

BLUEPRINT

Staff magazine for the University of Oxford | July 2015



*P*RE-SESSIONAL SUPPORT | *T*HE RUSKIN REVEALED | *S*TAFF SPORTS SPECIAL



NEWS IN BRIEF

◆ Oxford's work on precision cancer medicine has received a significant boost after Cancer Research UK announced that it would give 'Major Centre' status to the Cancer Research UK Oxford Centre and an extra £5m over two years. The Oxford Centre, which is a partnership between the University, Oxford University Hospitals NHS Trust and Cancer Research UK, acts as a major research hub for a network of similar centres, drawing together expertise from different fields, encouraging collaborative research and bridging the gap between innovative laboratory work and benefits for patients.

◆ The Ashmolean has raised the money needed to acquire a major painting by J M W Turner. *The High Street, Oxford* (1810), which has been on loan to the museum from a private collection since 1997, is Turner's only full-size townscape in oils. It was offered to the nation in lieu of inheritance tax, but, as the painting is worth more than the tax liable on the estate, the museum had to raise the £860,000 difference. Over £60,000 was donated by local residents and museum visitors, helping the museum reach its fundraising target in just four weeks. The painting will remain on display in the museum's ground floor over the summer, while 12 full-size reproductions will be installed around the city.

◆ June saw the iconic Oxford dodo take to the road in an ambitious one-week tour of the UK to mark the Museum of Natural History's nomination in the Art Fund Prize for Museum of the Year 2015. Starting at Land's End and ending in John O'Groats, the dodo visited over 20 museums and galleries along the way, where it 'interviewed' objects from their collections and published the Q&As on the morethanadodo.com blog. Accompanying the dodo model were a cast of the precious head, which is the only remaining soft tissue material of a dodo in the world, and real foot bones from the same animal.

◆ Oxford's self-service bike share scheme, part-funded by the University, has recently been expanded to include docking stations at the University Science Area (Hinshelwood Road), Littlemore Mental Health Centre, Warneford Hospital and Chancellor Court. The OXONBIKE scheme now has 11 stations and 66 bikes linking the hospitals, science area and Headington shops. Bikes can be picked up and dropped off at any docking station in the network. Registration is just £1 and journeys under 30 minutes are free. For details and to register, visit www.oxonbikes.co.uk.

◆ Are you interested in taking a course at the Department for Continuing Education? Courses range from single-day events to full degree programmes, and over 60 subject areas are on offer in the humanities, social sciences, health sciences and more. You can find out more and get a taste of what's available at the department's open days on 25 and 26 September, which feature a range of free events including lectures, informational sessions, workshops and walking tours. Registration will open in August at www.conted.ox.ac.uk/openday.

◆ After 15 years in Ewert House in Summertown, Isis Innovation is moving to a new address off the Botley Road. From 3 August the University's technology commercialisation company will be based at Buxton Court, 3 West Way, Oxford OX2 0SZ. Phone numbers and email addresses will remain the same. If you are interested in talking to Isis Innovation staff about intellectual property, technology transfer, software commercialisation, academic consultancy or entrepreneurial activities more generally, you can also take advantage of their hot desks, which have been established in a number of departments and provide easy points of access to information. Details at isis-innovation.com/hotdesks.

◆ Oxford has signed up as one of ten leading universities backing the United Nations' HeForShe gender equality movement. UN Women launched HeForShe in September 2014 with the aim of mobilising a billion men and boys in support of gender equality. As a university champion, Oxford has pledged to increase the number of women in senior positions, to build on work creating a safer campus for the whole community, and to promote gender equality among its peers in the world's research-intensive universities.



