back from a trip to New Zealand for my mother’s 90th, with wife Ashley, stepkids Maia and Akai, and newly married son James who normally lives in Boulder, Colorado. Son Matthew and grandkids Joey and Isla could not leave Berlin and so they missed the beauty of sunrise over the Pacific and the best beaches in the world.’

1986

Year Representatives: **Simon Male** (undergraduates)

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and **Daniel Schaffer** (graduates)

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Undergraduates

Ed Vaizey continues to be active in the House of Lords, and presents a yet-to-be-award-winning show on Times Radio every Friday between 10am and 1pm. Ed chairs the UK-ASEAN business council which takes him regularly to the region, and is a governor of St Paul’s School. To put bread on the table he advises a number of private companies.

Espen Ronneberg is working as Senior Adviser, Climate Change Multilateral Agreements with the Secretariat of the Pacific Community. In 2023 he and his family relocated from Samoa to Suva, Fiji, one of the few real cities in the Pacific. The regional and international climate change work remains challenging, but he is also working with new sectors such as fisheries, public health, agriculture and statistics to include the climate change elements in their work programmes.

Simon Male has spent three years working as an equity specialist at Bloomberg, where he works with asset managers, investment banks and corporations to enhance their analytical workflows. He lives with his family in suburban New York.

Graduates

Ben Alpers: This last year was an eventful one for me and my family. In 1998, I became one of the founding faculty members at the University of Oklahoma’s Honors College. The university decided to rehome the Honors faculty in other departments of the university. Though half of my teaching and service is still in the Honors College, last September I became a member of OU’s History Department. I also received promotion to full professor, starting in July 2025. Since the fall of 2024, I have been chairing the board of the Reacting Consortium, the non-profit organization that overseas Reacting to the Past, an innovative pedagogy that teaches history through elaborate role-playing games. I’m currently working on a Reacting game about the 1968 Columbia University student strike. My wife, Karin, began a term as Assistant Chair of the Department of Modern Languages, Literatures and Linguistics. Both my children are now working in the film industry. Our son, Noah, is in Los Angeles, where he is working at an agency, but hoping to get a gig closer to the production side of things. Our daughter, Mira, lives in Brooklyn and is just starting a job with the film-distribution side of Mubi.

For the second summer in a row, I returned to Oxford to teach in the University of Oklahoma Honors College’s Honors in Oxford program, which is based at Brasenose College. Karin and I celebrated our 30th anniversary in Oxford in July. I expect to be teaching in Oxford again next July. Finally, I turned 60 in August – indeed, I’m writing this a day after my birthday, in a train in Waverley Station, Edinburgh, having just celebrated my birthday with a trip to Scotland.

Riccardo Bianconi: I have been writing three books on mathematics. Two will be translated. I continue to do a lot of teaching. As hobbies, I do some gardening and read novels and short stories (in English and in Portuguese).

Gbolahan Elias: I am a professor at Babcock University, Ilishan, Ogun State in Nigeria, a Senior Advocate of Nigeria and a partner at my firm G. Elias. I have advised on seminal mergers and acquisitions, large and complex foreign currency financings, transformative long-term commercial arrangements, pioneering infrastructure projects and impactful law reform efforts – across industries including

financial services, energy, telecommunications, consumer products and transport.



Lionel with his daughter

Lionel Hogg: Earlier this year, my daughter suggested I should try yoga, to which I succumbed because she's my daughter, she runs the classes, and it would probably be good for me. The chief selling point was her target audience for classes — men over 45 who have some awareness of their limitations but insist that physical activity requires a

good degree of sweat and a limit to communal introspection. It has been a remarkably revealing experience. For about half of each class, I am demonstrably superior to my fellow travellers: no one else is paying attention, of course, but how can they not notice? The problem is the other half, in which I suspect I'm an instrument of considerable pity. This old dog is determined to learn some new tricks, however long it takes.

I am still practising law and cherry-picking the interesting matters, so have no thoughts of slowing down presently. We have two adult children, who seem to have found their feet well, and our youngest finishes school this year and I suspect will head into the creative industries. I have also been coaching his club basketball team for several seasons; the team's record would suggest I am a terrible coach.

I maintain a vicarious association with Oxford through an annual dinner hosted by local law alumni for graduates from the University of Queensland (my alma mater) about to head to Oxford for postgraduate study. Wonderful young people; the future looks very bright.



Mari Izumi: As a researcher on agriculture in Japan and Europe, I conduct research both domestically and abroad. I really enjoy visiting different places and talking to people. I also continue to play table tennis enthusiastically.

Julie Kaye (née Greenough): My husband and I have just returned to Canada from another very enjoyable long visit to England, during which we hiked Wainwright's Coast to Coast path for a second time. I was very happy for the chance to reconnect with Sonia Johnson, Madeleine Barrows (née Fontana) and Tony Trowles (all MCR 1985) at Tony's home in London. At the time of writing, I am excited to be leaving for a walking holiday in Japan with my younger son Ryden.



Julie at the start of the Coast to Coast path

Lazza Mathews: I am an experienced duty solicitor specialising in criminal defence, as a consultant, at Edward Fail, Bradshaw & Waterson where I have been for a number of years.

Mark Newton: Mark is professor of physics at Warwick University and head of department.

Eric Olson: My main focus (obsession?) these past several months has been to find ways to maintain and even accelerate progress towards a low-carbon future in the face of significant political headwinds in the US and elsewhere. I recently launched a new company: HeatWave is an AI/tech-enabled strategic consulting firm and action accelerator dedicated to helping businesses and cities manage risks and

seize opportunities in the face of the new economic realities created by a hotter and more volatile world. Our timing is, for all sorts of unhappy reasons, very good and we are ramping up quickly. I am also working with the Keystone Policy Center (a long-time leader in multi-stakeholder collaborations) to find ways to accelerate sustainable energy infrastructure development by helping public and private sector leaders 'rise above entrenched positions to reach common higher ground'. I am always delighted to see old classmates who pass through the San Francisco Bay Area.

Daniel Promislow: I moved my job from the University of Washington to Tufts University last year, and I have really enjoyed settling into Boston life over the past year. Most importantly, with Leslie's and my 22-month-old grandson living a three-minute walk from us, most mornings start out with helping him get ready for his day before we start our own. It's a great gift in our lives. I continue to spend much of my work life focused on keeping the Dog Aging Project moving forward and have also set up my fly lab at Tufts. As always, interacting with the undergrads who come work in the lab is one of the great pleasures of my life in academia. Less pleasurable is the ongoing stress that my colleagues and I face of trying to lead the life of a scientist during a time when science is under threat in this country. I try to focus on doing what I can to make sure that the coming generations of scientists will be able to thrive. And more than ever, I am thankful for those in my own scientific community. Challenging times.



Dan Schaffer: I continue to work as a pensions law partner at Slaughter and May, London. Lawyering is still very enjoyable. And it can involve novelty even after 36 years of practice, like interviewing journalist Emily Maitlis for a client event and using metacognition to succeed in an important Court of Appeal case. I also really enjoy contributing to law student life in Merton College. Slaughter and May sponsors the annual Halsbury Society Lecture and dinner. I organise and come up to

judge the second-year moot competition. I also teach a Trusts Law class and the tutorials. The students are always so impressive. I chair the Merton Lawyers' Association (there's a dedicated page on the Merton website, LinkedIn and WhatsApp communities). The MLA Committee has arranged a programme of events including London drinks and annual gatherings.

On the family front, our eldest Antoine (29) is engaged to be married. Antoine lives in London and works for Stackline. Vincent, our middle son (26), works for Palantir Technologies (currently in South Korea after two years in Manhattan). Louis, our youngest (25), is starting a law conversion course in London. My wife and I celebrated our 32nd wedding anniversary in October and we have now completed our house renovation project in Dinard, Brittany. *Une maison du bonheur*. We absolutely love spending time there and will be there as frequently as we can. I now have French (and British) nationality. I spent my partner sabbatical there in June and July 2025. I still train hard all year round. I am currently focused on doing an Olympic triathlon (with Louis) in Dinard, a heli-skiing week (again) at Tyax Lodge, British Columbia (with Antoine) in March 2026, and then ten days' cross-country ski and sail (with Vincent) in May 2026 in Svalbard.

Alongside Merton alumni activity I enjoy organising my school Haberdashers' Aske's (1982) leaver dinners three times a year. I have managed to reconnect, in a WhatsApp group, 75 of my year. The group is very active.

Luc Tremblay: Luc Tremblay is Professor, Sensorimotor Control at University of Toronto.

1987

Year Representative: Simon Male

Tel: 001 845 548 7825 Email: simon_male@yahoo.com

Peter Wilson and Mónica are moving to Beijing at the end of August, where Peter will be the next UK Ambassador. His children are either starting university (the youngest), finishing (middle child – from Trinity, Oxford), or just over halfway through a medical degree (the eldest).

Having spent most of his career to date in news media (BBC, the *FT*, Ofcom), **Jim Egan** is returning to Oxford to take up a position at the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism in the Department of Politics and International Relations. Jim will be the new lead author of the Institute's annual *Digital News Report*, the world's largest and most comprehensive study of news consumption trends. Surveying close to 100,000 people in 48 countries, the report tracks changing global news consumption habits and attitudes and the impact of these changes on the journalism sector and beyond.



From left: Jim Egan, Simon Whitfield, Sophie Scott (née Daniels), Andy Castell and George Scott

Fay Rice remarried in July 2021, and is now Fay Leech. She left practice in December 2023 and, in January 2024 opened Soothe Ocular Spa, a standalone Dry Eye clinic in Newcastle upon Tyne. The business is growing, and she finds it very satisfying to be able to make such a positive difference to people's lives. In September 2024 she became a grandmother for the first time when her daughter-in-law gave birth to Jacob. Her son and his family live in Canada but she visited in October 2024 and they enjoy weekly FaceTime sessions.

1988

Year Representative: Tim Gardener

c/o Development Office, Merton College, Oxford, OX1 4JD

Email: publications@merton.ox.ac.uk

Simon Fraser has been teaching for over 30 years. For the last ten, he's been teaching Senior Mathematics at a school

in Herts, where he has enjoyed teaching the offspring of a number of Old Mertonians. Scant leisure time is spent fixing cars and playing golf. He is now experiencing shock and delight in equal measure as he packs off his eldest two children to university.

David McDowell has now been with the History and Politics Departments at Fettes College for 20 years and married to Margaret Ann for ten. They regularly meet up with fellow Old Mertonians, especially **Pete Mabbs** and **Marie Smith**. He devotes increasing amounts of time to the International Baccalaureate course in Global Politics.

Lewis Ayres is still a professor in the Department of Theology and Religion at Durham University, though he is now also McDonald Agape Distinguished Professor of Early Christian Theology at the Pontifical University of St Thomas Aquinas (the 'Angelicum') in Rome, and for the next two years he and the family will be there full time.

Tim Gardener continues to work in a small Winchester-based consultancy company that specialises in decision analysis and decision support. He was the lead author for an International Guideline on Comparative Assessment for Decommissioning of Oil Rigs, every bit as scintillating as the title suggests.

1989

Year Representative: Matthew Grimley

Merton College, Oxford OX1 4JD

Email: matthew.grimley@merton.ox.ac.uk

Charles Wynn-Evans has been appointed an Honorary Research Fellow, and an Associate Member, of the Centre for Law at Work at the University of Bristol Law School.

John Cooper's book *The Lost Chapel of Westminster: How a Royal Chapel Became the House of Commons* was published in November 2024.

Catherine Byram-Wigfield writes: 'After nearly 22 years in Enforcement at the FCA (formerly FSA), I was appointed as a

full-time Judge of the First-tier Tribunal's General Regulatory Chamber in March 2025. It still involves lots of regulation but now across a huge variety of sectors. I lead the Information Rights jurisdiction, where a number of Mertonians have been spotted recently. I am also continuing to sit as a Deputy District Judge hearing civil and family cases and in the Health, Educational and Social Care chamber, chairing Special Educational Needs and Disability cases. The last few years have brought a number of adjustments as a result of my deteriorating eyesight, but I'm told I'm a distinctive sight on the circuit with my dark glasses and visor! Away from court, two teenagers and singing in a chamber choir seem to keep me out of mischief.'

1990

Year Representative: Christine Barrie

Email: Christine.barrie@btinternet.com

As Director of the UK High-Field Solid-State NMR National Research Facility, hosted at the University of Warwick, **Steven Brown** has overseen a £17 million UK Research and Innovation project for the delivery and installation this year of the UK's first 1.2 GHz NMR spectrometer, as featured in *Chemistry World* in February.

Zaid Al-Qassab completed his first year as Global CEO of M+C Saatchi, the global advertising and marketing services group. He and Claudia Drake (1991) are enjoying their life as empty nesters. They are often to be found hanging out with Mertonians **Piers Allison**, Mark Corben (1989), and Italian resident Henry Harrison (1989). They also enjoyed a visit from Cyprus-based George Zachariah (1991).

Azeem Azhar continues to work in the field of artificial intelligence. His newsletter and podcast, *Exponential View*, continues to grow. For the first time in a decade he has written code (with the help of AI). He is working on his second book which is about the intersection of AI and energy, while continuing to invest in deep technology companies. Although spending too much time travelling, he's trying to hang out with his wife and growing children – son (20), daughter (17) and daughter (14) – as much as they will let him.

Jayne Joyce reports that *The Art of Breastfeeding* (9th edition) was published in October. She writes: 'We launched it in Chicago, and I did a short book tour in Scotland. Depending what newspapers you read, you might have seen our UK charity embroiled in controversy about gender. The question "What's next?" was answered in November when I was elected to the board of trustees, and then as co-chair. Don't believe what you see in the papers: it was a landslide, not a coup! Our middle daughter, following her older sister, moves from Cambridge back to Oxford this autumn to begin her DPhil. Dominic (1986) will also be starting a new job, as Savilian Professor of Geometry.'

Philip Wilson continues to work as a theatre director, most recently directing the premiere of *In the Mouth of the Wolf*, adapted from the story by Michael Morpurgo, at the Barn Theatre in Cirencester, and John Van Druten's *The Voice of the Turtle* at Jermyn Street Theatre. He is also writing: notably a new version of *Cinderella* for Chichester Festival Theatre (soon to be published by Nick Hern Books) and an adaptation of Matt Haig's *A Boy Called Christmas* for Chichester this December. He is still in touch with **Matthew Rose** and **Tom Weisselberg**.

1991

Year Representative: George Zachariah

Email: George.Zachariah@merton.oxon.org

Matthew Cherry shared: 'After having been at the Payment Systems Regulator for nearly eight years, most recently as Chief Economist, I have started a new job this June. My new role is Economics Director at the Civil Aviation Authority, co-leading a team of economists there covering regulation of the airspace and space industries in the UK. With two daughters doing public exams (one GCSEs and one doing A-levels) it has been a busy summer so far in our household!'

Caroline (née **Davies**) and **Ross** (1990) **Bentley-Davies** are living in the countryside in Lincolnshire with their rescue dog. They have been married for 28 years now! Ross still works as a software developer and Caroline is running her own educational consultancy (www.bentley-davies.co.uk). She

has another book published this year in Corwin/Sage's *Little Guide for Teachers* series: *Differentiation and Adaptive Teaching*.



Alex L'Estrange

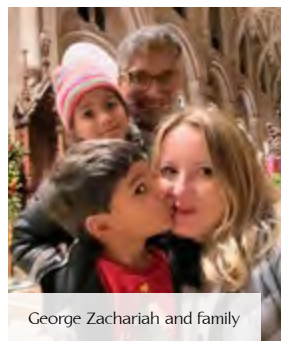
Alexander L'Estrange is loving being a musician, making his living from composing music for choirs, children, professional groups like the King's Singers and also TV music for CBeebies programmes like Magic Hands and Tiny Tunes. You can also hear his podcast jingle on Andrew Peale's (1992) excellent show, *Asia Matters*. He loved overlapping as a chorister parent with **Frank Garcia** (1990) at St John's, Cambridge. Alexander lives in Wheathampstead, Hertfordshire with his wife Joanna (Hertford, 1990) and two children (aged 19 and 17) and enjoys playing lots of cricket and growing lots of courgettes.



Paul McLoughlin

Mac (Paul McLoughlin) has fallen in love, gone through heartbreak, and is experiencing feelings again! He would like to sincerely thank and apologise to his Merton mates (Jon, Paul, Ben, Ian, Norm, and Martin) for acting as his virtual therapists on their WhatsApp group chat. 'You're all better than ChatGPT at this and I love you all! There is likely much messiness ahead, but growth isn't a linear process. Onwards!'

Paul Miller has quit tax law to pursue his first loves – comics and cycling.



George Zachariah and family

As for me, **George Zachariah**, we moved to Cyprus last June, with a new UN posting. It has been an eventful year: Susie's mother sadly died in November in Oxford. It has been a big change after Mali. Zara (8) and Sebastian (6) have been enjoying their new school here and making friends. We are discovering Cypriot culture, north and south. The peace process has been busy. We are grateful for visits from several Merton friends and hope for more (we would love to see you). Among the many Mertonians here are the new High Commissioner and the former Bishop. We have travelled nearby to Jordan and Bulgaria (skiing!)

1992

Year Representatives: Andrew Davison
Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, CB2 1RH
Email: apd31@cam.ac.uk
and **Steve Maxwell**
Email: stevenmaxwell99@gmail.com

Jenny Nevins is still running her business called Savor where they make homes that are chic and simple for the things that matter, from treasured family memories to key family documents. Surprisingly to her, they have found viral success on TikTok, which is allowing her to stay somewhat current with her kids whose friends will sometimes see their videos on their 'for you' pages. Not quite an empty nester, she still lives in Tribeca with two off to college and a high school sophomore. She would love to connect with Merton alums passing through NYC.

Andrew Davison returned from two years as a visiting fellow in Princeton, and moved to Oxford as Regius Professor of Divinity, and to Christ Church, where he is a canon of the cathedral.

Anna Watts reports that life in the Netherlands continues to be lovely (but still flat). On the research front, neutron

stars continue to offer lots of challenges, and she's back to 'regular' university teaching after five years of Bachelor Degree Programme Directorship through the pandemic. Kids are both doing well – the oldest has just picked a science-oriented subject packet for her last three years of high school (excellent choice) and the youngest heads to high school in September. She is not sure they are quite ready for that!

Professionally, **James Handscombe** has joined the advisory board for the Academy for the Mathematical Sciences and had two Ofsted inspections to get through (they were fine). Personally, he had a year of quiet domesticity with two sets of exams (finals and the IB Diploma) to take by proxy via his daughters and is about to be an empty-nester with his youngest heading off for university. Amusingly, he has a new book coming out in the autumn (*The Cabinet of Curiosity*). And esoterically, he has rather optimistically planted an olive tree in his back garden and has become fascinated by the collaboration between Walton and Sitwell exemplified by Scotch Rhapsody.