FROM TOP: TURNER'S TOWNSCAPE; DODO ON TOUR; JOIN THE BIKE SHARE SCHEME



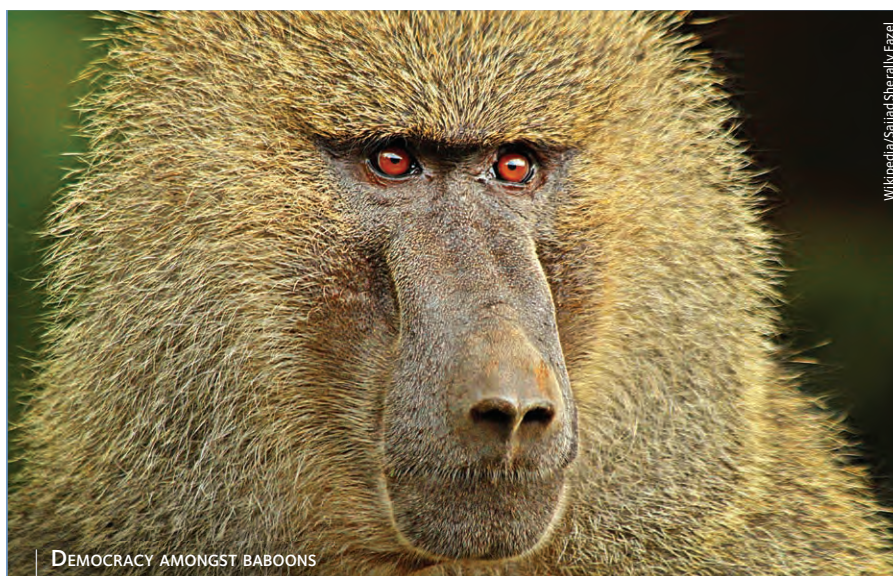
COVER: SMALL WORLD – HERTFORD COLLEGE IN LEGO®, CREATED BY ITS HOME BURSAR, DR ANDREW BEAUMONT

RESEARCH ROUND-UP

◆ Reducing the tendency of vitamin A to form toxic clumps could slow down a condition that leads to blindness in children and young adults, a University study has found. While vitamin A is usually considered good for the eyes, the study found that, in patients with Stargardt disease, it transforms into toxic compounds which cause chronic inflammation, premature ageing of the retina and vision loss. To date there is no treatment for Stargardt disease, but a team led by DPhil student Peter Charbel Issa used genetically engineered mice to look at one possible cause of the premature ageing of the retina in the disease. They used modified vitamin A, with deuterium atoms in place of hydrogen at a critical position on the molecule; this prevented clumping, thereby dramatically reducing Lipofuscin formation and inflammation, and preventing progression of Stargardt disease.

◆ Gaps in educational achievement at age 16, particularly those between white pupils and different ethnic minority groups, have decreased substantially over the last 25 years, according to a new study by Professor Steve Strand from the University's Department of Education. The report, commissioned by the UK government's Department for Education, draws on data for attainment and ethnicity between 1991 and 2013. It shows that Indian and Chinese pupils are now pulling well ahead of their white British classmates in the GCSE grades they achieve, and Bangladeshi and black African students have also improved significantly. The two lowest-achieving groups are black Caribbean and mixed white and black Caribbean students. Yet these groups are also closing the gap. In 2004 only 24% of black Caribbean pupils achieved five or more GCSE A* to C grades or their equivalent including English and Mathematics (5EM), nearly half the rate for white British students (41.6%). By 2013 they were just 7.2 percentage points behind (53.3% versus 60.5%).

◆ Researchers have found a promising future treatment for heart disease: a drug first developed in 1950. Hydroxychloroquine (HCQ) was created to combat malaria, and later found to be useful in the treatment of lupus and arthritis. Dr Rebecca Burton and a team at the Departments of Pharmacology and of Physiology, Anatomy and Genetics found that HCQ can also reduce heart rate.

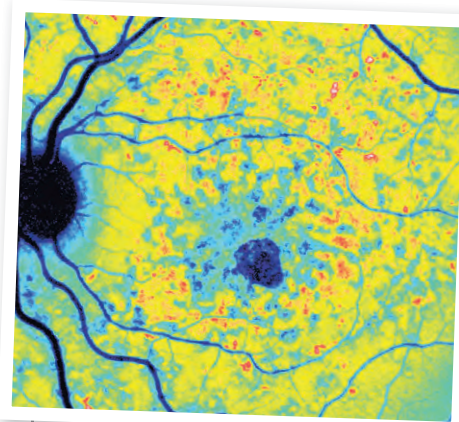


The treatment could benefit people with heart failure. The drug acts on an area of the heart called the sino-atrial node, which keeps the heart beating by producing a rhythmic electrical signal transmitted to the rest of the heart muscle. The team is working with Isis Innovation to partner with industry and complete clinical trials.

◆ Olive baboons decide where to move democratically rather than following dominant animals, new research led by Oxford and Princeton and published in *Science* has found. The first study to simultaneously GPS-track members of a group of primates discovered that baboons with higher social status did not have a greater chance of attracting followers when they pulled away from the troop. When individuals pulled in different directions, the group would compromise by taking a 'middle way' when the difference between the directions was less than 90 degrees. When the difference was greater than 90 degrees, they would choose the direction taken by the majority. Dr Damien Farine of the Department of Zoology says: 'Patterns of collective movement in baboons are remarkably similar to models that can predict the movements of fish, birds and insects, which use a simple set of rules such as "follow your neighbour".'

◆ A telephone-based system to help clinicians diagnose and treat patients with diseases that affect the voice has been developed by Dr Ladan Baghai-Ravary, an

expert in speech analysis and recognition based at the University's Phonetics laboratory. She has produced software which can analyse a brief phone questionnaire, searching for the characteristic signs of a number of conditions. The voice can be affected by a range of disorders, from Parkinson's disease and strokes to spasmodic dysphonia, a condition in which the muscles of the vocal cords move abnormally. These different disorders all change the sound of patients' speech in different ways, but it's very difficult for a listener to identify the underlying condition. 'We know people sometimes put off going to the doctor even if they have early signs of these illnesses,' says Dr Baghai-Ravary. 'With this system, they can call in and will receive some quick feedback to encourage them to make an appointment for a clinical diagnosis.'



HEATMAP REPRESENTATION OF THE RETINA OF A TEENAGE GIRL WITH STARGARDT DISEASE: RED FLECKS SHOW HYPERFLUORESCENT AREAS CAUSED BY MATERIALS SUCH AS VITAMIN A CLUMPS; THE DARK BLUE REGION IN THE CENTRE DELINEATES AN ATROPHIC AREA, INDICATIVE OF CENTRAL VISION LOSS

► For more information, visit www.ox.ac.uk/news and www.ox.ac.uk/staffnews

PEOPLE AND PRIZES



Dr Nihan Akyelken of the School of Geography and the Environment has received the International Transport Forum's 2015 Young Researcher of the Year Award for her contribution to developing

a conceptual framework for the governance of sustainable freight transport in the age of globalisation.



Philip Burrows, Professor of Accelerator Physics, has joined the Canadian Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council (NSERC) Subatomic Physics Long-Range Plan Committee.

He is one of only two overseas experts on the committee, which is charged with developing a strategic plan for the Canadian subatomic physics programme for the period 2017–26.

David Clark, Professor of Experimental Psychology, has been awarded the 2015 Lifetime Achievement Award by the American Association for Behavioral and Cognitive Therapies. This is the first time the award has gone to a researcher working outside North America.

Roger Crisp, Professor of Moral Philosophy, Uehiro Fellow and Tutor in Philosophy at St Anne's, has been awarded the British Academy 'Thank-Offering to Britain' Fellowship for 2015–16. The Fellowship is supported by the proceeds of an appeal made in the 1960s by the Association of Jewish Refugees to thank the people of the UK for their support for refugees fleeing Nazi persecution. It enables an established scholar to spend a year concentrating on research that is related to 'human studies, widely interpreted'.



Dr Allison Daley of the Department of Zoology has been awarded the 2015 Jan Bergström Young Geoscientist Award in recognition of her contributions to research, which recently

included using fossil evidence to reveal the existence of *Aegirocassis benmoulae*, a two-metre-long lobster-like animal that lived 480 million years ago.



Anke Ehlers, Professor of Experimental Psychopathology, has been awarded the 2015 Wilhelm Wundt–William James Award by the European

Federation of Psychologists' Associations (EFPA). The award was established by the EFPA and the American Psychological Foundation to recognise distinguished contributions to the science and profession of psychology and to the promotion of effective cooperation between Europe and North America.



Dr Patrick Farrell of the Mathematical Institute has, together with colleagues from the Simula Research Laboratory and Imperial College London, won the 2015 Wilkinson Prize.

The award recognises their work in developing dolfin-adjoint, a package which automatically derives and solves adjoint and tangent linear equations from high-level mathematical specifications of finite element discretisations of partial differential equations.

Alex Halliday, Head of the MPLS Division and Professor of Geochemistry, has been awarded the Oxburgh Medal by the Institute of Measurement and Control for his work in developing and using new mass spectrometry techniques to understand the processes controlling a multitude of environmental systems.

Alison Noble, Technikos Professor of Biomedical Engineering and Director of the Institute for Biomedical Engineering, has been awarded the inaugural Laura Bassi award of the International Federation for Medical and Biological Engineering. The new award recognises a senior female biomedical engineer for outstanding research contributions in the field of medical and biological engineering.



Dr Tessa Roynon of the Faculty of English has won the Toni Morrison Society Book Prize for best single-authored book for her monograph *Toni Morrison and the Classical Tradition: Transforming American Culture* (OUP, 2013).