Kelyn Bacon Darwin has recently been appointed as the President of the Competition Appeal Tribunal, and is horrified that her youngest child is now 18 and the main user of the family car. She has enjoyed meeting numerous Mertonians over the last year, including hosting a group of Sarah Tobin's students to watch one of her High Court hearings. The Bacon Darwins are also delighted that the daughter of Claire Ropers (Merton French lecturer, 1995-96) will be coming to live with them for two years from September 2025, while she is studying law at Kings.

Steve Maxwell left Google after 15 years in 2023 and is now self-employed as a leadership consultant. He still lives near San Francisco and has started dabbling in a spot of poetry.

Professor **Raymond Jagessar** is currently lecturer in chemistry at the University of Guyana and is involved in teaching, research and publishing. He is also currently the Foreign Secretary of the Caribbean Academy of Sciences. He recently participated at the 3rd Commonwealth Chemistry Conference in South Africa. He is a strong advocate against climate change and anticipates that the world will take this as a serious threat to humanity. He welcomes collaboration and can be contacted at raymondjagessar@yahoo.com. He

wishes all Mertonians past and present best of health and to be at the forefront of their endeavours.

1993

Year Representative: Jo Cooke

Email: jvicooke@hotmail.com

This update is a brief one; however please do keep your news coming through. I love hearing from people and knowing what's what.

Tania Davison (née **Abrahams**) reflects: 'As we all hit half a century, we tried to prove we weren't past it yet.' Tania skied the Vallée Blanche but feels she was rapidly outdone by **Leanda Fauset** (née **Cooksey**) who did the Three Peaks Challenge, and **Jim Ratzer** who did a crazy cycling race. **Henry Braun** kindly got in touch, although he says he has no news and blames it on 'the curse of middle age'. There's a theme here.

Jim Freeman's news is 'the arrival in our lives of my two nieces – which had the knock-on consequence of me having to do a really high Go Ape course when I thought I was past such things'. **Naomi Drewitt** is still a civil servant at the Department of Health and Social Care, although facing yet another reorganisation and downsizing (her sixth since she's been a civil servant, which reflects Naomi's strong survival instinct).

Sarah Boon continues to live happily in Wiltshire with Richard Smith (Mansfield), Hera the whippet and Casper the horse. She's developed her skills as an equine sports massage therapist, and she is still working at Travers Smith as a pensions lawyer where **Susie Daykin** (class of 1994) is Head of Pensions, which is great!

Matt Nelson is still based in London. He really wishes he'd learnt to swim front crawl properly, if only to keep up with the rest of the family, who now play a lot of water polo.

And, saving the best to last, **Richard Marsh**'s highlight is a short but intriguing one. 'This is the year I finally came into possession of swimming trunks with **Jamie Inman**'s face on them.' Don't dwell on that thought for too long!

1994

Year Representative: Nick Quin

Email: nickaquin@yahoo.co.uk

'Now, what I want is, Facts. Teach these boys and girls nothing but Facts.' Charles Dickens, *Hard Times*

All my contributors this year have referenced education, fittingly I suppose given our connection. In some cases, our children are now having the joy of exams and as nervous parents we perhaps live vicariously through them once again. In other cases, we have managed to assume paid roles, for example **Ben Woolley** remains teaching maths in Tacoma, Washington, USA, with all the excitement that living in today's USA as a green card holder entails. **James McEvoy** is stepping down after four years as Head of Biological Sciences at Royal Holloway University of London (before they find out he's a chemist).

And **Richard Hewitt** writes: 'I am leaving Kamuzu Academy, Malawi, after 21 rather wonderful years teaching the Classics and Law (inter alia). I am not entirely sure what follows, but it will include spending more time with my study of Kungoni Centre of Culture and Art, Mua Mission; perhaps also renewing acquaintance with England. My friend and former colleague Alexander Chula wrote an account of his time in Malawi, *Goodbye, Dr Banda. Lessons for the West from a Small African Country* (2023), and I am honoured to be the "RLH" to whom the book is dedicated. Any resemblance to one "Dr Highbrow" is not entirely coincidental.'

Thank you to all out there helping others to grow and learn. And, with our rather unique shared experience as Mertonians:

'No one is useless in this world who lightens the burden of it for any one else.' Charles Dickens, *Our Mutual Friend*

1995

Year Representative: Tom Brown

Tel: 0207 827 4008

1996

Year Representative: Maria Pretzler

Email: m.pretzler@swansea.ac.uk

Dominic Treadwell-Collins is the Chief Creative Officer of television company Happy Prince. He recently wrote and executive produced the Disney Plus/Hulu television series *Rivals*, based on the novels by Dame Jilly Cooper, winning the Royal Television Society Award for Best Drama Writer. He is currently filming *Rivals* series two and lives in Berkshire with his husband and son.

James Brooks is living in Teddington with his partner Emma and four kids (9, 12, 13 and 15). After spending almost a decade building Lightsource into one of the world's largest renewable power businesses and selling to bp, James has founded a sustainable private equity fund focused on water, clean energy and carbon. He is also an independent chair of energy and datacentre development companies. He's still rowing regularly but is less competitive these days!

1997

Year Representatives: Catherine Sangster

Oxford University Press, Oxford, OX2 6DP

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and **Jill Davies**

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Thank you to Freya and Josefine for updating us with their news. Hopefully many of us will get the chance to catch up at the Gaudy on 27 September.

Freya Keopping enjoyed catching up with friends at the 'Merton in London' dinner on 15 May and wrote to us the next morning still feeling a little worse for wear despite, as she explained, having a far more disciplined approach to alcohol. Freya continues to surprise people by living in Milton Keynes (public perception of which is perhaps best described by a City colleague Freya had just met: 'Well, that is a surprise. I wouldn't expect someone like you to be living

somewhere like that') and advocates a mass exodus of every interesting person from London to Milton Keynes.

She is kept busy working on some rather hopeful AI projects and admiring the youth of her children, who are 7, 9 and 11. Last summer, Freya and family went to the Alps where they enjoyed some downhill mountain biking, horse riding and a baking hot campsite, their original booking in La Berarde (1850m) having sadly fallen victim to the destruction of the entire village in a rockslide after torrential rains. They enjoyed another adventure over the New Year, ice climbing in Rjukan to celebrate Freya's husband Richard's 50th birthday, and Freya has been converted. 'I had spent our entire marriage refusing to go ice climbing, and somewhat hoping that its obsolescence would be the only benefit of global warming; what a mistake! It was a thrilling adventure, very much enhanced by the Heavy Water museum, which would be worth the trip on its own.'

Josefine Wallat will be moving this summer to China after six years as German Consul General in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. From August 2025 she will be Head of the German Consulate General in Guangzhou.

1998

Year Representative: Alexander J. Edmans
Email: aedmans@london.edu

Alex Edmans launched a report on cognitive diversity in asset management in the House of Lords in June, followed by a panel discussion that featured Stephanie Niven (2002). He coauthored the 15th edition of *Principles of Corporate Finance*, the finance textbook he studied at Merton. His daughter Audrey was born in May, a sister to Caspar.

Ben Garner moved back to the Oxford area in 2020, with his wife and children, Grace (15) and Tony (12), having lived in Baltimore, USA for nearly 15 years. The whole family have settled in well and are enjoying life in the Cotswolds. Ben is the vice president and regional general manager for 2U, an EdTech company that partners with universities and organisations to deliver online degrees and executive education courses. In

this role he is responsible for the growth and success of the UK partnerships, including with Saïd Business School.

Cristian Gazdac has just finished his Fulbright Professorship in the USA. He was researching and giving talks on cultural identity at the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton, Yale University, the University of Florida, and the Fulbright Reunion in Cleveland. He is proud to report that he is still playing football with his students.

Pamela Noakes (née **Shorney**) has become a trustee of the charity Tir Natur, which is aiming to undertake the first large-scale rewilding project in Wales.

Edwin Northover was appointed head of the Asian offices of Debevoise & Plimpton, having been in Hong Kong for 15 years.

Matt Shouler left government service under Elizabeth Truss (1993) and changed career into law. In his first live case, he appeared before Judge Owen Curry (2000). Matt anticipates being called to the bar in summer 2025, and would be glad to hear from other OMs in the profession.

1999

Year Representative: Andrew Tustian
Email: andrewtustian@hotmail.com

After 18 years as a civil servant working on equalities and health policy, **Rosalind Taylor-Hook** (née **Hook**) recently made a career change into tech, retraining as a software engineer through Code First Girls bootcamps sponsored by NatWest. She joined NatWest as a trainee engineer in April 2024, combining problem-solving skills from her previous career with new technical expertise. She notes: 'It's more of a steep learning curve and squiggly career than a career pinnacle, but I'm mostly enjoying the journey.'

Thomas Ableman has founded Freewheeling, a consultancy helping transport and mobility organisations with innovation and decision-making. As a leisure hobby, he is writing *A History of Europe in 75 Train Journeys*. This will be published in periodic Substack articles telling the story of Europe's history

through the prism of a different train journey each month from 25 January 2026, culminating on the 75th anniversary of the Treaty of Rome on 25 March 2032.

In April, **Ruanne Barnabas** was awarded the Alumni Early Achievement Award by the University of Washington School of Medicine for her contributions to global health and her early-career achievements. The award notes that her research 'has had a profound impact on public health policy, particularly in the areas of HIV treatment and prevention, HPV vaccination and global health interventions'. She also led studies that demonstrated the efficacy of a single-dose HPV vaccine, which influenced global vaccine policy.

2000

Year Representative: Alexander Perry

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2001

Year Representative: Katherine Millard

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2002

Year Representative: Ben Zurawel

Tel: 0207 832 0500 Email: ben.zurawel@gmail.com

Claire Chee and **Chiin-Zhe** are delighted to announce the birth of **Dominic** in December 2024, little brother to **Julian**. Claire says: 'Professor **Dominic Welsh** was a great inspiration and role model; he inspired our name choice.'

2003

Year Representatives: Andrew Godfrey-Collins and Helen Nicholas (née Beggs)

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Nat Merry celebrated her marriage to **Kat Baier** in October last year. It was a wonderfully laid-back affair: after a no-fuss ceremony at the registry office, Nat, Kat and assorted Mertonians (**Sze-Ann Causer** (née **Seeto**), **Kirsten Claiden-Yardley**, **Andy Jarvis** (2004), **Andrew Godfrey-Collins**, **Becca Davis** and, all the way from Norway, **Francis Grady**) spent the afternoon in a pub function room playing silly board games.

Throughout this year, many of us reached the milestone age of 40, which was an excuse for several more Merton mini-reunions: **Andrew Godfrey-Collins** hosted a noughties-themed disco in Southampton, **Rebecca Middleton** (née **Molyneux**) had a ceilidh in Cambridge and **Brian Melican** had no fewer than two parties, one in Wallington, where he grew up, and one in Hamburg, where he now lives. **Helen Nicholas** (née **Beggs**) didn't have a party, but did achieve her goal of 150 Parkruns before turning 40.

Besides the assorted smaller reunions, many from our year group attended our second Gaudy, which was a joyous occasion despite some glumness about the current state of the world. Everyone was a little greyer than at the previous Gaudy ten years earlier but the youthful sheen hasn't yet entirely vanished. Let's see how we're all looking in 2035 though!

Anna McVey reports: 'Since reading Biological Sciences at Merton, I've been working as a documentary producer, combining scientific research with scriptwriting. I recently wrapped *Limitless 2* with Chris Hemsworth and *Pole to Pole* with Will Smith – both major National Geographic series commissioned for Disney. These projects explore human limits, science and the natural world – a rewarding return to the themes that first inspired me during my time at Merton. It's a joy (and occasional chaos) to help bring science and big ideas to global audiences.'

Two Mertonians from our year have also been writing about the natural world: **Guy Shrubsole**, now a *Sunday Times* bestselling author whose works you may well have spotted at your local Waterstones, brought out his third book, *The Lie of the Land*, in autumn 2024, with a paperback edition released in May of this year. **SJ Beard's** *Existential Hope: Facing Our Future When the Signs Look Bad* will be released in September.

In Oxford, **Emily Fildes** worked on the (very strange, one might almost say Kafkaesque) digital and video content for the Bodleian Libraries' exhibition *Kafka: Making of an Icon* to mark 100 years since the Czech author's death.

And overseas, **Tomas Furlong** and Eleanor Hughes welcomed Nico on 15 October, joining Oscar (4) and Astrid (5). After six happy years in Singapore, they relocated to Dubai over the summer of 2025.

2004

Year Representatives: Nicola Davis, Gavin Freeguard and Natasha Beth (née Zitcer)

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It's possible that, after celebrating 20 years since our matriculation and catching up with so many old friends at the Gaudy last September, those who attended felt there was not much news to report in this edition of *Postmaster*. Or maybe it's just been a quieter year for the class of 2004. But there are still a few professional and personal updates to report.

Stewart Pringle got in touch with the exciting news that he left the National Theatre in October 2024 to take on a new position as Writer-in-Residence at the Royal Shakespeare Company. Congratulations, Stewart!

Aaron Borbora is a Home Office pathologist and seems to be racking up a worrying large number of homicide cases already (his words, not ours!). He has recently become president of his local Medical Society which is a real honour; as a former food rep he is trying to ensure that the meals served at the meetings are up to scratch. He and his wife Lottie have a lovely home in Heswall overlooking the Dee Estuary and continue their travels (this year China, Argentina, France and the Caribbean). Aaron commented that he very much enjoyed catching up with old friends at the Gaudy and wishes he was better at staying in touch.

Tash Beth (née Zitcer) is adjusting to life working for a Labour government after 14 years. She is currently at the Department for Education working on reforming children's social care,

including via the Children's Wellbeing Bill which may or may not have made its way through Parliament by the time you read this (depending on how thorough their Lordships are in debating it). Outside work, her two daughters keep her and husband Ian busy – mostly ferrying them to various extracurricular and social activities. She's hoping she'll get time to fit in her own social life sometime in the late 2030s.

2005

Year Representative: Sara Edris

Email: saraedris@hotmail.com

Marc W S Jaffré writes that his first book was published this year by OUP: *The Courtiers and the Court of Louis XIII, 1610–1643*. Between research, writing and editing it's been a long time coming, but he's very excited that the book is finally out.

2006

Year Representatives: James Dobias (undergraduates) c/o Development Office, Merton College, Oxford OX1 4JD and Gregory Lim (graduates)

Email: gbslim@gmail.com

Undergraduates

Dani Quinn is still living in London and working in education, recently moving to City of London Academy Southwark as the Safeguarding Lead (while still teaching maths). She and her husband Jonny (Queen's) recently celebrated the second birthday of their daughter Minnie (who is very popular among the Mertonian friendship group).

Henry Stewart-Brown, Meg, Kit (5) and Bill (1) have moved to west Worcestershire. Henry has abandoned **Adam Caines** and other Mertonian alumni at the law firm Macfarlanes and moved to a new job at NewVest.

Leo Romanenko is very happy to announce that he and his wife Ali are celebrating the birth of their baby boy, Arthur Jacob Leonidovich Romanenko, born on 1 June 2025.

Caroline Crampton's latest book — *A Body Made of Glass* — was published in the UK and US in hardback in April 2024 and then in paperback in April 2025. The *Observer* called it 'fascinating and intelligent' and the *New York Times* described it as 'a beguiling book', which made the six-plus years she worked on it feel like it was worth it.

Dan Zamansky is a British-Israeli independent historian, who writes *The New World Crisis* Substack (newworldcrisis.substack.com). Among his latest published articles is a reflection on the unlearned lessons of the Second World War (www.ynetnews.com/article/sylfohyxe)

Mark Johnson (now **Mark Porteous-Johnson**) married his husband Jack in October 2024 in London, with a big group of Merton friends in attendance.

Continuing a theme, I (**James Dobias**) married my husband Xabier (Xabi) in September 2024 in San Sebastián in Spain, surrounded by Mertonians. In fact, we were married by the wonderful Anna Bond (2005), who made excellent use of her degree by conducting a bilingual Spanish/English ceremony. I continue to live in Kennington with many Mertonian neighbours and to work as a lawyer (specialising in litigation, corporate crime and investigations).

Graduates

We were saddened to learn of the death of **Anthony Genot** from complications during a medical procedure. He had been the director of research at the French-Japanese International Research Laboratory on Micro-Mechatronics Systems in Tokyo, Japan, investigating DNA nanoscience. Our sympathy and condolences go to his widow and daughters.

Victor Petrov is an associate professor of history at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. In 2023, he published his first academic book, entitled *Balkan Cyberia: Cold War Computing, Bulgarian Modernization, and the Information Age Behind the Iron Curtain*, which in 2024 won the Barbara Jelavich Book Prize, the Marshall D. Shulman Book Prize, the Computer History Museum Prize and the John D. Bell Memorial Book Prize.

Yulia Savikovskaya has continued to work as a theatre, music and book critic both in Russia and in London. She continues to write plays and is also writing an autofiction novel *Total Immersion*, based on her three years of living in London during and after graduating from Oxford in 2019. A reading of her play *The Snails* took place in Moscow in May. Another of her plays, *Dear Kate*, which tells the story of a visit by an American teenager to post-Soviet Russia, has been shortlisted for a drama competition in Yekaterinburg. Her play *The Leak* had a stage reading in Kazakhstan in May, and a production is planned for this autumn. Yulia had her acting and directing debut at the Thomas Mann Theatre Laboratory this spring.

Andrew Stephenson is a lecturer in philosophy at the University of Southampton, and has accepted a professorship at the Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich, Germany, starting in August 2025. The title of the chair is the History of Philosophy from Modernity to the Present.

2007

Year Representative: Alistair Haggerty

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Thank you for the fantastic response to my request for updates. It was great to hear from so many of you and to find out a bit about what you have been doing over the last year.

In the time-honoured nursery rhyme tradition, first comes love, then comes marriage, and then babies, so I'll start with the news of nuptials. In October, **Bill Hellier** and his wife Josie had their wedding in sunny southern California. This was followed, a few months later, by him officially becoming a US citizen.

On 21 May, **Miriam O'Duill** and Will Fowler were married in a delightful and intimate ceremony, celebrated with their families, and followed by some walks in the Yorkshire Dales over the Bank Holiday weekend.

Harry Beeson married Claire last August in the chapel of Selwyn College, Cambridge, where they first met. They are

still living in Compiègne in France and celebrated the birth of their son Owen in December.

Owen is one of a number of sons born to 2007 matriculants over the past year. **Will Kane** and his wife Natalie welcomed baby Leo in May. He was followed, two months later, by the birth of Ruban Gananandan, **Kohi** and Alice's son. Then, in September, **Warren** and Emma Stables welcomed the arrival of Oscar.