Dr Joel Tarning, associate professor and Head of Clinical Pharmacology at the Mahidol Oxford Tropical Medicine Research Unit in Thailand, has been awarded the Giorgio Segré Prize by

the European Federation for Pharmaceutical Sciences for his scientific research work on the pharmacokinetic and pharmacodynamic properties of antimalarial drugs in vulnerable populations such as pregnant women and young children.

QUEEN'S BIRTHDAY HONOURS 2015

A number of Oxford scholars were recognised in this year's Queen's Birthday Honours.



Frances Ashcroft (left), Royal Society GlaxoSmithKline Research Professor in the Department of Physiology, Anatomy and Genetics and

Fellow of Trinity College, is appointed DBE for services to medical science and the public understanding of science. Her research focuses on ATP-sensitive potassium (KATP) channels and their role in insulin secretion, in both health and disease.



Two former heads of house were also recognised. **Frances Cairncross** (above left), who was Rector of Exeter College from 2004 until she stepped down last year, is appointed DBE for services to higher education and to economics. **Professor Steve Nickell** (above right), who served as Warden of Nuffield College from 2006 to 2012, was knighted for services to economics.

Also honoured was **Dr James Adams**, Emeritus Fellow of All Souls College, who is appointed CBE for services to Latin scholarship. Dr Adams, whose research interests lie in the linguistic history of all varieties of Latin, literary and non-literary, from about 200 BC to the early medieval period, was Senior Research Fellow at All Souls from 1998 to 2010.

VIEWFINDER COMPETITION

Think you know what and where the plenteous plant on p20 is and want to win two tickets to the Oxford Wine Festival? Email your answers to **blueprint@admin.ox.ac.uk** with the phrase 'wine competition' in the subject line by **Friday 7 August** and the first correct answer pulled out of the hat will win a pair of tickets for the session of the winner's choice.

The Oxford Wine Festival pops its corks on Friday 21 and Saturday 22 August at the Oxford Union buildings, bringing together 40 of the UK's top wine merchants, regional specialists and English vineyards for a celebration of all that is great about the grape. Visitors can sample hundreds of rare, unusual and award-winning wines, accompanied by live music, artisan food, tutored tastings and wine masterclasses from the world's leading wine authorities. For tickets and more information see **www.oxfordwinefestival.org**.



FROM LEFT: PROFESSOR SIR RICHARD EVANS, PROFESSOR DAME ANN DOWLING, PROFESSOR WALLACE BROECKER, PROFESSOR RUTH SIMMONS, DAME HILARY MANTEL, PROFESSOR SIR MAGDI YACOUB

The University conferred honorary degrees at two ceremonies this summer, at Encaenia on 24 June and during a degree ceremony on 6 June. The honorary degrees conferred at Encaenia were as follows:

DOCTOR OF LETTERS

Professor Sir Richard Evans is Regius Professor of History emeritus and President of Wolfson College, Cambridge. He is best known for his work on the modern history of Germany and his three-volume history of the Third Reich. Since 2000 he has served on the UK Spoliation Advisory Panel, adjudicating on claims from those who during the Nazi era were deprived of cultural objects now held in UK national collections.

Dame Hilary Mantel is a novelist, the author of 14 books including *A Place of Greater Safety* and *Beyond Black*. She is the first female novelist to be awarded the Man Booker Prize twice, which she won for her two most recent novels, *Wolf Hall* and *Bring Up the Bodies*, which relate the career of Thomas Cromwell, Henry VIII's most powerful minister. She is currently working on the final novel of the Cromwell trilogy, *The Mirror and the Light*.

Professor Ruth Simmons was the President of Brown University from 2001 to 2012, and continues there as Professor of Comparative Literature and Africana Studies. Under her leadership, increased financial support and resources were made available to students at Brown, facilities were improved, a commitment to shared governance was renewed, and an emphasis was placed on diversity. Before moving to Brown she was President of Smith College, the largest women's college in the United States, where she launched a number of important initiatives, including the first engineering programme at a US women's college.

DOCTOR OF SCIENCE

Professor Wallace Broecker has spent his career at Columbia University, latterly as Newberry Professor of Geology. He is also a scientist at Columbia's Lamont–Doherty Earth Observatory. His main research interest lies in

defining the ocean's role in climate change. He was a pioneer in the use of radiocarbon and uranium series dating for mapping the Earth's past climate fluctuations, and was the first to recognise the role of the Ocean Conveyor Belt, which he named. (Professor Broecker received his honorary degree this year after being unable to attend the 2014 ceremony.)