From left: Will and Leo Kane, Warren and Oscar Stables, and Kohi and Ruban Gananandan

In November, **Lizzie Dogra** (née **Bauer**), **Netan Dogra** (graduate matriculation 2011) and young Alex were joined by baby Andrew.

Completing the line-up for a toddler six-a-side football team – who should have sufficient time to train before an inaugural kickabout at the next Merton Family Garden Party in 2027 – is Arthur Dawkins. **Charlie** and Jessica Dawkins were thrilled by his arrival on 5 May 2025.

To add a little balance to the preponderance of boys, **Kriti Upadhyay** and Dan had a baby girl, Anushka, who was born on 30 October. Kriti has recently returned to work after maternity leave and is developing her ability to juggle (mostly not literally juggling) a small child and appearing in court.

After marriage and babies come anniversaries and, in April, **Emma Murant** (née **Reynolds**) and **Sam** celebrated a decade

of marriage with a two-week trip to Japan with their young daughter. The timing of their trip meant that they saw the country in full cherry blossom bloom. Emma and Sam also acquired their first dog this year in the form of Melly the cockapoo.



Angel, Hector and Tintin

I will conclude this report with an update from **Angel Sarmiento**, which is likely to make you pine for sunnier, more laid-back climes. He and his husband Hector have spent the last two years living in Punta Mita, a beach resort on the Mexican Pacific coast, with their rescue dog Tintin. Angel is the CEO of Mita Residential, a specialist in luxury holiday villas, and spends his time enjoying daily sightings of coatis, iguanas, a myriad of tropical birds, land crabs and humpback whales.

2008

Year Representative: Alice Salvage

Email: Alice.salvage@gmail.com

2009

Year Representative: **Stephanie Cadoux-Hudson**

Email: scadouxhudson@gmail.com



Pari with her Catherine Pasquier Award

Pari Kritsiligkou, Alan and Georgios moved back to the UK and are now enjoying living by the beach in Formby. In September 2024, Pari started her own research group as a Tenure Track Fellow at the Department of Biochemistry, Cell and Systems Biology at the University of Liverpool. In June 2025, she received the Catherine Pasquier Award from the Society for Free

Radical Research Europe – an

annual award for outstanding early career scientists with significant accomplishments in the field. Pari's work has focused on understanding how free radicals can regulate signalling pathways in health, development and disease.



Fabienne and James' wedding

Claire Higgins, who currently resides in Australia, and her partner Patrick celebrated the birth of their second son, Tom, in October 2024.

Fabienne Cheung and James (Bridges) were married in Dulwich, London, in July 2024 with lots of Mertonians in attendance, and welcomed their son Felix James Cheung Bridges in May 2025.

May was a good month for babies, as it was the month my husband **Alex Cadoux-Hudson** and I welcomed into this world our first child, a gorgeous baby girl who we have named Elizabeth Maud Rose.



Stephanie and Alex with baby Lizzie at the Henley Qualifiers

2010

Year Representative: **Martin Schmidbaur** (undergraduates)

Email: martin.schmidbaur@gmail.com

There is currently no Year Representative for the 2010 graduates. Please contact the Development Office if you'd be interested in the role

Undergraduates

It's that time of year again – where I sit down to write the annual update on the goings-on of the 2010 vintage. This year marks a full fifteen (15!) years since we stepped through those gates at Merton.

This year's report is coming to you from Milton, Massachusetts, where my wife Molly and I welcomed our son Fritz Schmidbaur, born on 5 November 2024. I found it strangely moving to have introduced him to some of you already – and can confirm that at least four Mertonians have already held the little nugget. **Jan Engelhart** approves of his name, so he's also got that going for him. In all seriousness, 15 years later, this group continues to be an important part of my life. Thank you.



Pip and Lucas

Pip Schuijt and her partner welcomed their son Lucas van den Assem on 20 March 2025. Pip is still based in the Netherlands and reports that she's in touch with the 2009ers – Anna Hoffman in particular.

Catrin Bucknall shared that baby Jack was born in December 2024. We're thrilled for the Bucknall family's growing crew.

Proud dad Andrew O'Flaherty



Andrew O'Flaherty is now chasing after an 18-month-old and loving it — while trying not to stay lean and still growing his investment business. We believe in you, Andrew.

Molly Kallas also welcomed a daughter, Emmie, in the winter of 2024. Older brother Sid is already excelling in his big brother duties.

Jonny Carver and **Nicola** are expecting Carver baby #3 — with big-brothers-to-be Callum and Fraser reportedly debating bunk bed configurations already.

Leaving the (growing) baby category and moving on to what has been a bit of a 'back to school' theme in this year's life updates from some of you:



Laura learning about beekeeping & pollinators

Laura Burnett made the leap from tech to science and started a Master's in Conservation & Land Management at Bangor University. She's been cold-water swimming off Ynys Môn, learning about pollinators, and surveying moths. She's eyeing a future in nature-friendly farming.

Rory Queripel completed their horticulture degree at the Eden Project and are heading to Imperial College London this autumn to study Taxonomy, Biodiversity & Evolution. Together with their partner, they hope to return to Cornwall afterwards. In the meantime, Rory is co-editing a journal issue on asexuality in Tolkien. (You read that right.)

As of time of writing, **George Lockett** and his fiancée Charlotte are in the throes of planning for their wedding at Chelsea Old Town Hall this July. In between wedding

preparations, George is working toward an MD focused on machine learning and ultrasound-based diagnostics for endometrial cancer. He's been presenting his research at conferences across Europe — and soon, Cancún.

Also at the time of writing, **Michael Geeson** and his wife Lucia were wrapping up their New York chapter and moving to London. Their past year included epic camping trips and a very specific Munich beer-hall-style birthday bash hosted by, well, me. Our former Entz rep may or may not have papped me hiking with my spork.



Martin, Michael and the spork

Emma and **Dan Crowe** are still in the thick of parenting life. Molly and Kit are thriving, and Emma reports they're all keeping busy with teaching and raising small humans.



The Crowes: Emma, Molly, Dan and Kit

Jessica Odone delivered perhaps the most on-brand message of the year: 'You went to junk.' I guess she responded nonetheless, so that's something. Jess now lives in Cambridge.

If you've read this far — thank you. Whether you had big news to share or are quietly doing life with no headlines, I hope you're

well and know there's a group of old friends here who'd love to hear from you. With love from Milton.

Graduates

Emanuele D'Oswaldo tells us that in April 2024 he joined the University of Konstanz as a Tenure-Track Professor of Formal Methods for Software Engineering. His wife Anna is expecting their second child in October.

2011

Year Representative: Timothy Foot

Email: tim.foot@gmail.com



It was lovely to hear from many of the 2011 cohort this year, and to catch up at various Merton events. Many apologies to **Phil Herbst**, who appears to be seated opposite me at every dinner we go to.

Marriage was very much the theme of the news received this year. **Mark van Loon** and Rebecca Dodson (2012) were married in July 2024. **Jeannette Smith** and **Rob Price** were married in September 2024 at Jeannette's parents' village church in south-east Kent. Jeannette reports that a whole host of Mertonians gathered to celebrate the event, and enjoyed 'Merton purple' slushies while tearing up the dance floor.

Also last September, **Joseph Hutchinson** married Sophy Tuck in a nuptial mass at St Bartholomew the Great, Smithfield,

to the glorious music of Haydn's *Nelson Mass*. This summer, Joe is starting a new job as a consultant at Great Ormond Street Hospital. Two weeks before Joe and Sophy's wedding, my husband Philip and I were married in Merton, with a civil ceremony in the Savile Room followed by a service of blessing in the College Chapel.

This spring, **Ben Hopkins** married his fiancée Barb in a beautiful (if warm) ceremony down in Mariposa County, California. Ben and Barb are moving over to Florida in 2026, as Ben starts as an assistant professor in the Department of Molecular Genetics & Microbiology at the University of Florida. Ben was just pipped to the marital post by another biologist, **James Kempton**, who married **Elena Lichmanova** (2021) in April.

However, 2011-ers did more than just get married over the past year. **Matt Booth** has moved to London, to take up a post as a Heilbronn Research Fellow at Imperial College London. **Mary Boyle** has been translated to Cambridge with her family, and is keeping busy as a Fellow at St Edmund's College, as Postgraduate Admissions Tutor and Bye-Fellow at Homerton College, and Outreach Coordinator for German in the Faculty of Modern and Medieval Languages.

Finally, **John Brazier-Beckett** writes to say that he and his husband Andrew have moved to west London, and that he (together with some familiar Merton voices) has started up a political history podcast — details on demand!

2012

Year Representative: Stephanie Cadoux-Hudson

Email: scadouxhudson@gmail.com

Mark Geldof published his first book this year: *Formal Medieval Combat and Performance: The Woodville-Burgundy Emprise of 1467* was published by Palgrave MacMillan. He is also the editor of two other books: one came out late last year and the second will appear this autumn: *Soviet Weapons of the Afghan War*, and *Soviet Weapons of the Atomic Age* (both published by Safar Publishing). Mark has also recently come out of 'retirement' as a historical combat participant!



Mark in June 2025 in British Columbia. Photo: Zena Charowsky

2013

Year Representative: Abbey Ellis

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Junghwan Lim (DPhil Mathematics) reports that he has co-founded an AI start-up, Motif Technologies, based in South Korea focused on developing AI technologies. He and his team have developed Motif 2.6B, a small-scale language model whose performance is comparable to similar models from major tech companies. Junghwan plans to release a larger model in September, and a significantly larger one early next year. He is interested in exploring potential collaborations with Merton or the wider University of Oxford to develop competitive AI technologies that benefit both South Korea and the UK.

Theophilus Kwek is very happy to share that his latest book, *Commonwealth*, was published by the Manchester-based Carcanet Press in May 2025. He was particularly thrilled to launch it in June at the Merton College MCR, with a reading jointly organised by the Merton history and poetry societies. A couple of copies are also now available at the College library.

Abbey Ellis is co-editor of a book titled *Ancient Plaster: Casting Light on a Forgotten Sculptural Material* (Proceedings of the British Academy) to be published by Liverpool University Press this summer.

2014

Year Representative: Sarah Bosworth

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Hello from the 2014 Mertonian cohort, a year that has been characterised by the ringing of wedding bells for many in our number. As many of us turn a decade older, it must be that time for the next life stage.

Molly Clark is working at the Citizens Advice Wandsworth, as an adviser-caseworker on a project that offers advice and support to people using the foodbanks in the borough. She lives nearby in Tooting, with her husband Dominic, whom she married last April.

Next up, another newlywed is **Oliver Pateman**, who married Sophie in February at the Holy Trinity Church in Sloane Square. Observant readers of the 'Merton News' may recall her making an appearance as 'Patewoman'! Oliver enjoyed celebrating with friends and family, and especially with three Mertonian ushers, **Edward Thomas**, **Bertie Beor-Roberts** and Timothy Foot (2011).

Speaking of **Bertie Beor-Roberts**, he is now firmly settled in Chambers, having entered his third year of practice as a commercial chancery barrister. An unexpected professional turn of events was appearing very briefly in the newsreels alongside Katie Price as her barrister when she attended court in August 2024. Bertie recently bought his first flat in Fulham, where he continually misses the Merton gardeners, struggling to maintain even a single small flowerbed. Despite the passage of time, Bertie has just managed to hold on to his streak of photographing weddings for Mertonians, having attended **Joseph Hutchinson's** in September, along with a strong Mertonian contingent of ushers and guests. Any others needing wedding photos are encouraged to get in touch!

Bertie actually failed to make my wedding this May, predictably double booked with another wedding. I married my wife Bethan and we are now happily settled in Norwich with our labradoodle Rhubarb. It was a wonderful day, joined by Mertonians **Asim Ali**, **Anna Schnupp**, **Ella Baron**, **Stefan Marjanovic**, **Ben Holden**, **Nanae Hart** and Harry Bush (2013) – Anna’s turn next year back in Oxford! I was lucky to have Nanae, Anna and Ella on hand to sort my hair the morning of the big day, years of practice getting ready for Oxford Balls finally of unexpected use again.

Outside the joviality of marriage, Merton will be pleased to hear that several of our number continue to pursue academia to their hearts content – albeit from further and further afield. **Henry Drummond**’s book was published last year by Oxford University Press, titled *The Cantigas de Santa Maria: Power and Persuasion at the Alfonsine Court*. **Toby Adkins** spent a year living in Australia and New Zealand researching for the University of Otago. He’s now moved to Princeton to start a new Fellowship research position with the Princeton Plasma Physics Laboratory. Finally, **Wanrug (Fay) Dowson** has just started an Assistance Professorship in Comparative Literature at Thammasat University, Bangkok, Thailand, where she lives with her two daughters, Ayla (2) and Rhea (8 months).

Looking forward to next year’s update as many of us enter our 30s. Expect to hear of more wedding bells and perhaps the odd child or two popping up along the way!

2015

Year Representative: Cuong Quang

Email: cuong.quang@merton.oxon.org

It continues to be my great pleasure to collect the news from the 2015 Merton cohort. This year marks exactly ten years since we matriculated and I’m pleased to share new updates.

Freddie Crowley continues his directorship of the Whiddon Autumn Festival, which is now in its fifth annual edition. Since its founding by Freddie, the festival has grown to become a five-day feast of music across five north Dartmoor villages, and is now a firm fixture on the West Country cultural

calendar. Freddie’s vocal ensemble, Corvus Consort, released their new album *Welcome Joy: a celebration of women’s voices* in September 2024 to great acclaim by the BBC. Awards include being selected by BBC Music Magazine as one of the ‘13 best albums of 2024’, BBC Music Magazine ‘Recording of the Month’ in December 2024, with a five-star review, BBC Radio 3 ‘Album of the Week’ in the week of the release, and Limelight Magazine ‘Editor’s Choice’ in November 2024.

Bethan Hughes has received her MSc in Psychology and Learning Disability from the University of Portsmouth, with graduation in July. She is currently finalising her PhD proposals following the success of her MSc thesis and is now Head of Psychology at a school in North Wales. She has also completed intermediate levels in pole dance, pole silks and aerial hoop, and beginner levels in static trapeze and dance trapeze – bringing her closer to a childhood dream of running away to join the circus. To follow her showcase or competition performances, interested readers can find her on instagram as merchdrycinoedd.



The poster for Kailin’s exhibition

Kailin Sun is hosting a botanical art exhibition at the Munich-Nymphenburg botanical gardens, from August until 5 October this year, in collaboration with her friend and botanical artist

Carolina Correia. This exhibition is called 'Divergence and Convergence: an illustrated guide to plant evolution'. Kailin is also aiming to complete her PhD in systematic botany this year at the Botanical Institute in Munich, which is located at these botanical gardens.

In personal news, Kailin shares that she has been married to Dr **Felix Weitekämper** (DPhil in Mathematics, since July 2018 (so before her BA graduation at Oxford!)). She is applying for German citizenship and has decided to take Felix's name. Her new name will be Kailin Weitekämper (hopefully preceded by 'Dr. rer. nat.', once she has handed in and defended sometime in the coming months). Felix has been appointed professor for statistical and symbolic artificial intelligence at the German University of Digital Science, an online not-for-profit university based in Potsdam.

William Fourie is now a senior lecturer in musicology at Rhodes University. He was re-elected as Vice-Chair of the South African Society for Research in Music for the 2025–28 term. He serves on the executive of the Society with fellow Mertonian Carina Venter, who was herself re-elected as Chair of the Society for the same term. Their enduring friendship was cemented in Carina's room on Fellows' Quad.

As for your year representative: my wife, two young children and I have comfortably settled into Brisbane after more than five years living here. As a true 'sandgroper' from Western Australia however, I admit I have yet to adjust to the humidity. Our children are thriving at kindergarten and Year 2, and my artificial intelligence start-up has recently signed a five-year joint venture with the National Transport Research Organisation, an Australian/New Zealand scientific research foundation. I have the privilege to continue my research in major programme management with Dr Paul Chapman OBE, Senior Fellow in Operations Management at Saïd Business School.

2016

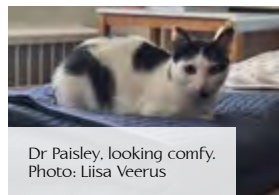
Year Representative: Henry Grub

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The past year has been a busy one for 2016 matriculands in academia. In May, **Michael Bruckner** graduated with a PhD in Philosophy from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, and in August started as a Postdoctoral Teaching Fellow for Global Perspectives on Society at NYU Shanghai. **Lydia Buckingham** started work as a Lecturer in Applied Mathematics at Cardiff University in September last year.

Edwin Lock recently joined King's College London as a Lecturer in Computer Science in September 2025, after finishing his most recent postdoc in Oxford. And **Ricardo Parolin Schnekenberg** will be leading a gene therapy research project for SCA29 (spinocerebellar ataxia type 29) at the Queen Square Institute of Neurology at UCL for the next three years. This will build on his Merton DPhil thesis, which, incredibly, someone came across online and read, leading to this opportunity. Clearly, hope endures for us all that theses are useful to society. Congratulations to all who are moving forward with their academic careers.



Dr Paisley, looking comfy.
Photo: Liisa Veerus

Dual-doctors **Liisa Veerus** and **Axel Almet** expanded their family with the adoption of 'Dr Paisley' (see the photo). It remains unclear what his doctorate is in, but my guess is fisheries science.

In other news, **Tim Liao** won the 2024 Society of Legal Scholars' Peter Birks Prize for Outstanding Legal Scholarship, for a monograph based on his Merton DPhil thesis. Tim is now based in London and working at LSE. Congratulations!

Jonathan Wolstenholme recently moved to a new role as Assistant Minister at Trinity Church, Islington, where he is grateful for his ministry. In July he celebrated the fifth anniversary of his marriage to Lizzy (Somerville, 2016), who began her psychiatry core training. This year also brought his 100th Parkrun, and he enjoys spotting fellow Mertonians on Strava!

Lily McElwee and **Christian Willmes** share the good news that on 24 July 2025, Wilhelmina Lelia Augusta Willmes was born healthy and happy in Scottsdale, Arizona.

Laura Tárkányi spent quite a bit of time gardening this year and purchased her first chainsaw (for chopping wood). We pray she retains all her limbs.



Henry Grub filming one of the spring lectures at the Royal Institution

Lastly, I have entered the final year of my own PhD at Imperial College London, and will be submitting my thesis by the end of the year. I also took the opportunity to undertake a couple more internships – at the Royal Institution (March to May) in its digital media, and in Japan teaching English in July and August.

2017

Year Representative: Adrian Burbie

Email: adrian.burbie@outlook.com

The last year has clearly been replete with exciting developments for the class of 2017, judging from the breadth of responses to the call for submissions.