Professor Dame Ann Dowling was the University of Cambridge's first female Professor of Mechanical Engineering and the first woman to head the Department of Engineering at that institution. Her research focuses on efficient, low-emission combustion for aero and industrial gas turbines and low-noise vehicles, especially aircraft and cars. She has led major research collaborations into some of the big issues facing modern societies, such as the Energy Efficient Cities initiative and the Silent Aircraft Initiative. In 2014 she was appointed President of the Royal Academy of Engineering, the first woman to hold that post.

Professor Sir Magdi Yacoub is Professor of Cardiothoracic Surgery at the National Heart and Lung Institute, Imperial College London, and Founder and Director of Research at the Harefield Heart Science Centre (the Magdi Yacoub Institute), where he oversees over 60 scientists and students working in tissue engineering, myocardial regeneration, stem cell biology, end-stage heart failure and transplant immunology. He established the largest heart and lung transplantation programme in the world, which has seen more than 2,500 transplant operations, and has pioneered novel surgical procedures for the treatment of many complex congenital heart conditions. He is also founder and president of the Chain of Hope charity, which treats children with cardiac conditions in war-torn and developing countries and sets up training and research programmes in local cardiac units.

At a ceremony on 6 June, honorary MA degrees were conferred upon three long-serving members of staff:

Valerie Boasten began working for the University in 1983, first at the Dunn School and then for the E P Abraham Trust, a trust fund linked to the school. She retired from the trust in 2013 having given 30 years to the University's scientific administration. She is also the University's first female Bedel, having been appointed Bedel of Arts in 1998 and then becoming the University's Senior Bedel, Bedel of Divinity, in 2003. She retires as Bedel of Divinity in September 2015.

Charles Jones, who retired in May 2015 after nearly 49 years' service, is the Mechanical Engineering Technician and Student Workshop Supervisor in the Department of Chemistry. He has made a significant contribution to both research and teaching through the provision of design and fabrication services for a wide range of high-specification bespoke instrumentation and the development and delivery of a course which forms part of the Skills Training Programme offered to graduate students and postdoctoral students.

Alison Miles served initially as secretary to two Masters of Balliol (Professor Baruch Blumberg and Sir Colin Lucas), and then as Sir Colin's secretary when he became Vice-Chancellor in 1997. Since then she has been responsible for the University's ceremonial life in all its many aspects: Encaenia, together with its associated events and duties; other honorary degree ceremonies; visits by members of the Royal Family and international dignitaries; and a wide range of interactions with other institutions. She will retire as the Chancellor's executive assistant, a role she has held since 2004, in September 2015.

FROM LEFT: VALERIE BOASTEN, CHARLES JONES AND ALISON MILES



◆ **Ms Jessye Norman**, the soprano, concert and opera singer, was regrettably unable to attend Encaenia this year. It is anticipated that the honorary doctorate in music will now be conferred on her at Encaenia 2016.

MEDICAL HONOURS ANNOUNCED

Four Oxford professors are among 48 new Fellows of the Academy of Medical Sciences, elected for excellence in medical research, for innovative application of scientific knowledge or for their conspicuous service to healthcare.



Matthew Freeman, Professor of Pathology and Head of the Dunn School of Pathology, has made notable contributions to the field of biochemistry (especially regulated proteolysis), membrane trafficking, signal transduction and developmental cell biology. His research focuses on how cells communicate with each other, as well as the biological and medical consequences of this signalling between cells.



Simon Hay, Professor of Epidemiology, investigates spatial and temporal aspects of infectious disease epidemiology to provide an improved cartographic evidence base for programmes of disease control. He has led initiatives to map the global distribution of a wide variety of pathogens, including malaria, dengue,

Leishmania and Ebola, to help optimise the allocation of disease control efforts.



Ian Pavord, Professor of Respiratory Medicine, is an internationally renowned respiratory medicine researcher with a particular interest in asthma, chronic pulmonary disease and chronic cough. He has played a leading role in the emergence of three of the most promising emerging treatments for these conditions, developing new methods to assess and treat airway inflammation and airway diseases.



Irene Tracey, Nuffield Professor of Anaesthetic Science and Head of the Nuffield Division of Anaesthetics, uses advanced neuro-imaging techniques to understand how the human central nervous system processes and modulates nociceptive inputs to produce pain and analgesic experiences. She and her colleagues are also contributing to a better understanding of how the brain produces altered states of consciousness during anaesthesia.