Wick Willett reports that he has had a good year on state, ceremonial and public duties as a lieutenant with the Irish Guards, posted at Buckingham Palace, Windsor Castle and the Tower of London, hosting plenty of Mertonians for sumptuous hospitality at the officers' mess (hospitality that was a little too sumptuous for your correspondent). Wick is now moving back to the operational battalion of the Guards, taking over the Mortar Platoon.

In similar matters military, congratulations are due to **Emily Pope** who commissioned in the last year from Sandhurst into the Army Reserves. She is looking forward to juggling the variety that life as a reservist brings alongside her day job in Middle Eastern political intelligence, and enjoys raising suspicions that she is in fact a spy.

Emily Capstick writes that that the girl from (old) York is about to move to New York, having completed her master's in AI policy at Stanford, and is keen to catch up with Mertonians over in the Big Apple who are desperate to find something resembling a decent British pub. On the topic of master's degrees, **Liam McKenna** has gained a place at UCL to study for an MA in medieval and renaissance studies from this autumn following successful completion of his bar course.

Cyara Buchuck-Wilsenach has had a fruitful year on the Civil Service fast stream, channelling her inner Humphrey Appleby, and generously offers any insights she can lend to any graduates considering the Civil Service for a career.

Meanwhile **Chengxi Taylor** (née **Wang**) has spent the last year launching her AI start-up, General Reasoning, which focuses on advancing AI reasoning capacity through building generative verifiers. As if all that wasn't enough to keep Chengxi busy,

she has also been chairing the Oxford Saïd Alumnae Leaders Group, with a particular focus on promoting women in tech, and got married in Provence this summer to her co-founder and partner in life and work. Congratulations all round.

Giannis Aposolou is delighted to share that, after four years, he has completed his PhD at the Catalan Institute of Classical Archaeology in Tarragona, Spain. He's also very happy to announce that he'll be returning to Oxford this autumn to begin a Junior Research Fellowship at All Souls. He says that in many ways, Oxford has always been on his mind, so this truly feels like a dream come true. He's very much looking forward to reconnecting with 2017 Mertonians — do get in touch if you'd like to meet for a coffee or a drink! His email is apjohn22@gmail.com.

And finally, if you'll indulge my including something on a personal note, I have decided to give up dealing with tax collectors in favour of preaching about them instead. Having left Slaughter and May this summer, I will be moving back to Oxford to take up a post at Keble College Chapel joint with St Andrew's, Headington, from September. Should any of you also decide that you don't like the real world and wish to re-live your student days, do let me know when you're in town or drop by for a Formal sometime (despite it not being Merton).

2018

Year Representative: Rebecca Smithson
Email: RSmithson00@hotmail.com

2019

There is currently no Year Representative for 2019 — but we would love to have one. Please contact development@merton.ox.ac.uk if you are interested.

One member of the class of 2019 reports that alongside **Ada Foo**, **Jonathan Su** and a Schwarzman Scholar he is building Analyst, an AI assistant inside Microsoft Word, Outlook and browser that streamlines office workflows. The venture is a natural follow-on from his time at Merton, where his

previous start-up won the University's 'Best Undergraduate Idea' award for Merton.

His co-founders Ada and Jonathan, as well as the broader team, have expertise in developing digital ecosystems and engineering solutions for government respectively. Analyst now has pilot engagements with a law firm, an asset-management fund and an orthopaedic clinic, with more milestones expected later this year.

2020

Year Representative: Roheena Buckland
Email: bucklandr@outlook.com

2021

Year Representative: Lottie Tellyn
c/o Development Office, Merton College, Oxford, OX1 4JD
Email: publications@merton.ox.ac.uk

Lottie Tellyn says that she has been writing for the *Times* and *Sunday Times* since August last year (which has included everything from news reporting to taking a bus across Europe!) and is excited to be heading to Columbia University in New York to do a master's in journalism for the next year. Any Mertonians based in NY or the surrounding area are welcome to get in touch.

2022

There is currently no Year Representative for the 2022 year group. Please contact the Development Office if you'd be interested in the role.

Matthew Oulton writes that he got engaged to fellow Mertonian Ciara Williams (2021) in May, in County Donegal, Ireland.

In Memoriam



Deaths Notified

We have sadly learned of the following deaths:

Fellow

Béla Novák*

Emeritus Fellow

George Radda*

Former Governing

Body Fellow

Ian Thompson*

Staff

James Lisle*

Former Staff

Mark Everitt*

Peter Ferguson

1942

Ralph Thornton*

1944

Brian Chapple*

1949

Colin Baker*

Anthony Littlewood*

Ian Skeet*

1950

John Barber

1951

Philip Rock

Francis Scovil

1952

Gordon Whittle

Alan Share

1954

Richard Lloyd*

Peter Westwood*

George White

1955

David Curtis

John Paine

1956

John Hamlin*

1957

John David Aspinall*

Rex Watton*

1958

John Bradshaw*

Peter Doye*

Kris Kristoffersen

John Mills*

1959

Robert Moore*

1960

David Fletcher*

Roger Laughton

Richard Mulgan*

Thomas Vargish

1961

Christopher Hurley

1962

Malcolm Deas

Jeremy

Hummerstone*

Brian Mastin

1963

David Page*

1964

Robert Irwin

1965

Robert MacDowell

1967

John Beckett

John Perryman

Eldon Zuill*

1969

Tony Millns*

1971

John Fleming*

James Fletcher*

Charles Scudder*

1972

Graham Hill*

1974

Chris Madell

Brian McHale

Rod O'Brien

1975

Neil Smith*

1979

Sky Foerster*

1986

Susan J Craighead*

1987

Paul Gandy

2006

Anthony Genot

Fellow



Professor Béla Novák, 31 July 1956 — 22 February 2025

In 2006, Oxford was awarded a substantial grant by the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC) to set up a virtual Centre for Integrative Systems Biology. The BBSRC realised that as a group we didn't really know what Systems Biology was and we therefore needed to appoint a Chair in Systems Biology to keep us on the straight and narrow.

We interviewed a number of very eminent international researchers, but when Béla arrived there was no doubt who we wanted and needed! This smiling Hungarian with a mop of unruly hair was a breath of fresh air. He wasn't interested in showing how clever he was (although he was!), he was interested in the scientific question. Taking experimental data, he modelled the possible ways the currently identified pathways could produce those data, eliminating some and suggesting others — these predictions guiding the biologists to new experiments to test their hypotheses. He wasn't just interested in presenting you with a testable prediction, he needed to know that you understood how and why he had come to those predictions from the data. To this end he was the most engaging and amusing teacher at all levels, whether student or professor. He was constantly thinking of how to make a potentially dry subject fun. He's the only person I know who could make you laugh when describing the role of toggle switches and bifurcation in cellular decision making.

He joined us in 2007 and we immediately knew we had made the right choice. He was naturally collegiate. His warm,

* denotes full obituary

outgoing personality meant everyone took to him. Oxford and Oxford colleges may be daunting to outsiders, but Béla just accepted the eccentricities and adapted. I remember black leather boot laces evolving into bow ties with time. He grew to really love Merton College, a feeling reciprocated. He would go to lunch most days, using the time taken to walk down from the Biochemistry Department to think through his latest problem. Then he would engage whoever sat next to him in conversation. It was a pleasure to sit next to him as you never knew where the conversation would go! He was non-judgementally interested in everyone and what they did and thought. His interest was never superficial; he might not agree, but he genuinely wanted to know why you were interested in a subject. Conversations rarely ended without a quirky joke, sometimes needing to be explained at length, and a mention of his beloved family.

Béla was born in Budapest and initially trained as a chemical engineer, but became increasingly interested in biology and the mechanisms involved in irreversible decision making in cell development. Despite the problems posed by the Cold War he sought to collaborate with key researchers in the west, and it was in Edinburgh, with Murdoch Mitchison that his interest in the control of the cell cycle started, and this would be his passion for the rest of his life. The control of the irreversible signals driving the steps of cell division is key to all growth and development, and when it goes wrong can lead to conditions such as cancer. He went on to collaborate with most of the major groups in this area, not because they were famous, but because they could provide the data he needed and, because they rapidly recognised how important he was for pointing them in the right direction they provided that data. He not only collaborated with experimentalists, but also for over 30 years with a fellow modeller, John Tyson, at Virginia Tech. Together they would thrash through a problem to provide not just mathematically satisfying models but also real insights to guide the experimentalists.

However hard Béla worked, his family always came first. When he first moved to Oxford he came with his wife, Nora, and son Tomi who followed in his father's footsteps with an interest in computing. Their two daughters, Mariann and Zsofi, joined later. The family were his solid centre and the joy he took as they flourished was palpable. They both

married in Merton, revealing the significance that College had become to him, and when Béla became a grandfather, picking the children up from nursery and taking care of them lit up his life. We had numerous conversations about the joy and wonder of watching small children develop. His love of his family was complete and unconditional.

Béla was due to retire this year and a symposium was organised for 9th May to mark his retirement. Tragically he died suddenly on 22nd February and the symposium became a celebration of his life. The symposium was attended by many of the scientists who had worked with him during his career, including Nobel and Breakthrough Prize winners. It was evident how much Béla meant to these people; he was not just a collaborator, but had become a true friend to each of them. Throughout that day genuine emotions revealed how deeply the premature loss of their friend and colleague meant. He would have been totally surprised and moved to see how important he was to them as a person.

Béla enriched the lives of all who met him and he will be truly missed.

Emeritus Fellow Professor Judith Armitage

Emeritus Fellow



Professor Sir George Radda, 9 June 1936 – 13 September 2025

György Károly Radda was born in Győr, Hungary, on 9 June 1936. He was educated at the Benedictine School near the abbey in Pannonhalma. In high school he won a national mathematics prize and earned admission to Eotvos Lorand

University in Budapest. He chose to study chemistry.

On 23 October 1956, a Communist celebration in Budapest became a student-led rebellion that spread throughout the country. Two weeks later, on 4 November, Soviet tanks rolled into Hungary to crush the rebellion. Along with thousands of others, Radda decided to get out of the country; his father agreed but insisted he take his sister and younger brother with him. Hidden in a farmer's cart, they were taken to a bridge over the Danube at the Austrian border. Radda took 'the biggest gamble of my life': he offered all his money to a soldier guarding the bridge and the soldier let them cross to Austria.

Along with other refugee students, Radda headed to Vienna. Some Oxford faculty members flew to the city to meet them. Dr Courtney Phillips of Merton College, a tutor in chemistry, met Radda. Phillips didn't speak Hungarian and Radda didn't speak English, but it was said they used the Periodic Table to converse. Radda was flown to London and, on 30 November, arrived at Merton. In December, he was offered admission to the College, provided that he learned sufficient English by the start of the term in January. With a superhuman effort, he managed to achieve that amazing feat. He earned a First in chemistry, followed by a DPhil on the effect of aromatic substitutions on benzene.

Radda was encouraged to apply for a Fulbright Scholarship to study in the United States but discovered that his escape from Hungary had rendered him stateless. Geoffrey Mure, Warden of Merton, contacted Britain's Secretary of State for the Colonies, and in July 1962 George became a British subject. He won a Fulbright to study with Nobel Prize-winner Melvin Calvin at the University of California, Berkeley. He was soon publishing papers about experiments involving enzymes and membranes, and also began experiments studying a new subject: nuclear magnetic resonance (NMR).

He was appointed to Merton College as University Lecturer in Biochemistry in 1966 and began to work with Sir Rex Richards, Professor of Chemistry (and future Warden of Merton), on NMR. His work with Richards grew into applying NMR in vivo: scanning living tissue. The result was a big breakthrough that would have far-reaching implications for medical science in

1974. He published a paper describing using phosphorus NMR to study animal tissue metabolites. There followed a six-year gap until the next publication about NMR because of lack of funds. Then he and his colleagues discovered a method that enabled them to map metabolites in living small animals. They realised that if they could study NMR in rats, they could do so in humans – but they would need a much bigger magnet.

Radda and his group convinced the Medical Research Council and the British Heart Foundation to support the substantial cost of construction of a big magnet and in 1983 the Clinical Magnet Resonance Laboratory at the John Radcliffe Hospital in Oxford was born. It was the first NMR unit to study energy metabolism in human patients.

A meeting in 1979 at Wolfson College entitled 'Applications of NMR to Medicine' planted the seed. Techniques were developed to investigate organs inside the human body. NMR was recognised to have enormous potential for investigating coronary heart disease, and eventually diseases of every organ, including the brain.

Throughout his work in the laboratory, Radda mentored over 100 DPhil students. Among them was Irene Tracey, whom Radda invited to co-found and direct the Oxford Centre for Functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging of the Brain at the John Radcliffe in 1997. Tracey served as Warden of Merton College from 2019 until she became Vice-Chancellor of Oxford in 2023.

Radda helped found the International Society of Magnetic Resonance. He was Chief Executive of the Medical Research Council from 1996 to 2006. In 2003 he agreed to chair the merged Departments of Anatomy and Physiology at Oxford. He was invited to Singapore to build a bioimaging centre and in 2009 was appointed Chairman of the Singapore Biomedical Council.

In 2000 George Radda was knighted by Queen Elizabeth. He was a Fellow of Merton College, a Fellow of the Royal Society (and won the Society's Buchanan Medal), a citizen of Singapore and, particularly noteworthy, Honorary Member of the Hungarian Academy of Science and recipient of the Hungarian Corvin Chain.

We owe quite a bit to the soldier at the bridge who let George, his sister and his brother pass over the bridge to Austria in 1956.

Rex Jamison (1955) AB and MA (Oxon), MD, FRCP and FACP

Former Governing Body Fellow

Ian Granville Thompson, who died in October 2023, was Secretary of Oxford University Chest, that is, Finance Director. He was a Fellow of Merton College so long as he held that office, an association that was promoted by Philip Watson and Edward Olleson, who sat on several University committees, as well as being tutors at Merton.

Ian was not a typical Oxford University man. His professional background was primarily in local government, and he came to Oxford only because some (unspecified) body recommended he put his name forward. His natural manner was friendly and warm, and he had something of the appearance, but not the character, of a pugilist, all deployed with good effect when engaged in one-to-one conversation at close range, as if delivering his thoughts in absolute confidence. He retained the full-strength regional accent of his hometown, Burnley, and spoke accordingly, as when he said, of the occasion when the University Estates staff held a formal dinner at the College, that 'Merton done us proud'. He recalled an occasion when he had to engage in fairly tough, but ultimately successful, negotiations with the National Union of Mineworkers about pensions, and was detained from leaving the room when an enormous hand was placed on his shoulder. He turned to be confronted by the towering figure of Mick McGahey, who said simply, in trademark guttural tones, 'You did well in there, lad' and released his grip.

After a life spent thus far among normal people, Oxford must have come as a shock, but Ian remained composed, in the main. He wanted to increase efficiency with regard to the management of the Chest and to increase formal budgetary controls. He said he was given enormous support by the Vice-Chancellor, Patrick Neill, who had recruited

him and was kind and helpful at every stage thereafter but attempts to substantially streamline and modernise the Chest were almost impossible at that time. Ian left Oxford for Manchester (of which he commented 'they don't seem to have as much money as Oxford') in 1995, ironically before the North Commission recommendations eased the institutional deadlock, tied up a lot of organisational loose ends and paved the way for the greatly expanded contemporary University powerhouse.

Like other newcomers to Oxford, Ian found it difficult to settle into local home life and was appalled by the scale both of property prices and of things in general (he said he did not understand why Merton and every other college needed their own sports fields 'about the size of Old Trafford'). He retired in modest but comfortable circumstances near his hometown. The golden days enjoyed by the Burnley FC of his youth had long gone and have only recently revived somewhat, but it is assumed that, along with King Charles III and Cardinal Napier, he remained a supporter at Turf Moor, despite the rival attractions of Manchester.

Clifford Webb (1967)

Staff



James Lisle, Merton's Groundsman, died on 8 January 2025.

James Lisle joined Merton in October 1988 and served for 36 years as the devoted groundsman of Merton College. He is remembered here by his colleagues and Merton students.

James Lisle was Groundsman at Merton for 36 years. He

always took great pride in preparing the sports pitches to the highest of standards, and often remarked when admiring the perfectly striped grass that his was 'not a bad office, Mr Lightfoot'. I first met James in May 2016, shortly after I joined the College, as he was part of my staff team. At that time, he was working with his lifelong friend Julian Tompkins. The two had a great working relationship and strong friendship, which included a shared love of motorcycles: something I too could connect with. James was a fantastic groundsman, who spent many hours in all weathers looking after the grounds; marking pitches, organising and attending matches, and maintaining the adjoining meadows. His sudden and unexpected passing in January of this year shocked the entire College community. He remains in our thoughts and is very much missed.

Tim Lightfoot, Domestic Bursar

James began his work at Merton at the same time as me. From the very beginning, he dedicated himself to the care of the College's sports fields, the lawns, the hedges, and the trees all around, tending them with skill, patience and quiet pride. James was intrinsic to the life of Merton sport, always going the extra mile to make sure matches could be played, training could continue, and students had the chance to enjoy every moment of their college years. He worked tirelessly and often invisibly to keep things running smoothly. He even lent his support to the much-loved Bops, helping to make them possible for so many students.

It is only with James' passing that the College has truly understood the full extent of these many unseen efforts – the countless small but vital acts that ensured sport and student life at Merton flourished. For this, and for so much more, he will be ever valued.

Dedicated and endlessly committed, James was more than a groundsman: he was part of the very fabric of Merton. He will be remembered not only in the beauty of the fields and gardens he cared for, but in the camaraderie, competition and joy he made possible.

Mark Seal, Merton College Boatman

In the picturesque setting of Merton's Sports Ground, James' commitment and professionalism shone through for over 36 years. His easy-going approach was much appreciated when our work paths crossed, and the place doesn't feel the same without him.

Grass-cutting of an unusual kind turned up in the autumn of 2022, as local farmer Chris Straine brought 81 sheep to mow down the wildflower meadows. After initial hesitation, James was over the moon and checked daily on 'his' flock.

Lucille Savin, Head Gardener

James was someone with a genuine interest in providing his students with the best playing surfaces possible. He had a true love of his grounds, and I made a friend out of James, learning much from him over the years we worked together.

I found James to be the warmest, most welcoming person I had met in years. He loved his family and always talked of his campervan adventures with his wife and, of course, his love of motorcycles. I will remember James with much fondness, as I have lost a good friend and colleague.

Anthony Shepherd, Groundcare Sales & Weston-on-the-Green Depot Manager

I have really felt the passing of James. He was not only exceptional at his job but he was also truly a positive force in people's lives. I remember him being really disappointed to hear that I hadn't mentioned the day of a tennis match, such that he couldn't prepare oranges and refreshments for us. He is sorely missed at Merton.

Marc Giroux, JCR Sports and Recreation Representative, 2025–26

James always felt like our biggest fan. He was the first to arrive and the last to leave, through rain and shine. The oranges at half time and the beers never failed to make us smile, and he will be remembered forever by the team and the alumni before us. Thanks for everything, James.