CHEMISTS RECOGNISED

The achievements of Oxford chemists have been recognised by the Royal Society of Chemistry with 2015 awards and prizes.



Dr Robert Paton, Associate Professor of Organic Chemistry, has been awarded a Harris-Meldola Memorial Prize for his pioneering work in using computation to understand reactivity and selectivity in organic and bio-organic chemistry allowing rational design in synthesis.



Anthony Watts, Professor of Biochemistry, was awarded the 2015 Interdisciplinary Prize for pioneering new solid state NMR techniques that have revealed the functional significance of conformational dynamics in biomembrane complexes of ligands and small molecules.

Bill David, Professor of Chemistry and STFC Senior Fellow at the ISIS Facility at the Rutherford Appleton laboratory, received the John B Goodenough Award for his development of new theoretical and experimental approaches to powder diffraction and his contributions to the understanding of structure–property relationships in important solid-state materials.

Dr Philipp Kukura, Associate Professor of Physical Chemistry, received the Marlow Award for the development of ultrafast spectroscopic and ultrasensitive microscopic imaging techniques with applications in chemistry, physics and the life sciences.

Dr Mark Wallace, Associate Professor of Physical Chemistry, received the Norman Heatley award for his distinguished work in the area of artificial lipid bilayers, creating a new way of studying membrane proteins.

TOP THINKERS IDENTIFIED



Two Oxford academics are among ten 'New Generation Thinkers' chosen by BBC Radio 3 and the Arts and Humanities Research Council for their passion to communicate modern scholarship to a wider audience.

Dr Daniel Lee (left) is a British Academy Postdoctoral Fellow in the Faculty of History. His research examines the experiences of Jews in France

and in French North Africa during the Second World War. He will shortly begin a new project that explores Jewish pimping and prostitution in the Mediterranean, 1880–1940.

Dr Kylie Murray is a British Academy Postdoctoral Fellow and Junior Research Fellow in the Faculty of English Language and Literature. Her research explores pre-Reformation Scottish literature, books and culture. She has recently discovered Scotland's oldest non-biblical manuscript, dating to the 12th century, and fresh evidence which suggests that James I of Scotland was the author of Scotland's first dream-poem.

PHYSICISTS WIN PRIZES

Two Oxford physicists are to receive Institute of Physics awards this year.

Amanda Cooper-Sarkar, Professor of Particle Physics, has been awarded the Chadwick Medal for her study of deep inelastic scattering of leptons on nuclei, which have revealed the internal structure of the proton.

Chris Lintott, Professor of Astrophysics, has been awarded the Kelvin Medal for his major contributions to public engagement with science through conventional media (especially television) and by leading citizen science projects through Zooniverse, 'opening a new chapter in the history of science by enabling hundreds of thousands of people to participate in the process of scientific discovery'.

WESTON SHORTLISTED

The Weston Library has been shortlisted for the prestigious British Construction Industry Awards in the Major Building Project of the Year (over £50m) category.

The transformation of the grade II listed building (formerly the New Bodleian Library) has already generated praise from users, visitors and the media alike. Project architects Wilkinson Eyre and construction manager Mace undertook the design and build contract under the management of the Estates Services Capital Projects team. The BCI awards will be presented on 14 October.

NEW FELLOWS OF THE ROYAL SOCIETY

Eight Oxford academics are among 47 new Fellows of the Royal Society.



Sir Rory Collins, Professor of Medicine and Epidemiology, has created and led large studies that transformed statins from esoteric drugs for familial

hypercholesterolaemia into safe, widely used generics that annually prevent millions of heart attacks and ischaemic strokes. His large placebo-controlled trials and worldwide Cholesterol Treatment Trialists' meta-analyses confirmed heart attack reduction, discovered stroke reduction and demonstrated safety and efficacy in many different types of patient.



Benjamin Davis, Professor of Chemistry, is noted for his chemical interrogation and manipulation of biological systems, particularly those that hinge on carbohydrates

and proteins. He has developed selective and benign bond-forming strategies that have been applied to biology, allowing the construction of synthetic biomolecules and bioconjugates, the creation of synthetic cells and viruses and *in vivo* chemistry.



Alison Etheridge, Professor of Probability, has made significant contributions in the theory and applications of probability and in the links between them. Her particular

areas of research have been in measure-valued processes (especially superprocesses and their generalisations), in theoretical population genetics and in mathematical ecology. Recently she has created a flexible framework for modelling biological populations which, for the first time, combines ecology and genetics in a tractable way, while introducing a novel and

mathematically interesting class of stochastic processes.



Jane Langdale, Professor of Plant Development, has transformed our understanding of how plants make leaves and how leaves change during major evolutionary transitions.

Her research has led to the elucidation of mechanisms operating throughout leaf development – from the earliest stages of organ inception and specification at the shoot apex, through patterning of distinct cell-types, to chloroplast biogenesis – not just in model flowering plant species but in species from all major land plant lineages.



Philip Maini, Professor of Mathematical Biology, is renowned for his mathematical and computational modelling of spatiotemporal processes in biology

and medicine, which has led to significant scientific advances in both. He has, for instance, developed multiscale models for wound healing and for vascular tumour growth, and thereby elucidated the underlying mechanisms by which particular growth factors reduce scar formation and provided detailed insight into the design of combination cancer therapy.



Gero Miesenböck, Waynflete Professor of Physiology and Director of the Centre for Neural Circuits and Behaviour, has pioneered the science of optogenetics. He

established the principles of optogenetic control in 2002, using rhodopsin to activate normally light-insensitive neurons, and was the first to use optogenetics to control behaviour. He has exploited optogenetics in a succession of experiments illuminating synaptic connectivity, the neural basis of

reward, mechanisms of sleep homeostasis and the control of sexually dimorphic circuitry.



Dr Jonathan Pila, Reader in Mathematical Logic, has pioneered the study of the distribution of rational points on sets defined by real analytic conditions,

leading (with collaborators) to a powerful general theorem in the setting of o-minimal structures, a part of model theory. This theorem has found significant applications to central problems in Diophantine geometry and has opened up a rich new connection between Diophantine geometry and mathematical logic.



Henry Snaith, Professor of Physics, has pioneered the development of hybrid materials for energy and photovoltaics through an interdisciplinary

combination of materials synthesis, device development, advanced optoelectronic characterisations and theoretical studies. His recent discovery of extremely efficient thin-film solar cells manufactured from organic-inorganic metal halide perovskites has reset aspirations within the photovoltaics community and holds out the prospect of delivering a higher efficiency photovoltaic technology at a much lower cost than existing silicon PV.

◆ **Jeremy Farrar**, Professor of Tropical Medicine and Global Health at the University of Oxford until 1 October 2013, when he became Director of the Wellcome Trust, was also elected FRS for his outstanding contributions to our understanding of the epidemiology, pathogenesis and treatment of several globally important infectious diseases, especially those affecting South East Asia, including tuberculosis, dengue and influenza.

ESRC RECOGNISES OUTSTANDING IMPACT

The Economic and Social Research Council has awarded two prizes to Oxford researchers in recognition of the impact of their work.

Dr Jane Dyson of the School of Geography and the Environment has received the ESRC Outstanding International Impact prize following the making of her film *Lifelines*, based on her research with north Indian youth (see *Blueprint* Nov 2014, p7). The ESRC said her documentary on the challenges facing



young people in the Indian Himalayas has become an important educational tool, countering negative stereotypes and informing society about a poorly understood section of the world's population. The film has reached schoolchildren, students and policymakers worldwide and has been viewed

over 14,000 times in 126 countries.

Dr Oliver Owen, a Research Fellow in the Oxford Department of International Development, was awarded second prize for Outstanding Early Career Impact in the ESRC Celebrating Impact Prize 2015. The ESRC said his five-year fieldwork study within the Nigerian Police Force is providing unique research evidence for reforms aimed at improving police performance, effectiveness and accountability.

L'ORÉAL PROFESSOR OF MARKETING



Andrew T Stephen, Assistant Professor of Business Administration and Katz Fellow in Marketing at the Katz Graduate School of Business, University of Pittsburgh, took up this

post in the Saïd Business School on 1 June. He also became a Fellow of Worcester College.

Professor Stephen's research investigates how companies should use new technology platforms, particularly social media, as part of their marketing strategies. How, for instance, does using social media psychologically impact consumers, how can online networks impact profitability in e-commerce markets, and how can crowdsourcing product ideas from customers be improved? He has won many awards and in 2015 was ranked as one of the top 20 most productive marketing academic researchers in the world by the American Marketing Association.

HALLEY PROFESSOR OF PHYSICS



Raymond Pierrehumbert, Louis Block Professor and Professor in the Geophysical Sciences, University of Chicago, took up this post in the Sub-department of

Atmospheric, Oceanic and Planetary Physics within the Department of Physics on 1 July. He also became a Fellow of Jesus College.