Merton Women's Football team

Former Staff



The Reverend Mark Everitt died on 19 August 2025.

Mark joined Merton as Chaplain and Tutor in Russian in 1963, and served in both posts for the next 39 years until his retirement in 2002. He had learned Russian during National Service in the Air Force and subsequently studied at Lincoln College and at Wells Theological College. He held a curacy in his home county of Sussex before coming to Merton.

As Merton College Chaplain, he calmly led the Chapel community through the many changes of those decades, keeping Chapel both steadily faithful and open to those of other faiths or none. He encouraged many in their faith and future service. He presided over a gradual but important expansion in the College's provision of welfare support for students, and also served as Sub-Warden and Tutor for Admissions. The cheerful hospitality he and his wife Sue offered to students and colleagues alike helped many settle into the College.

As one of the few Russian tutors in the University he taught a series of undergraduate and graduate students who went on to work in public service, business and academia. His academic interests in the 19th-century Russian church led not only to publications but also to sympathetic engagement with the churches behind the Iron Curtain and a refreshing trickle of Orthodox thought and practice into College Chapel life: it was fitting that the last sermon he preached as chaplain ended with a reminder of a Russian saint who greeted all comers with the bracing words 'My joy, Christ is risen.'

The College extends its heartfelt condolences to Mark's family and friends.

1942



Ralph Thornton, 1923–2024

Ralph Thornton died on 12 January 2024. He celebrated his 100th birthday in some style and with two parties in October 2023.

Dad started at Merton in 1942 and read Mathematics. He completed his degree in 1948. His father was a railway worker. Wyggeston School in Leicester and Merton changed his life. He loved Merton and at Merton he grew into the person and the teacher he became. I asked him if he was lonely or felt isolated when he first came to Merton. He replied: 'I never had any loneliness or homesickness. I was surrounded by nice people.' At the end of the summer term in 1943 he was 'ordered' by the Ministry of Labour to do the Radio B Radio Course and was then sent to Farnborough, where he stayed until October 1946, working on projects such as Mobile Air Recognition, Telemetering and Radio/Remote Control.

He remembered the years 1946 to 1948 at Merton vividly and happily. 'It was a wonderful life.' He was captain of the Merton Rugby team, which he described as 'more than adequate'. There was an England International, a Scottish Trialist and two others who played for what we would now call first class clubs. That team photograph and all his College photographs were on the wall in his study all his life.

Dad taught mathematics at Warwick School from 1948 until 1988. That he was a remarkably gifted teacher was

evidenced by the number of mathematicians, some of whom had been in his classes in the 1950s and 60s, who attended his memorial service at St Mary's Church in Warwick. Generations of his students read Mathematics at Oxford and Cambridge. At Warwick he coached the rugby team, did the timetable for 33 years, was Head of Mathematics from 1962 until 1983, and became Second Master. In addition, he was chief examiner at A level for the Northern Board and selector for the Warwickshire Schools' rugby team.

His retirement was active too. He was Head Guide at St Mary's Church, he led fundraising projects for the school and he was a trustee at Myton Hospice and the Charity of Thomas Oken and Nicholas Eyffler. My mother, Christine, died in 2013, after 61 years of marriage. They were very happy years. He leaves the three of us (Alison, Richard and myself), three grandchildren (Emily, Sam and Tom) and two great-grandchildren (George and Harry).

By his son, Nick Thornton

1944



(Norman) Brian Chapple, 1926–2025

Brian first came up to Merton as an Army Cadet in 1944–45. He returned as an undergraduate after military service, graduating from the School of Geography with an MA in 1951 and a DipEd in 1952.

Brian was born in Hackney on 29 May 1926, and grew up in Winchmore Hill. He attended the Stationers' Company's School in Hornsey and was one of 272 students to be evacuated to Wisbech, on 1 September 1939. Along with many

of the boys, he thought nothing of cycling to London to visit his parents. The boys competed for the fastest times.

After training as an Army Cadet, Brian continued in the Royal Artillery as a Lieutenant, and served as part of the BOAR, the British Army of the Rhine.

Brian met Brenda, his future wife, while at Oxford. A member of St Hilda's, Brenda joined the School of Geography after a brief period in the School of Medicine. They had two children together, John and Laura, and were married for 59 years, until Brenda passed away in 2020.

Following family tradition, after leaving Oxford Brian became a schoolmaster. He was an assistant master at Bushey Grammar School, and then Senior Geography Master at Hendon Grammar School. After moving to Solihull in the West Midlands, Brian accepted a post as a Senior Lecturer in Geography at what was then the City of Birmingham College of Education, in Westbourne Road. He taught there for 18 years, until his retirement in 1982.

Brian was always interested in politics and he excelled as a local councillor and as the first Liberal Democrat Mayor of Solihull. He represented Lyndon Ward from 1972 to 1976, and from 1982 to 2002; served as Mayor in 1992–93; and was made an Honorary Alderman in 2010.

Brian was steadfast in his many interests and hobbies. After retirement, he continued his dedication to education by serving as Chair of Governors for Lyndon School, Solihull. He was also a bridge player, a football supporter (Spurs was his team), a chocoholic, a jigsaw fanatic, a pipe smoker, a *Guardian* reader, a dog lover (and dogs adored him in return), a coffee drinker, a fan of detective stories, and a dedicated member of the congregation of St Margaret's Church, Olton.

Brian is remembered as an exceptionally nice man. Baroness Lorely Burt, former MP for Solihull, in her tribute to Brian said: 'Brian Chapple was the kindest and loveliest man I've ever met. He worked hard for his constituents and also for the Borough of Solihull and he was loved by everyone.'

By his son and daughter, John and Laura Chapple

1949



Colin Arthur Baker (1932–2024)

Colin was born in Thornton Heath, London, 3 March 1932, and lived there until the age of seven when he was evacuated to Bedford during the war. His father was the school master at the school Colin attended (Owen's School) so he was fortunate to be able to remain with his parents during this time. Having studied sciences at school he went up to Merton in 1949 to read Chemistry and then completed a DPhil. Colin was one of three Mertonians in the family. His brother, Alan Charles Baker (born 1929), matriculated in 1947 and shared a room with Colin during some of their undergraduate time, and his father, Geoffrey Warlow Baker, (born 1900), was at Merton from 1919 to 1923. In Colin's career as a research scientist, he specialised in laser optics and eventually worked for the UK Atomic Energy Authority at Harwell.

Colin's love of rowing started at Merton and continued later at Wallingford Rowing Club. I believe there are some of his Summer Eights bumps cards in the College Library from 1951. He visited College for a number of social occasions and I remember him very much enjoying attending the 2023 Summer Eights Dinner and seeing the new eight carried from the Boathouse to College. At Wallingford Rowing Club he spent a lot of time volunteering, including building rafts for launching boats and providing informal coaching to club members.

Amongst many other skills he was a talented silversmith and made a number of beautiful teapots of his own design. He was also a glider pilot, flying out of Lasham airfield with a group of friends who shared an aircraft.

At the age of 92, Colin remained remarkably fit through his rowing. He enjoyed double-sculling and his training diary shows regular sessions on the rowing machine, three times a week, going back many years.

Colin was a loving and caring husband, dad, father-in-law and grandad to Pat, Tim, Jenny, Natasha and Scott. He was always kind and thoughtful and I will remember him as someone who supported and guided me through life. He passed peacefully on 5 December 2024 after a short illness. The family has many happy memories to look back on.

By his son, Tim Baker

Dr Anthony Blair Littlewood, 1930–2024

Anthony Littlewood was born in 1930. He was educated at St Edmund's School, Hindhead, and St Paul's School, London. After National Service in the RAF, during which he learnt to repair radios and play the organ, he went up to Merton College as a Postmaster, studying chemistry. After taking his degree and DPhil, he spent two years as a Fulbright scholar at Northwestern University in the United States: during this period he married Audrey Charnley. On his return to the UK he was a lecturer, and latterly a reader, at Newcastle University, where he specialised in gas chromatography, a subject in which he was an early pioneer. He published a textbook, *Gas Chromatography*, which was noted for its clarity: he was inordinately proud of the fact that it began with the words 'Gas Chromatography is ...'. The book was a success and continued to finance the purchase of the occasional bottle of fine wine for many years.

In 1984 he took early retirement and spent his time travelling, cycling and composing music, taking as his guiding principle the avoidance of anything that sounded remotely like Brahms.

He died in Newcastle on 24 December 2024 after a brief competition between several fatal conditions.

By his daughter, Madeline Littlewood



Ian Skeet died peacefully at home on 16 April 2025, at the age of 96.

Ian Skeet, author, oil industry executive and chronicler of Oman's modern history, was born in Reading in 1928, the son of Aileen and CHL Skeet. His father's service in the Sudan Political Service meant that Ian and his sister, Anne, spent much of their childhood apart from their parents, including the war years, when they lived with an aunt and uncle. Early education with a governess included two winters in Khartoum before Ian was sent to Rottingdean Preparatory School, and later to Marlborough College, where he played cricket for the First XI and captained the squash team.

After National Service in the Army, he read Mods and Greats at Merton College, Oxford, playing cricket for both the Occasionals and Wiltshire. On graduating in 1953, he joined Shell and after a three-month induction period, travelled by boat train to Marseilles, and then to Amman, Jordan, to learn about the oil business and to learn Arabic. He then furthered his knowledge of Arabic at the Foreign Office Arabic School in Shemlan, Lebanon, before being posted in 1955 to Shell Egypt in Cairo. It was in Cairo that he met someone who was to become a lifelong friend, the writer and historian James (later Jan) Morris, who was working there for *The Times*. Ian remained in Egypt until the Suez Crisis, when he was deported as an enemy alien.

Posted to Cape Town in 1957, he met his future wife, Elizabeth Pratt, who was visiting from England. They got married in Gloucester Cathedral in 1959 and subsequently had four children: Mark, Jeremy, Nicola and Juliet. Over the following years, Ian held posts in Qatar, The Hague, London, and

then Muscat, Oman, where Shell had recently discovered oil and was preparing to export it. As management liaison for Petroleum Development Oman, Ian travelled extensively through the country's interior, preparing tribal leaders for the arrival of the oil industry. His experiences inspired the book *Muscat and Oman: The End of an Era* (1974; reissued 2024), praised by Jan Morris, as 'a marvellous work – so learned, so full of insights, and yet often so funny'.

In 1968 Ian became General Manager of Shell Sudan. From 1972 he took up the post of Africa Regional Coordinator at the Shell Centre in London, and the following year was appointed head of government and international relations, a position he held until retiring in 1985. He later wrote *OPEC: Twenty-Five Years of Prices and Politics* (1988) and *Oman: Politics and Development* (1992), as well as consulting and lecturing.

By the Development Office

1954



Richard John (Dick) Lloyd was born on 24 October 1933 and died on 21 September 2024, aged 90.

Dick Lloyd came to Merton in 1954 to read PPE. He had by then completed his two-year National Service in the Suez Canal Zone. Military service had brought him into contact with French and Italian military and engineering personnel and inspired him to change to Modern Languages. After a term, finding that schoolboy French was not enough to tackle French and Italian literature, he switched to Law. But he never lost his love of learning modern foreign languages.

Dick's time at Merton was hugely liberating for him. He and his contemporaries had grown up under the shadow of the Second World War. For Dick, this had meant an early separation from his family in London when he was evacuated in 1940 to a boarding school. His childhood was tough, and he continued as a boarder throughout it. The Army, after boarding school, was his first taste of freedom.

Dick formed an attachment to Merton which lasted his whole life. He wrote about his precious friendships there in a memoir, *Three Glorious Years: The life of an Oxford undergraduate in the mid-1950s* (2015), a copy of which can still be found in the College Library.

Here, he reflects honestly that he learnt more about Law from discussions and revision sessions with his fellow students than from tutorials. Too often, his pursuit of knowledge gave way to the pursuit of other undergraduate pleasures: rugby, taking part in plays put on by the Merton Floats, debating, drinking, excursions around Oxford in his 1933 Morris Minor Tourer and girlfriends.

After Merton, Dick never worked as a lawyer. He found a job in export sales for Coles Cranes, a British manufacturing company. His legal training stood him in good stead. He was able to combine his skill for argument and forensic attention to detail with his love of modern languages.

In 1958, while training for this position in Manchester, he met Audrey Atkinson at a dance. They had a whirlwind romance, and this culminated in their marriage in 1959. Dick and Audrey made their home in a London suburb where they raised their three daughters: Lucy-Jean, Josephine and Fay.

Dick remained in export sales for the whole of his career, moving eventually from Coles Cranes to several other construction companies. In the heyday of the British manufacturing industry between the 1960s and early 1980s, Dick enjoyed flying the flag for British products in Eastern Europe behind the Iron Curtain, in South America and in the Far East. He taught himself languages including French, German and Spanish and enough Polish and Romanian to help clinch a business deal.

In the mid-1980s, when the British construction industry was in trouble, Dick reinvented himself and started his own business, Grabcranex, exporting machines built in Germany: always a European at heart.

In retirement, Dick and Audrey moved from their home near London to take up a new life in Devon where they had owned a holiday cottage since the 1960s. Here, Dick was able to engage in amateur dramatics. He was a keen member of a local nature study group and volunteered as a hospital transport driver. He also acted as Year Representative for Mertonians who matriculated in 1954, 1953 and 1952 with great enjoyment.

Dick is survived by his wife Audrey. This summer his three daughters, five grandchildren and two great-grandchildren took his ashes to be interred in the churchyard at Sherford, the quiet place which he made his home after a lifetime of travelling the world.

By his daughter, Lucy-Jean Lloyd (1982)



Peter John Westwood, 2 January 1934 – 18 January 2025

Peter spent 'four glorious years' at Merton reading History (1954–58). A prolific diarist and letter writer, he wrote extensively about his time there and in the last few months of his life, continued to regale family with tales of his many Mertonian adventures and deep affection for Oxford.

Peter was born in the Radcliffe Infirmary Oxford (where his maternal grandfather, Dr William Collier, was senior medical officer) and spent the first few years of his life in London with

his mother and beloved nanny. With the outbreak of the Second World War, Peter's mother moved them back to the safety of Oxford to live with Peter's maternal grandmother. Here he spent the next ten years of his life.

Despite the war, Peter had a happy childhood in Oxford joined by his older cousins Martin and Richard Collier (both of whom he idolised) and soon followed them to the Dragon School in Oxford (1940–47) and then to Wellington College (1947–52).

The years 1952–54 were spent completing National Service in the Royal Marines where he enjoyed learning to be a Landing Craft Officer and qualified into the Special Boat Wing. Many exhilarating sea and air exercises were completed off the south coast. Peter's National Service was an exciting and energetic experience that he was sad to leave.

Peter returned to Oxford in 1954 and took up his place at Merton. The next four years were undoubtedly some of his happiest. He considered himself extremely lucky to have had excellent tutors – historians the late John Roberts and the late Dr Roger Highfield, whom Peter would often visit until Roger's death in 2017.

Outside his academic studies Peter spent a great deal of time playing sport, representing Merton in every sport except rowing, football and boxing. He was captain of the lawn tennis team, but his principal interest was in rugby, playing under the captaincy of his close friend Tony Hammond.

Peter threw himself into life at Merton, making lifelong friendships with his Mertonian contemporaries: Pete White, Tony Stearns, Tony Hammond, John Newbold and Quentin Macleod to name but a few. Many in the group were enthusiastic members of the Myrmidon Club and Peter loved nothing more than recounting their various exploits.

Reluctant to follow many of his friends into more traditional careers, Peter's fourth and final year at Merton was spent on the Devonshire course for entry into the colonial services. And thus began the next adventure. Peter was posted to Fiji in the South Pacific, arriving in 1958. He spent the next 14 years there, immersing himself in Fijian culture.

On his arrival, Peter was posted to Labasa in Vanualevu, where he was appointed District Officer of the Macuata district, and where he learned the duties of a British colonial district officer. During his time as DO, Peter travelled extensively, visiting Fijian villages where he succeeded in learning the language and acquiring a considerable knowledge and understanding of Fijian customs.

As a result, he was selected to be seconded to the Native Land Commission where he trained under the Chairmanship of Ratu Edward Tuivanuavou Cakobau (later Sir) before being assigned to work in the Bua district. Bua was, at this time, one of the most remote and least developed parts of Fiji and Peter spent nearly a year there working and living in Fijian villages. Peter always said that this was one of the greatest experiences of his life in Fiji which resulted in his lasting love for the Fijians and their culture.

His final duties were to organise the Independence celebrations and to welcome and accompany Prince Charles on his visit in 1971.

One further outcome of his time in Fiji was meeting his future wife, Vimla Pillai, who worked in the government offices. They married in Australia on their way back to England. Now based in London, Peter took the Law Society exams and qualified as a solicitor before joining the firm of Burchell & Ruston and becoming Under Sheriff of Surrey.

Peter and Vimla went on to have three children and remained in southwest London until Peter's death at the age of 91.

He continued his adventures into his working life, family life and retirement – undertaking numerous trekking trips to the Himalayas, sailing the Mediterranean and North Sea with his cousin Richard, and returning to Fiji and Australasia on holidays with his wife and children.

Peter's final years were dogged by some of the usual frailties of old age but thankfully he retained his wry sense of humour, and his final days were spent reflecting on his most extraordinary life.

Peter was much loved and is survived by Vimla and their three

children, William, Julia and Timothy; and two grandchildren, Joseph and Charlie.

Peter's ashes were scattered in the River Cherwell in Oxford on a beautiful spring morning, close to the Dragon School and Merton College and not far from where he grew up.

By his daughter, Julia Marshall

1956



John Gordon Hamlin, 6 August 1936 – 9 October 2024

John was born in Cardiff to the Reverend Gordon Hamlin and his wife Bessie who was a teacher of French; he was the eldest of three children. When the bombing of Cardiff became severe, they moved to Minehead in Somerset where his father took on a new ministry. There he learned his love of the outdoors, walking and playing in the woods and on the beach.

As John neared secondary school age, the family moved to Birmingham where he won a scholarship to King Edward's School in Edgbaston, a school which he loved and to which he later returned in his first teaching post. He was heartbroken when, after two years, his father moved to Bristol for health reasons and John transferred to Bristol Grammar School. To the end of his career, he remained sympathetic to any pupil who had to change schools and kept his eye on them.

He found his solace in scouting and was able to indulge his sense of adventure, map reading and discovery, becoming a Queen's Scout. He also loved cycling and as a teenager cycled

several times from Bristol to Cornwall to visit relatives. But he flourished at Bristol Grammar School, inspired particularly by the chemistry master, and was awarded a Postmastership at Merton.

Before going up to Oxford he completed his National Service in the RAF and was awarded the Sword of Honour at the Passing Out Parade.

He delighted in his Oxford years, reading Chemistry, and gained a First Class Honours degree. His love of the subject and desire to help others gain the same joy and delight in their chosen subjects made him determined to teach and he was a natural, showing compassion, drive, encouragement and determination. He returned to King Edward's, Birmingham where scouting was a big part of his contribution to the school's life. He was thrilled to attend a 50-year reunion of former scouts in 2013 and was still in contact with several to the end of his life. He ran two scout troops and took boys on numerous camps and hikes in Scotland, Wales and the Lake District.

In 1965 he moved to Bablake School, Coventry, as head of the chemistry department and there he was renowned for the Christmas Chemical Magic Show. During a lunchtime before Christmas, the boys would queue around the quadrangle to obtain the best possible vantage places when the doors opened and then pack into the lab to watch wondrous chemical events.

In 1967 John married Marion, who was a graduate in German from Birmingham University, and they set up home in Coventry at the beginning of a wonderful 57 years of marriage.

John's opportunity for headship came when he was appointed headmaster of Queen Elizabeth Grammar School Penrith at the age of 36 and he was excited to go to Penrith. There were many challenges, but he was determined that students should experience as much of the world as possible. Many pupils will remember that he was always at school at exam results time, negotiating with the universities and colleges, encouraging pupils to perhaps change course or their chosen career if they hadn't made the grade.

In 1982 he was appointed headmaster of Reigate Grammar School in Surrey where he stayed until retirement in 1996. The school had recently become independent, and his first task was to clear a huge financial debt to Surrey County Council. For 14 years the school grew in every respect: there had been a handful of girls in the sixth form, but John built up a case to make the school co-ed and in 1992 the first girls entered the school at 11+. It is now fully co-ed and highly sought after.

John and Marion had loved Penrith so much and returned there on retirement, living on Beacon Edge – a move they never regretted. In retirement, John took on an allotment and spent many hours tending it, with rows of vegetables and over a hundred dahlias. John and Marion also travelled widely in the Middle East, Eastern Europe and the Far East, with an unforgettable trip to Ethiopia as well as walking each summer in the Alps.

By John's friends and family

1957



John David Aspinall, 12 August 1937 – 29 September 2024

John read Chemistry at Merton from 1957 to 1961.

Although he was born in Rugby, he was always a proud Lancastrian and the family moved back to the north-west when John was nine. He sat his 11-plus a year early and won a Foundation Scholarship to The Manchester Grammar School.

Before he could take up his place at Merton, John was among the last cohort to do National Service. He served in the

Royal Navy, which was rare, and was also lucky enough to spend a significant period at sea on HMS *Superb*. He sailed from Trincomalee in Sri Lanka and, on the outbreak of the Suez crisis, was diverted to the Red Sea, returning home round the horn of Africa. He obtained the rank of Leading Coder in the ship's radio room, which always seemed highly appropriate given his love of cryptic crosswords and talent for numbers. John thoroughly enjoyed his time in the Navy. It had a significant influence on his character, giving him a quiet confidence and self-sufficiency and a lifelong interest in other countries and their people.

John was a Postmaster, something my sister and I only discovered when writing a speech for his and Mum's 40th wedding anniversary. John's modesty and lack of ego were a significant part of who he was.

John loved his time at Merton. He fully embraced the independence and opportunities Oxford offered. He combined his academic studies with cricket, playing for the college team and a more informal team, the Mayflies. He was joined at Merton for his final year by his brother Keith, who vividly remembers on his arrival in College being bought his first pint in the JCR by John. He also enjoyed the companionship of a close group of friends. John made friends easily throughout his life. People liked to be with him, he was relaxing, easy company with a dry wit, a ready smile and was quick to laugh. Always interesting and interested but not needing to be centre stage.

After graduation, John joined ICI on Teesside, initially sharing digs with Roger Pickering, one of his closest friends from Merton. They decided to expand their social life by joining the Stockton Maskers, an amateur dramatic group. It was there that John met Verna. They married in 1963 and were devoted to each other for 61 years.

The aspect of his career that he most enjoyed was the international nature of his various roles and the opportunity to travel again. He visited ICI colleagues and customers all over the world. We estimate that he travelled to over 30 countries.

John was a very present and supportive father. As both my sister and I inherited his love of sport and the outdoors he

spent a great deal of time taking us to training and watching matches. He came on rugby tours and hiking trips to the Lakes as a parent helper. His low-key approach was perfect on those occasions. John particularly loved cricket and was a regular spectator at England Test Matches. We often reminisced about being at Headingley for the final day of the 1981 Test Match against Australia.

Throughout his life John had a passion for mountains and hiking, latterly being part of a friends' walking group. John also loved his garden. It was his principal creative outlet and his masterpiece. He was a very knowledgeable plantsman and chief family gardening consultant.

Post-retirement John and Verna travelled regularly on the Continent and in the UK, particularly enjoying good food and the company of friends.

John took great pleasure in the expansion of his family over the years. Getting all of us together for holidays to celebrate his 70th and 80th birthdays was very special for him.

John was warm, calm and consistent – you always knew where you stood – an utterly dependable presence. A provider of thoughtful, practical advice, he was stoic and unflappable and never prone to fuss or flashiness.

John remained active and retained his formidable intellect until the end of his life. He will be missed enormously by his family and friends. He is survived by his wife Verna, two children, four grandchildren and brother.

By his son David Aspinall, daughter Jane Boret and brother, Keith Aspinall (1960)

Rex Watton died on 6 July 2025, aged 87.

Born in 1938 in Bournemouth, Rex came to Merton in 1957 to read physics under the guidance of his tutor Dr John Michael Baker. At this time, for science undergraduates, entrance was decided on the results of the Scholarship Examinations held in the College and subsequent interviews. His friend Graham

Rolfe, also from Bournemouth School, came up the same year to Merton to read Mathematics.

After his degree Rex joined the Royal Signals and Radar Establishment (RSRE) at Malvern with the aim of working in low-temperature physics, and indeed he first worked on superconducting thin films under the Advanced Computer Techniques Project. However this project was killed by the spectacular advances in silicon technology. That said, during this short period, he successfully identified the mechanism for the enhanced temperature superconductivity found in disordered metal films deposited at very low temperature.

In 1965 he married Barbara Saunders who taught Classics and, through the Malvern Hills Art College, commenced his lifelong principal hobby of sculpting in clay and metal. With this absorbing pastime and his wife's enthusiasm for visiting classical sites throughout Europe, these interests afforded a welcome escape from science. Their two children, Elaine and Jason, completed the family.

In the late 1960s Rex moved specialisation to infrared research and night vision, leading the Uncooled Thermal Imaging Programme at RSRE and it was in this successful programme his research won many national awards, some of these in conjunction with colleagues at GEC. Early work on the ferroelectric detector materials for intruder and burglar alarms (passive infrared sensor, PIR) led to a Queen's Award for Technology in 1982. This was followed by a further Queen's Award in 1987, jointly with EEV Ltd, for the successful technology transfer and development of a Fire Service camera, using the pyroelectric camera tube. This established thermal imaging on the nation's TV sets with the search for survivors in such incidents as the Mexico earthquake and the Putney gas explosion. The camera was purchased in large quantities by the Royal Navy and deployed in the Falklands. Rex became internationally recognised as an invited speaker, and the success of the programme led to international research projects. In 1986 he was personally awarded the Rank Prize for Optoelectronics for this pioneering work.

In 1993, his work at Malvern had moved on from the camera tube to solid state infrared imaging devices; with the first ferroelectric element arrays and handheld thermal imaging

camera, he won, with colleagues at Plessey, the Prince of Wales Award for Innovation. The exploitation of this technology into the civilian market commenced immediately with the development, by GEC, of a new helmet-mounted camera for firefighting. By the time of his retirement in 1998, arrays up to 384x288 elements had been developed for night vision, firefighting and industrial thermal imaging cameras. After retirement, Rex remained in the programme as a consultant into the early 2000s. In recognition of his research, the Institute of Physics in 1999 awarded him the Duddell Medal and elected him as a Fellow of the Institute, FInstP.

A significant point for Merton is that three of its members had key roles in the development in the UK of night vision devices. Rex (1957) worked with Mike Wreathall (1939; *In Memoriam* 2013), his collaborator at GEC on infrared devices, while also at GEC John Woolgar (1956; *In Memoriam* 2008) led a team working on low-light image intensifier devices.

Rex lost his wife, Barbara, in 2017 and is survived by his daughter and son and two grandchildren.

By his son and daughter, James and Elaine Watton

1958



Johnson Lockyer Bradshaw, 1940–2025

Johnson Lockyer Bradshaw, always known as 'John', his much-preferred version, was born in Higher Bebbington, Cheshire, on 23 February 1940. Like others of his generation, he took advantage of the 1944 Education Act and won

successive scholarships, first to the prestigious Birkenhead School — a Direct Grant School — and then to Merton.

John was fortunate to have a room in Fellows' Quad, though on the top floor. His mechanical skills were valued by H. W. Garrod who had a collection of small clockwork toys that John regularly fixed. His linguistic skills were employed, but to the chaplain's disgust, when he changed *escam* (food) to *pavones* (peacocks) when saying grace before dinner; at that time the raucous white peacocks ruled the roost.

His wish was to become a doctor and, although he had studied Classics in school, he managed to learn a lot of science as well. Coming up to Merton, he hoped to be able to transfer from Greats to Medicine but was frustrated by the government deciding there was an oversupply of doctors at that time. He therefore switched to PPP, specialising in psychology and physiology, which he successfully completed. He turned a second frustration, that of not being able to be funded for a DPhil, into a decided positive, working in industry and developing business computing skills for two years, after which he enrolled for a PhD in physiological psychology at Sheffield, a place he described as 'an ugly picture in a beautiful frame', highly industrial as it then was, but surrounded by beautiful countryside.

Exploring widely was a feature of his whole life, beginning with long bicycle excursions while still in school, and later featuring extensive tours of Europe, the Middle East, and the then-Communist Soviet Bloc. His mixture of scientific knowledge, which extended to vehicle maintenance, classical archaeology and his dextrous love of languages, both ancient and modern, stood him in good stead then and this last persisted throughout his life.

Just before he started at Sheffield he met, and soon afterwards married, Judy, a botanist and high school science teacher from Bamburgh, Northumbria. Shortly before he completed his PhD, he applied for a position at the University of Otago and, on its completion, they went to Dunedin, New Zealand, in 1967. They had not been there long when visiting Australians offered him a job at the then very-new Monash University. He accepted and remained at Monash from 1968 for the rest of his life, becoming an Emeritus Professor in 2002.

He quickly established himself, supported by his wife Judy, who became his research assistant in title but in fact his indispensable manager in all senses of the word. He and his research students, who themselves have gone on to highly successful careers, focused on neurophysiology and associated disorders. His writings proliferated and were published in top journals — his very first paper had been in *Nature* — as well as books, some of which have become classics, such as his first book, *Human Cerebral Asymmetry*, from 1983.

Excursions inside and outside Australia continued, but with a new twist to the archaeology, for John became interested in Aboriginal archaeology, a subject that had only begun about 1960. He was particularly intrigued by the Bradshaw rock paintings in Western Australia, though he could not trace a genetic connection.

Sadly, on one quite local excursion to the Grampians in 2010, Judy suffered a stroke that caused aphasia, a problem John knew only too well professionally. Despite that, she managed to communicate when he visited her practically every remaining day. She died in 2023 and a year later John was diagnosed with dementia and Alzheimer's. He went into a home, where he said he was happy, but then, following surgery, died peacefully on 3 June 2025. He is survived by his daughter, Catriona, a distinguished doctor, her partner, James Beeson, and his grandchildren Hamish and Tessa.

John N. Crossley (1960)



Peter Doye, 1938–2024

Peter Doye lived near Emsworth in south-east Hampshire from 2018, and before that he lived for 52 years in Farningham, north-west Kent.

Peter came up to Merton from Harrow County School for Boys in 1958. He was proud of his modest roots, as the son of a train driver. He was equally proud of Merton College for which he retained an enduring affection.

Peter worked in branch and district management initially with Martin's Bank, then for the remainder of his career with Barclays. He contributed to his local community as chair of the parish council, charitable trustee, treasurer to various organisations and for a year was chairman of the banking profession's The Cornhill Club.

In retirement, he spent a rewarding decade as a Magistrate on the Dartford and Gravesend Bench and as a member of the Kent Courts Committee. He also travelled widely in Europe and beyond, with trains often featuring centrally in his itineraries.

He leaves his beloved wife Pat, whom he first met a few weeks before embarking on university and to whom he was married for 61 years; also, sons Andrew and Robert.

By his son, Andrew Doye



John Angus Donald Mills, 1938–2025

John Angus Donald Mills, who passed away peacefully in April at the age of 86, led a life that defied easy categorisation: economist, entrepreneur, campaigner, councillor, writer and aviator – his was a mind perpetually in motion, and a life lived in service to both country and conviction.

Born in 1938 and educated at Merton College, Oxford, John's early brilliance was evident in both numbers and narrative. He possessed an economist's rigour and a pamphleteer's zeal – traits that would define his influence across political, commercial and civic life. A committed Keynesian in an era of monetarist dominance, he made it his mission to challenge prevailing orthodoxies, authoring over 30 books and countless pamphlets on currency reform, trade imbalances and the perils of an overvalued pound. For him, economics was never abstract theory; it was about people, jobs and national purpose.

John's public service began in earnest with Camden Council, where he served for over four decades. At a time when local government was under political and financial siege, he brought not only endurance but also vision – defending frontline services, championing fairness, and working with quiet tenacity to make Camden a borough of both culture and conscience.

Yet politics was never his sole realm. In 1986, John founded JML (John Mills Limited), a company that would become one of Britain's most successful home shopping and consumer brands. He built it from his home in Camden and JML expanded into a £100 million turnover business, reaching millions of

households with its innovative products and infomercials. John's blend of commercial flair and long-term thinking helped pioneer a new model of retail, and his example proved that ethical capitalism and entrepreneurial success need not be opposites.

His personal life was no less extraordinary. John was married to the formidable Dame Barbara Mills QC, the UK's first female Director of Public Prosecutions, with whom he shared a deep mutual respect and sense of public duty. Their home was a hub of animated debate and quiet generosity – a place where public life and private warmth coexisted with grace. After Barbara's untimely death in 2011 he met and then later married Marjorie Wallace Skarbek Mills CBE.

John's interests were as broad as they were deep. He was a qualified pilot, often taking to the skies in his own aircraft, and remained intellectually restless well into his 80s – publishing, debating and campaigning until the very end. A staunch Labour supporter for over 60 years, he nonetheless stood apart from the party's shifting tides, insisting on what he believed the country needed rather than what the polls dictated. His leading role in the Labour Leave campaign reflected not isolationism but an unyielding belief in national self-determination and the importance of economic sovereignty.

Later in life, John became a generous benefactor, endowing academic chairs and supporting economic research that challenged mainstream assumptions. He believed in the power of ideas – not as abstractions, but as tools to change lives. His philanthropy reflected not ego but urgency; he wanted his work to continue in others, to inspire fresh thinking and bold solutions in a time of drift.

Above all, John Mills was a man of conviction: soft-spoken yet steel-willed, principled but pragmatic, ambitious not for himself but for the causes he championed. He did not chase celebrity, nor court applause. He simply kept working, writing, building and believing in a better, fairer Britain.

He is survived by his wife, four children, eight grandchildren and one great-grandchild who carry forward his deep love of learning, curiosity and commitment to public service.

John Mills lived a remarkable life. He leaves behind a legacy not just of ideas and institutions, but also of integrity — a rare and enduring example in public and private life alike.

By his daughter, Sarah McTavish

1959



Robert Ian Moore died on 5 February 2025 at the age of 83.

Bob Moore — Robert Ian Moore — was one of the ten undergraduate freshmen who came up to Merton in the autumn of 1959 to read Modern History. Born in 1941, he had been educated at the Royal Belfast Academical Institution and had won an Exhibition to Merton. His father was a Northern Ireland civil servant. From 1964 to 1994 Bob was a lecturer at Sheffield University and from 1994 till his retirement in 2003 he was Professor of Medieval History at Newcastle University.

From the start Bob was a very committed historian. At Merton his interests were mainly medieval but in his later academic life he was to look more widely and wrote a number of far-reaching and influential works which have significant relevance to the modern world and how we look at its past.

In 1987 he published *The Persecuting Society* about how the persecution of minorities started in the Middle Ages. This was to be followed in 2012 by *The War on Heresy*, reviewed on the front page of the *Times Literary Supplement* and much admired internationally. In the field of social history he published *The First European Revolution* in 2000, still routinely taught in UK universities. His interests had always been wide

and he was a pioneer in the field of world history. In 1985 he introduced a global history curriculum at Sheffield University and took it with him when he moved to Newcastle. He was the founding editor of the Blackwell History of the World series which has published a number of important texts. Bob was busy almost to the end on a volume in this world history series, on Central and South Asian history. Alas, he did not live to complete it since it would certainly have illuminated a field of history which we know little about.

As an undergraduate at Merton, he was active in the College societies which flourished then. After the short life of a small essay reading society which met at midnight, he founded the Avignon Society which met regularly at a more civilised hour to hear an essay from a member and then discuss it. He was Secretary of the Bodley Club, the most illustrious of the College's essay reading societies. He was active in the 1066 Society — the College History Society. He was an energetic arguer, whether speaking in the Union or in his rooms — first in St Alban's and then in Fellows (sometimes arguing through the night).

Throughout his career he was active in university administration. He was an active traveller as well, whether following his historical interests in France or with his wife Elizabeth, an authority on Armenian art and history, in the remoter parts of Asia Minor. Latterly, in an echo of Ralph Davies' medieval picnics, he spent a long weekend each year with some of his original Merton contemporaries, visiting churches and castles in England. However, on these excursions the accommodation was much more comfortable than the six weeks of the first long vacation from Oxford, spent with the same small group in Italy, with rucksacks, camping and visiting galleries, cathedrals and hill towns.

By Niall Campbell, Anthony Fletcher, David Forsyth and David Marler (all 1959)

1960



David Elliott Fletcher died peacefully on 23 March 2025, at the age of 83.

David was the first student I encountered at Oxford and, like me, found himself somewhat surprised to be hauling luggage across the cobbles to our outpost in 21 Merton Street. Our staircase proved to be a very friendly group, all five of us enjoying the newly refurbished flats: the distinguished Year 4 chemist Paul Powell, two fellow Year 1 chemistry students David Price and my immediate neighbour David Fletcher, and Mike Williams, already a graduate, who kept a paternal eye on proceedings. David (Fletcher) played a valuable part in settling us all down to university and college life; he was warm, welcoming, energetic and lively, with a wide range of interests, and keen to relax after dinner with coffee in his room, or beer down at the Eastgate, or simply escaping the sound of the typing pool – Courtenay Phillips having briefed all his chemists to use typewriters for their weekly tutorial essays. Of course we didn't realise it at the time, but I believe these rooms had been previously occupied by the slightly more distinguished writers Nevill Coghill and JRR Tolkien.

I recall, with pleasure and gratitude to David, the many occasions in the first year when we donned the famous maroon and white sports kit and headed for Mansfield Road to play hockey for the First XI, followed by some energetic but inexperienced squash and then, at David's insistence, by a race back along Longwall to Merton and dinner; and to enjoy listening to his LPs of keyboard music, from JS Bach to, in particular, Thelonius Monk, reflecting his passion for piano jazz. Happy days. Even though our directions of

travel subsequently diverged, he was always very keen to encourage my more academic commitments, and before he left Oxford it was a special pleasure to be invited to join his family for dinner on graduation day.

After leaving Oxford David stayed close friends with Alan Hopkinson, the two of them both qualifying as chartered accountants. He spent time in the expatriate accounting world in Brazil, then followed Alan's advice, and took an MBA at Cranfield Institute of Technology, which was, in David's own words, 'a decision for which I will be forever indebted to him'.

It came as no surprise to learn later that he had gone into management (assisted by the MBA), and travelled widely, occupying a variety of positions in companies including those involved in the marketing of pharmaceuticals and the sale of fine china. He then spent almost 50 years in Canada, having been moved to Montreal by CIL Inc in 1974. He left the corporate world in 1984 to pursue his own vision in scientific innovation.

He created and directed two companies. These built on his energy and commitment (and, I hope, his love of chemistry), and involved the use of non thermal plasma to break carbon-hydrogen bonds in methane, both to make 'clean' hydrogen (e.g. for use in fuel cells) and solid, pure carbon. His work was encapsulated in a book he worked on with passion until the end, the Solid Carbon Economy, which it is hoped will be published later this year. What amazing drive and vision, and a fitting reminder of David in his days at Merton.

In 2022, after a gap of only 59 years, Keith and Sandy Pickering were delighted to catch up with David – with Bonnie, his beloved partner ever since they married in 1967 – and found David to be just as he is remembered by all his fellow chemists at Merton – the same kind and quiet gentleman he always was, a really nice fellow.

David is survived by his loving wife Bonnie, their four children and nine beloved grandchildren, one of whom he always hoped would go to Merton.

Bruce Gilbert (1960)



Richard Grant Mulgan, 1940–2024

Richard and I were good friends at Merton and stayed that way throughout his life. He was a New Zealander with strong links to Merton. His father, John Mulgan (1933), died at the end of the Second World War and is commemorated on the Fitzjames Arch in the list of Merton members who died in the war. Richard was given a Commonership by the Fellows in 1960, in recognition of his father having been a Fellow before enlisting (Oxford Light infantry). Richard was embarrassed to be admitted because of his father's association with the College, as if in loco parentis. Consequently, encouraged by Fellows Robert Levens, John Lucas, Tom Brown and Robin Harrison (who later became Warden), he worked hard and graduated with a Double First in both Mods and Greats. After graduating he married Margaret Bedggood, who had joined him from New Zealand, later having three children.

Richard became a Merton Lecturer in Philosophy in 1964, after which he returned to New Zealand, spending two years as a Lecturer in Political Science at the Victoria University of Wellington before taking up the post of Professor of Classics for eight years at the University of Otago, where he was Acting Vice-Chancellor from 1986 to 1987.

Richard and Margaret separated in 1992, and in 1993 Richard married fellow academic Aurelia George Mulgan, a political scientist at the Australian Defence Force Academy, in Canberra. His second marriage coincided with his move to take up the chair in public policy at the Australian National University at Canberra, where he worked until his retirement in 2008, and became Professor Emeritus at the Crawford School of Economics and Government. Richard's book

Aristotle's Political Theory was published by Oxford University Press in 1977.

Nick Woodward (1960)

1962



Jeremy Hummerstone, 24 March 1940 – 25 October 2024

I think it was when I mentioned in College that we had moved from south London to Kent that somebody – possibly John Lucas, philosophy tutor – said: 'You had better meet Jeremy, then.' Thus started a long and transformative friendship. Jeremy – who matriculated in 1962, the year after me, as a mature student – was no academic; in fact he was openly contemptuous of two-thirds of his PPE course. But he loved books and held uncompromising opinions on the contemporary world, and a Socratic circle of his younger year-mates loved his denunciations of such disgraces as concrete architecture, plastics, swimming costumes and the New English Bible. But he enjoyed some modernities: arty cinema, Scott Joplin, email, for instance. Once as we bought tickets with my teenage son for a slightly risqué French film I heard the ticket lady ask: 'Your usual seat, vicar?' But for me the golden hours were spent in deepest Kent, the cottage where he was born in Lympne, village cricket matches, clambering down Shakespeare Cliff (pre-Channel Tunnel), cycling home at dusk along leafy lanes.

It was at Oxford that he won the love of his life, Clarissa, in a painful but classic love triangle with the best friend who introduced them. Clarissa traced her roots to John Wycliffe (author of the New English Bible of his day) but was an orphan, and I had the honour of giving her away at their

wedding in 1966. I entered Chipping Camden church with her on my arm to a tremendous clap of thunder. That summer they worked at a posh hotel in Cornwall. I camped nearby with that same best friend, now reconciled, and they fed us on titbits from the dining room.

Leaving Oxford with a Fourth (more distinguished than a Third), Jeremy did teacher training at Durham, whence he took Clarissa off to Papua New Guinea. I was in Zambia then. Somehow our letters found each other. I do not know whether he found his prelapsarian paradise, but he returned with two sons – Gabriel, Barnabas ('Barzy'), soon followed by a third, Macklow – and a wicked fake Australian accent, resolved to take holy orders. I was lucky enough to witness the ordination in York Minster in 1973, having just moved there. He was appointed curate at Helmsley, and my wife and I shared their huge house in Castlegate till we got settled. Jeremy fell out with his vicar and moved to a group parish in the Vale of Pewsey, and thence to Great Torrington in north Devon where he was vicar, tirelessly supported by Clarissa, from 1980 to retirement in 2010 endlessly fighting the church commissioners to retain his rambling vicarage. Their household was further graced with four daughters – Rebekah, Faith, Thomasin and Bridget – and they were well loved by the parishioners. We visited frequently, and they enjoyed visits to Yorkshire. In religion he was high Anglican, drawn also to the stately beauty of the Orthodox rites, not keen, I am afraid, on lady priests and often quarrelling with the establishment.

In 2010, they retired to Pickering, North Yorkshire, where Clarissa died suddenly in 2011. Jeremy fell ill in the summer of 2023 but remained active and enquiring until September 2024 when he entered Scarborough Hospital. In his bed, head framed by the hospital pillow, he looked like the Christos Pantocrator in the apses of his beloved Orthodox churches. He died at home lovingly attended by his seven children and numerous grandchildren. So passed a kind and independent-minded man, a unique character who some thought understood the world better than all the academics put together. The funeral was beautiful, a William Byrd mass sung by four York University scholars, but, once the sadness was over, with all those children it was quite a jolly affair.

Tony Ridge (1961)

1963



David Page, 19 March 1944 – 10 October 2024

David John Horlick Page, a Postmaster in Modern History and a close friend from our undergraduate days, died in a London hospital in October after a short illness at the age of 80. David was one of the brightest and best of the dozen historians who came up to Merton in 1963. He had many gifts, including an outstanding mind, a great sense of humour, exceptional generosity and a genius for friendship. I never knew anyone who had so many close friends – or godchildren: there were a dozen at the last count, including my own son, John, and nephew, William. David's funeral at All Saints Church, West Dulwich, in November was well attended, and was a suitable celebration of a life well lived.

David was born in Derby, where his father was a manager with Rolls Royce. He was educated at Loughborough Grammar School, where a young history teacher, Rodney Elton, later Lord Elton (the Conservative son of a Labour peer), encouraged him to apply for an Oxford scholarship. His interest in South Asia may have begun with the Indian special subject, which we did together under the tutorship of Dame Lucy Sutherland. It was reinforced by the year that he spent in 1966–67, teaching at Edwardes College, Peshawar, in Pakistan. This inspired him to write his DPhil dissertation on the background to partition in the subcontinent. He held a Harmsworth Senior Scholarship at Merton from 1968 to 1971 and completed his dissertation in 1975. It was published by OUP as *Prelude to Partition: The Indian Muslims and the Imperial System of Control 1920–1932* in 1982.

Meanwhile, David had joined the BBC's Eastern Service in 1972. He became Urdu programme organiser in 1977 and combined that job with the role of Pashto programme organiser from 1981. He worked hard to found that service in the wake of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. He became assistant head of the Eastern Service in 1986 and remained in that position until 1994 when he retired, somewhat prematurely, as a result of misguided cuts in the BBC World Service, which took out some of the best people.

He was able to maintain his interest in Afghanistan by becoming a trustee of Afghanaid, a remarkably enterprising NGO, in 1994. He remained a trustee until his death 30 years later, serving as chair from 2004 to 2014, and briefly acting as managing director. For his first 20 years on the board, he travelled regularly to Afghanistan through difficult and dangerous times. He presided over the transfer of the charity's headquarters from London to Kabul.

From 1998 to 2000 he worked as co-director with William Crawley, a former colleague at the BBC, on the Media South Asia Project, which was funded by the Ford Foundation and based at the Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex. This was a massive project on the impact of satellite broadcasting in the subcontinent, employing 16 research assistants, and involving 400 interviews and over 100 focus group sessions, in India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Nepal. The result was a book, co-authored with Crawley, *Satellites over South Asia: Broadcasting, Culture and the Public Interest*, which was published in 2001. A later spin-off from this project, co-edited with Crawley, was *Embattled Media: Democracy, Governance and Reform in Sri Lanka*, which was published in 2015.

In his later years he became a senior fellow of the Institute of Commonwealth Studies, London, and devoted much of his energy to the Commonwealth Journalists Association and the cause of freedom of the press. He was the primary draftsperson of the statement of Commonwealth Media Principles, which was adopted by the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Samoa in October 2024, shortly after his death.

David's partner of many years, Ruth Kirk-Wilson, whom

he had met at Oxford, was ill at the time of his death. She outlived him by only a few months, dying in January 2025. He is survived by his sister Janet and his nieces, Louise and Frances, and by Ruth's sons, Edward and William.

Hugh Macmillan (1963)

1967



Eldon E. Zuill, 19 May 1943 – 2 September 2024

Eldon Zuill passed away on 2 September 2024 at home in Scotland.

Eldon was the much-loved husband of Anne; father of Duncan and Alison; grandfather to Layla and Harry, Zac, Jess and Max; and father-in-law to Darren Burns. Eldon was the son of the late Edmund Zuill and Frances Zuill of Smith's Parish and brother to Felicity Simpson, uncle to Alex and Andrew and cousin to numerous Bermudians.

Eldon was born in Bermuda in Smith's Parish and went to Saltus Grammar School before moving to Canada to study at Trinity College, Toronto. He then went on to be a Rhodes Scholar and arrived in Oxford in 1967 to read Zoology. Teaching was in his blood and he taught at schools in Scotland before moving to the Health Education Board for Scotland from which he retired in 2013. He returned to Bermuda regularly with his family and he thought of Bermuda very fondly. He loved his time in Oxford where he excelled at cricket and received his doctorate. He was very proud to be a part of Merton College, Rhodes House and Vincent's Club, and talked of these often.

Eldon will be missed by many on both sides of the Atlantic for his big smile, friendly nature and willingness to share opinions and stories with everyone he met. He is hugely missed by his family.

By his wife, Anne Zuill

1969



Tony Millns, 1951–2024

My dear friend Tony Millns died on 10 December 2024, after a sudden, vehement onslaught of cancer.

Tony read English at Merton and went on to have a distinguished career in academics and public relations. In 1993, he became assistant chief executive of the School Curriculum and Assessment Authority, working with Sir Ron Dearing on all three of the Dearing reviews. These looked at the national curriculum, national testing, post-16 qualifications and higher education and the issue of tuition fees. In 1999, he became chief executive of what would become English UK. This is an amalgam of the associations representing the teaching of English as a foreign language in both the private and state sectors, a merger which Tony fruitfully pulled off.

Tony, a Yorkshireman, had a dry wit but he was never dusty. He was, for instance, a Messianic upholder of the importance of real ale. He was national chairman of CAMRA (the Campaign for Real Ale) from 1982 to 1985, and in 1989 he stood as the 'Keep Theakston's Brewery British' candidate in the Richmond by-election. This was won by a novice politician called William Hague but Tony polled more votes

than the official Liberal candidate and was only pipped by Miss Whiplash. Apparently, rules on equal airtime for candidates earned enormous publicity for good beer, as did the appearance on TV of two blue-rosetted Tory canvassers telling Tony: 'Aye lad, we'll be voting for you.'

Tony was extremely clever and tough-minded but he was also extraordinarily kind. On that misty October day in 1971 when I first arrived at Merton, Tony was already something of a grandee, a third-year Postmaster of some repute and, for me, a welcome breath of rarified air. I had come from a public school where the boys didn't think it was cool to show enthusiasm for anything, unless perhaps sport, and certainly not for higher matters of the mind. Tony wouldn't have put up with any of that nonsense. He loved Anglo-Saxon poetry and, with characteristic generosity and good humour, he took me under his wing. We had to pass Anglo-Saxon to progress with our degree and Tony became my unofficial and very successful tutor. The poems we studied — 'Beowulf', the magnum opus and the smaller works like 'The Wanderer' and 'The Seafarer' — were all about mortality. I can still picture that slight, Northern boy, marching me round Merton gardens quoting lines like:

*Fortune's turn turns the world under sky.
Here the cash was a loan
Your friends were a loan
Anyone at all, just a loan
Your family, only ever lent to you.
And the whole foundation of the earth wastes away.*

And just to put the time into context ... the quiet, pale figure of JRR Tolkien, late professor of our very subject, might be stalking through the gardens behind us.

Tony went through life with his eyes wide open. All those years ago, he introduced me to Bede's sparrow as a metaphor for human existence. Bede, writing around 721 AD, described human life as being like a sparrow that flies into a warm feasting hall, traversing the rafters and disappearing out at the far end. No one knows where it came from or where it went but for a brief respite it enjoyed the magic of the festivities. I am glad that Tony's sparrow and mine shared the warm hall for so long. In 53 years, I never heard a cross word

from him, only encouragement, and I will always be proud that he chose me as his friend.

Tony is survived by Jill, his wife of 41 years, and many friends who will miss him.

Stephen Mills (1971)

1971

John Fleming, 1951–2024

There must have been something in the water of The Lakes around Kendal in the 1960s – as there must have been in the taps of Widnes – to propel two alumni of Kendal Grammar School to Merton in October 1971: Ron Graham (whose obituary is in the 2023 *Postmaster*) and John Fleming. Both were firmly rooted in Westmorland. The graves of John's ancestors stand row on row in Kirkby Lonsdale churchyard. On his mother's side he shared a dark secret with John Barton: Manx heritage. John was amused by the coincidence. His parents had met when his father was visiting for the TT races in the 1930s.

Born on Boxing Day 1951, John was early diagnosed with diabetes, an affliction that weighed on him at school, Merton and through his life. However, he never allowed that to dominate him, although he had to adjust his lifestyle to meet its demands. Coming up to Merton to read Modern History, at times he needed the help and support of his devoted parents: they would periodically take up residence at the Eastgate for that purpose.

Bright and lively, with flaming curly red hair and a happy smile, someone awarded John the soubriquet 'the Orange Pixie'. To say he was fascinated by railways and had an impressive attic model railway layout at home risks giving the wrong impression: he was anything but an anorak. Rather he was very good company, a dry and thoughtful but quietly witty conversationalist. A largely unsuspected passion was the Motown sound, possessing as he did an extensive vinyl collection. And not many Mertonians could claim a stuffed

fox: in John's case, called Stephen (which survives him). He owned a very elderly VW Beetle which was later acquired by Ron Graham. In its dotage it featured a manually assisted windscreen wiper: that is, it needed the passenger to lean out of the car window to persuade it to move. He loved his time at Merton, making some good friends and graduating in 1974.

After a year's teacher training, including a term at Stonyhurst College, he embarked on his career as a history teacher. Spells at Repton School and King William's College, on the Isle of Man, were followed from 1983 by Bedford School, where he remained and became Head of the History Department. He was regarded as an excellent teacher who inspired his pupils with his enthusiasm and genuine pastoral care.

After retirement in 2013, John indulged his various passions for antique hunting, Yorkshire, the Isle of Man, gardening and the historic houses of England, more often than not clad in his trademark cavalry twill jacket and deerstalker. Determined bachelor with no siblings, John loved his extended family both on the Isle of Man and on the mainland. He stood as best man, godfather and 'uncle' to friends' children. A lifelong friend said of him: 'Beneath the sometimes crusty exterior, there was a soft centre.'

Philip Head (1971)



James Peter Stephen Fletcher, 27 October 1951 – 17 January 2025

James was born in Beaconsfield to Thomas Cecil Fletcher and Hilary Brigit Holden on 27 October 1951. His father was a Fleet Air Arm officer and pilot who flew Seafires during the war

and later the first naval jets as a reserve squadron leader; his mother was the only daughter of Walter Holden, a RIBA architect responsible for many houses in Beaconsfield and branches of the National Provincial Bank.

His parents divorced in the late 1950s and James was sent to Abberley Hall prep school in Worcestershire. From there he went to Winchester College where won a number of prizes in maths, music and poetry, including the Duncan Prize (1966), Kirby Prize for Musical Composition (1969) and Queen's Gold Medal for English Verse (1970).

In 1970 James won a place to Merton to read English. Before taking his place at Oxford he travelled overland for four months to Kashmir and back through Turkey, Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and into the Punjab.

After a year of studying English he was allowed to change course to Oriental Studies, when he specialised in Persian and Urdu, and had to come up to London every week to SOAS to be taught at least one of the languages as there were no teachers available at Oxford at the time. He graduated in 1975 with a Third.

James then settled in Bethnal Green, East London where he lived for the rest of his life. He worked for various different companies including NP Mander, installing organ pipes (1976); L Kelaty (1980), Eastern Rugs; and for a number of years helping with subscriptions at the *London Review of Books*. An accomplished musician (piano and saxophone), he played saxophone for a band called Redeye and with his old schoolfriend Robyn Hitchcock (and The Egyptians) in the 1980s, both recording and live in concert, and composed for piano and saxophone.

James never married or had children, but he retained a large network of friends from both Winchester and Oxford, and had many varied passions and hobbies, including ice skating (which he took up in his forties to get fit), maths, languages (he learnt Japanese), the music of Schumann and Messiaen, Citroën BX cars (he owned two simultaneously), cheeses and Burgundy fine wines.

By his half-brother, Mark Fletcher



Charles Seelye Kellgren Scudder, 1947–2025

Our friend and wonderful Mertonian Charles Seelye Kellgren Scudder, aged 78, of Killingworth, Connecticut in the United States, passed away on Thursday 19 June 2025, due to complications from a bone marrow transplant, surrounded by family at Yale New Haven Hospital. Charles bore his struggle with a recently diagnosed blood disorder and the aftermath of major risky surgery with such grace, courage and optimism that in the end his passing seemed almost an abrupt surprise to those outside his family circle. His loving and beloved wife Mary and children, who shared the pain and suffering he endured, bolstered and comforted Charles during his uphill battle to survive.

The exuberant passion and dedication to Merton Charles evidenced by his leadership on the Executive Committee and Chair of Reunions and Events for the North American based Merton College Charitable Corporation (MC3) were no rivals for his love for Mary Olson Scudder, nor is hers for him. Of the several sparkling heartfelt elegies and beautiful condolence letters from a swath of lifelong friends and colleagues, a small sample of Mary's spontaneous words stand out: 'He was the best, kindest man I have ever known ... Opening the cards that have been arriving, from colleagues, from acquaintances, friends, and tennis buddies, the comment that keeps appearing, independently from all these different sources, is that Charles was a "true gentlemen". That was my experience of him as well. When we met, it was, for both of us, love at first sight. (Yes, it happens.) From my viewpoint, Charles was ... drop-dead gorgeous, gracious, deeply romantic, emotionally intelligent.' Charles' two great loves wed in 2017 when Mary and he married in Merton's Chapel.

A man in full, Charles led an eventful, colorful, joyful life of accomplishment and service. He became a distinguished attorney, excelling in international corporate law. He was a natural athlete: a high school basketball player, a college ski racer, and a lifelong competitive tennis player. He loved playing the guitar and singing golden oldies at friends' beach bonfires on 4 July. Growing up, Charles enjoyed acting and never really gave it up entirely. In retirement, he even performed Shakespeare to rave reviews from Hollywood 'A listers' at the Bohemian Grove in California.

Charles was born in London, England to Dr Nina Kellgren, a medical doctor, and Evarts Scudder, an American writer, on 20 February 1947. He was educated at the American School in London, which his father helped found, graduating in 1964. There he made friends who remembered him fondly at his passing. A classmate's daughter whom Charles befriended wrote: 'Charles came from a long line of Boston Brahmin medical missionaries who were involved in the founding of a medical school in Vellore, India'; he 'often and with great pride spoke about the legacy his family had built over more than 100 years. It was clear he was deeply committed to making a lasting difference in the lives of others. He was very proud of all the family foundation has done to help people less fortunate, and of his family's continued commitment to bringing medical care to the underserved. I admired his deep sense of purpose and passion around preserving this legacy. He was a very good man.'

At the age of 17, Charles left England to come to America and attend Yale University. There at Davenport College, he embraced, tongue in cheek, the traditions of Spade & Grave, one of Yale's oldest secret societies, and earned a BA in Art History in 1968. After graduating, Charles served honorably as a captain in the United States Army, stationed in Vicenza, Italy. Fluent in Italian, his duties included translating local newspaper articles for his commanding officer and leading ski outings for officer spouses in the nearby Dolomites.

Upon completion of military service, Charles read Law at Merton and returned to the States, completing an accelerated American law degree at the University of Connecticut. As an attorney, he worked at Winthrop, Stimson, Putnam & Roberts in New York City and Obermayer, Rebman, Maxwell

& Hippel in Philadelphia, and held several in-house positions at different companies, including at the US office of the Dutch corporation Akzo Nobel, until his retirement in 2017.

After retiring, Charles remained active as President and General Counsel of The Scudder Association Foundation. His myriad other extracurriculars included serving as a longtime director of The Andrew Morehouse Trust, and voluntary support for the American School in London alumni community. He was a member of the Madison Beach Club in Connecticut for 50 years. Charles' son 'Whit' shared that 'The Merton community meant a great deal to my dad throughout his life ... He often said that his work with MC3 was the highlight of his retirement years.'

Notwithstanding all the volunteer caps he wore, retirement was a time of peace and contentment for Charles. After a busy, well-traveled career, he and Mary settled into a 1730s house in Killingworth on a six-acre property known locally as Maple Hill. He often said it was one of his happiest periods of his marvelous life.

Charles is survived by his wife Mary, his three children, John Whitney Scudder of Madison, CT, Ansley Harris Scudder of Bloomfield, CT, and Jocelyn Seelye Scudder of Park City, Utah. Although he has said goodbye in a very profound way, neither his memory nor the imprint of Charles Scudder's remarkable life will ever really leave us.

Nick Allard (1974)

1972



Graham Hill died on 14 February 2025.

Anyone who was at Merton during the early 1970s will remember Graham. Having delayed coming up from his hometown of Huddersfield until 1972 as a result of a climbing accident that left him unable to walk without crutches (he called them 'sticks'), he was a large presence in the College once he arrived. He had ground-floor rooms, first in Front Quad and then in Mob, which gave him quick access to the Lodge, outside which he would park his red Mini ready for daily or twice-daily trips to the Science Area in South Parks Road.

My first meeting with Graham was at a laboratory induction meeting for new chemistry undergraduates, where we agreed to become laboratory partners. That was the start of a friendship that would last for more than 50 years, as Merton friendships do. In 2020 Graham initiated a weekly Zoom call for a group of five of us who had been close friends at Merton, and that fixture in our calendars persisted throughout the pandemic, and continues to this day.

Graham was an enthusiastic participant in all that Oxford and Merton had to offer. As well as doing some chemistry, he was a regular player at Guitar Society, played double bass at Jazz Club, kayaked on the river, joined punting expeditions to the Vicky Arms, played croquet on the lawn in Merton and darts in the College Bar. He was always best characterised by his unfailing good nature, wit and charm.

After graduating, Graham moved to London and started a career in IT, specialising in networking. He worked for the

CEGB, various consultancies, and eventually (and until his retirement) for IBM. He also took time out in the early eighties to do a Master's in Computer Science at Imperial College, where he had the good fortune to meet Gillian, who would become his wife.

After a period working in Germany, they returned to the UK and lived first in Farnham, Surrey before settling in Liphook, Hampshire. Here their daughters Katie and Emily grew up, and Graham managed to combine his career with his love of gardening and woodwork (from which he leaves a legacy of beautiful hand-crafted furniture and other artifacts).

Graham is survived by Gillian, Katie and Emily, and by his brother Malcolm.

David Hogarth (1972)

1975



(Jonathan) Neil Smith, 24 January 1957 – 11 February 2025

Neil Smith was just the kind of person one might wish to meet, as a neighbour or subject-contemporary, on arriving at Merton as a freshman: he was friendly, relaxed, and curious as well as intelligent, and exhibited some eccentricities. The last included the use of a blue light bulb to indicate a pensive mood. He also (unusually for the time) smoked a pipe and played records by the band *Curved Air* loudly.

Neil spent his first ten or so years in London. His family then lived briefly at Bamford in Rochdale (Lancashire), and then settled in the West Midlands, at Norton in Stourbridge

(Worcestershire). Like many Merton undergraduates of the 1970s, Neil attended a state grammar school, in his case the King Edward VI Grammar School for Boys in Stourbridge. As a child he played with Meccano, became interested in science and science fiction, and was attracted to physics and engineering. At school he was also enthusiastic about music and learned the clarinet.

Neil's early interests seem to have prefigured the general course of his life, which had a remarkable unity and consistency, in that he was interested in both the fundamental principles and practical applications of areas of science, in his case electronics and acoustics. He also had a clear sense of vocation. When Neil joined Merton to study the mysteries of physics, he already held a sponsorship from the manufacturer GKN. As someone more involved in 'traditional' physics, rather than nuclear physics, he was more a pupil of Michael Baker than of Michael Bowler, and later in life would express gratitude for Dr Baker's kindness. It is suspected that Neil's studies included an optional first-year paper in electronics.

After leaving Merton, Neil worked for his commercial sponsor and then moved to the telecommunications company Plessey. He lived at first in Stourbridge and then around 1981 moved to Henstridge near Wincanton (Somerset). In 1983 he married Nesta Sparks and thereby acquired a stepson, Alex. Soon afterwards they settled in the small town of Stalbridge (Dorset) where they became valued members of a strong and lively community.

During the 1990s Neil ran his own consultancy company, Omicron Development Ltd, which undertook R&D in acoustics and signal-processing for the government and major companies. Projects included researching speech compression for transmission by satellite and the writing of a computer program for the analysis of sound. On his own initiative he designed a pioneering flat loudspeaker but sadly it was not developed as a commercial proposition. Around 2005 he returned to commercial employment, initially at Systems Engineering and Assessment at Frome and then, from about 2008, with Thales Underwater Systems, the world's leading supplier of sonar and mine detection equipment for submarines, with which he remained until retirement. He was

obliged to keep his work for Thales secret, but he relished telling friends that he rode around in tanks and helicopters and experimented with a 200-ton crane. He also mentioned his design of a sensor for military vehicles which he hoped would save lives. Secrecy notwithstanding, Neil's work was recognised by his election as a Fellow of the Cybernetics Society and as a Fellow of the Institute of Physics.

Sadly, in 2018 Nesta died. Neil retired in early 2022 and embarked on a vigorous new life. He already pursued extra-work activities as a freemason and in attending Theoretical Physics days at Oxford. He now inaugurated plans for increased travel with a visit to Sri Lanka in 2022 and intended to expand his interests in physics and mathematics, and to revive clarinet-playing; and by happy chance he made a new lady-friend. But in June 2024, to the distress of family and friends, he was formally diagnosed with motor neurone disease. Though he made the most of remaining time and energy, just a few months later he died.

Robert Peberdy (1975)

1979



Schuyler (Sky) Foerster, 1949–2025

Dr Schuyler (Sky) Foerster, Colonel, United States Air Force (Retired), passed away on 25 July 2025, in Colorado Springs, Colorado.

Born on 20 September 1949, in Newport News, Virginia, Sky lived a life fiercely dedicated to public service and human kindness. He will be remembered as a teacher, an officer, a

leader, a husband, a father, a global citizen, and a civic activist for peace and justice. He was deeply devoted to his family, friends, students, colleagues, and professional and civic communities. He lived every day with faith, love, compassion and generosity.

A 1971 graduate of the United States Air Force Academy with a BSc in International Affairs, Sky began a distinguished 26-year career in the Air Force as an intelligence officer in Southeast Asia and Washington, DC; he later held senior advisory roles in security and arms control policy, retiring with the rank of colonel. His notable assignments included: Officer of the Defense Advisor, US Mission to NATO (Brussels, Belgium, 1986–88), Special Assistant to the Ambassador, US Delegation to the Negotiations on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe, Joint Consultative Group, and the Conference for Security and Cooperation in Europe (Vienna, Austria, 1989–94), and Senior Advisor to the Commander-in-Chief, US Strategic Command.

Sky's educational achievements were equally distinguished. In addition to his Air Force Academy degree, he earned a DPhil in Politics from Merton College, Oxford (1983); a Master's in International Relations from the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, Tufts University (1972); a Master's in Public Administration from American University (1976); a National Security Fellowship at the JFK School of Government, Harvard University (1988–89); and was awarded an honorary Doctor of Humane Letters from La Roche College (2009).

In addition to numerous civic and teaching awards, his military decorations included the Defense Superior Service Medal (2), Legion of Merit, Bronze Star Medal, Defense Meritorious Service Medal, Meritorious Service Medal, Air Force Commendation Medal (3), and Air Force Achievement Medal.

Throughout his military and post-military career, Sky was closely associated with the US Air Force Academy's Department of Political Science. He served as permanent faculty for three periods between 1977 and 1989, and later as the Brent Scowcroft Professor of National Security Studies at the Eisenhower Center for Space and Defense Studies (2009–16). He was named Professor Emeritus in 2020. He

mentored countless cadets and students, guiding Rhodes, Marshall and Schwarzman Scholarship candidates. He also taught as adjunct faculty at Colorado College, the University of Pittsburgh, Masaryk University in the Czech Republic, and as a Visiting Lecturer on Global Political Issues with Compass Entertainment & Speakers.

Following his retirement from active duty, Sky devoted himself to education, public speaking, writing and publishing, radio interviews, nonprofit leadership and civic activism. He spoke and published widely on international politics and security issues, engaging academic, professional and civic audiences across the world.

His many professional affiliations included the International Institute for Strategic Studies, International Studies Association, Rotary International, and the World Affairs Councils of America. He served 12 years as President of the World Affairs Council of Pittsburgh, sat on the national board of the World Affairs Councils of America, and served as Emeritus and Past President of the Board of Directors of the Colorado Springs World Affairs Council.

A tireless community leader, Sky also served as Chair of the Board of Directors of the Colorado Springs Citizens Project, member of the Rotary Club of Colorado Springs, International Service Committee Chair, founding Director of the Center for Civic Resilience and Non-Violent Social Change, and founder of CGST Solutions, a consulting firm specializing in national security policy and civic education.

Sky was a devoted member of the First Congregational United Church of Christ in Colorado Springs, where he served as a Council member for Outreach, Chair of Mission, Giving & Outreach, a member of the Just Peace team, and a proud singer in the Chancel Choir.

He is survived by his beloved wife of 53 years, Janet Louise Johnson Foerster; his brother, Frederick Henry Foerster III; his daughters, Allyson Catherine Foerster and Jennifer Elise Foerster; and his extended family of nieces, nephews and countless 'chosen' brothers, sisters, children and grandchildren.

By the Foerster family

1986



Susan J Craighead, 18 March 1964 – 29 December 2023

Susan Craighead crammed everything possible into her two years at Merton College, living life to the full and making the most of this privileged experience, despite debilitating health issues. Having grown up in Burlington, Vermont, with the rare medical condition *epidermolysis bullosa*, Susan nevertheless graduated *magna cum laude* from Princeton University, where she had researched the Union Carbide gas tragedy in Bhopal, India, for her honours thesis. Susan then came as a Rhodes Scholar to Merton, where she undertook an MPhil in International Relations.

Susan and I were two of just four women in the 1986 MCR intake at Merton and had neighbouring attic rooms on Holywell Street during that first year and shared the very damp basement flat on Merton Street during our second year. Feeling very much the outsider from the Antipodes, I naturally gravitated to her vibrant social circle of Rhodes and Marshall scholars and the internationally diverse students from her MPhil programme. Memories of those times include sitting on the staircase together in our dressing gowns in the morning waiting for the bathroom, punting on the Isis, her penchant for spicy food, and her donation of feminist literature to the Merton Library, including Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex*. One of her prized possessions was a letter from the Domestic Bursar, addressed 'My dear Craighead'.

Due to her medical condition, Susan was unable to play sports, and she always joked that embroidery was her sport. The photograph shows an embroidered image of the Oxford

spires – including Merton's Chapel Tower prominently in the foreground, as seen from Christ Church Meadow – which Susan stitched for me as a wedding present. This is a very treasured possession of mine and has accompanied us on all my husband's overseas diplomatic postings.



While on holidays in the US, Susan used to send herself back care packages, which included essentials not yet available in British supermarkets such as Ziploc bags, and the kitchen at Merton Street never lacked a tin of pure maple syrup from Vermont. But Susan's sense of adventure never ceased to amaze me. In a very cold December she travelled with a friend around Turkey by dolmus and reported back to me afterwards that her eyelids had frozen together in the snow. And in the summer of 1987, having made repeated trips to the necessary embassies in London to obtain the required visas and travel documents, she made an epic journey to Myanmar, then onto China, returning to Europe via the Trans-Siberian Railway.

After completing her MPhil, Susan undertook a summer internship with *The Economist* magazine in London, before relocating to Louisville, Kentucky to work as a reporter on the *Louisville Courier Journal*. At this stage in our lives our paths diverged, and we lost touch as I accompanied my husband (and young children) on his diplomatic career in the Middle East. But bigger challenges lay ahead for Susan.

who returned to grad school and attended Harvard Law School. Newly graduated, and newly married, Susan moved to Seattle, Washington, where she embarked on a career as a public defender. Susan was a staff attorney for the Seattle-King County Public Defender Association, then served as a commissioner for the Washington State Court of Appeals for five years. In 2007 Susan was appointed to the King County Superior Court and, as Judge Craighead, was a leader in efforts to eliminate racial disparities in the US juvenile justice system. Health issues compelled Susan to retire in 2021, at the age of just 56.

Throughout her abridged yet active life, Susan was incredibly courageous and truly inspirational, overcoming her own health issues and physical pain to advocate for justice and dedicate her professional life to serving others. Susan was blessed with the gifts of empathy, drive, positivity and resilience, qualities recognised by those of us privileged to have known her at Merton, which enabled her to serve her community. She is survived by her son Daniel.

Christine Biggs (née Winzor) (1986)



Forthcoming Events 2025-26

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

- 25 1975 Golden Jubilee Lunch

November

- 13 Merton Lawyers' Association Meeting
Lady Rose of Colmworth DBE and Sir David Foxton
Venue: Sullivan & Cromwell, London EC4A 1AN
- 27 Michaelmas Drinks
Venue: The Antelope, London SW1W 8EZ

December

- 5 Christmas Carol Service
Carol Service by candlelight, sung by the Girl Choristers
& Lower Voices of Merton College
Venue: The Chapel, Merton College
- 10-19 Merton in Japan
Merton College Choir brings an Oxford Christmas to Japan, touring in cities across the country.

February

- 24 Merton College Net Zero Group Meeting
'Are policy and geopolitical headwinds hindering financial flows for the energy transition?'
Speaker: Dr Alex O'Cinneide, CEO and Founder of Gore Street Capital, Export Guarantees Advisory Council Member
Venue: TS Eliot Theatre, Merton College

March

- 21 Gaudy for the years 2015, 2016, and 2017
- 27-29 Passiontide at Merton



April

- 16 Returners' Dinner for 2025 Undergraduate Leavers
- 23 Merton Society Annual Lecture
'Dreaming Choirs – Music in Oxford in the 21st Century'
Speaker: Ben Nicholas, Reed Rubin Organist & Director of Music
Venue: Lazard, London WIU 3PZ

May

- 2 MCR Leavers' Reception
- 10 Merton Team at Bidwells UK Town and Gown 10K Run
Followed by brunch in College
- 14 Merton in Cambridge
Venue: Peterhouse, Cambridge CB2 1RD
- 17 Founder's Society Lunch
- 30 Summer Vllls Dinner

June

- 27 Merton Society AGM and Reunion Dinner
- 28 1966 Diamond Jubilee Lunch

September

- 26 Gaudy for the years 1992, 1993 and 1994



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