Professor Pierrehumbert's work deals with the unifying physical principles that govern the climates of all planets. With a hierarchy of modelling approaches ranging from idealised to complex, he has applied these principles to present and past climates of the Earth, to

other Solar System bodies, and to the newly discovered extrasolar planets. His research blurs the borders between astrophysics, geology and climate dynamics, dealing with such questions as where atmospheres come from, where they go to, and how such processes are affected by the kind of star the planet orbits. His work also engages policy-relevant science pertinent to the present era of human-induced global climate change.

PROFESSOR OF ECONOMIC HISTORY



Stephen Broadberry, Professor of Economic History at the London School of Economics and Political Science, will take up this post in the Department of Economics on

1 September. He will also become a Fellow of Nuffield College.

Professor Broadberry's research interests include global economic history, very long-run economic growth, and international comparisons of growth and productivity performance since 1870. He has compared Britain, for instance, with India, Japan, China, the US and Germany, and has led a project to reconstruct the national income of Britain and Holland, 1270–1870.

REGIUS PROFESSOR OF CIVIL LAW



Wolfgang Ernst, Full Professor of Roman and Civil Law at Zurich University, has been appointed to this post in the Faculty of Law, with the approval of Her Majesty the Queen,

with effect from 1 October. He will be a Fellow of All Souls College.

Professor Ernst is an internationally renowned expert in the field of Roman Law and its impact on medieval and modern legal doctrines. He serves as an elected expert for the German National Endowment for the Humanities and as President of the Research Council of the Austrian Academy of Sciences. His research interests include the legal history of money and of social choice.

TASSO LEVENTIS PROFESSOR OF BIODIVERSITY

Eleanor ('EJ') Milner-Gulland, Professor in Conservation Science and Director, Grand Challenges in Ecosystems and the Environment, Imperial College London, will take up this post in the Department of Zoology on 1 October. She will be a Fellow of Merton College.



NEXT VICE-CHANCELLOR APPOINTED

Professor Louise Richardson, currently Principal and Vice-Chancellor of the University of St Andrews, will be the next Vice-Chancellor of the University of Oxford. She will take up the post on 1 January 2016.

Professor Richardson has led St Andrews for more than six years, combining strong institutional advancement with a distinguished academic career; she was previously Executive Dean of the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study at Harvard University.

She is an internationally renowned scholar of terrorism and security studies, on which she has advised policymakers and others internationally. Whilst at Harvard she received several honours for the quality of her teaching, including the Joseph R Levenson Memorial Teaching Prize, bestowed by Harvard's undergraduate body in recognition of exceptional teaching.

Born in the Republic of Ireland, she holds a BA in History from Trinity College Dublin, an MA in Political Science from the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), and an MA and PhD in Government from Harvard University.

PROFESSOR OF POETRY



Simon Armitage has been elected as the University's 45th Professor of Poetry, in succession to Sir Geoffrey Hill. He will

hold office for four years from the first day of Michaelmas term 2015 and his duties will include giving a public lecture each term and delivering the Creweian Oration at Encaenia every other year.



Professor Milner-Gulland's research interests centre on engaging local people in developing countries in the conservation of their wildlife and in conserving species which are threatened

by poaching. She has a special interest in the critically endangered saiga antelope from Central Asia, which is threatened by poaching for meat and for traditional Chinese medicines.

A TRANSATLANTIC LIFE

Contextualising literature is one of her passions, Michèle Mendelssohn tells *Stuart Gillespie*

She grew up in French-speaking Canada, studied in Germany, England, Italy and the United States, and has variously taught in the US and Scotland, so it is no surprise that Dr Michèle Mendelssohn's work has a distinctly transatlantic feel. Currently a member of the Faculty of English, from October 2015 Michèle will join the Rothermere American Institute as its Deputy Director. 'The RAI is already a dynamic place and I'm looking forward to building on its reputation as a centre of excellence for research and teaching, as well as developing its public engagement programmes,' she says. 'I'm hoping to encourage a wider cross-section of University members to join the institute's conversations about history, politics and literature.'

As well as lecturing in the Faculty of English, Michèle is part of a team of three teaching English at Mansfield College. She has always been interested in the 'connectedness' of things. Her first book, *Henry James, Oscar Wilde and Aesthetic Culture*, looked at aestheticism as a transatlantic dialogue, focusing on the cultural exchanges that shaped both the movement itself and the work of these two ostensible rivals.

'As a teenager, I wanted to be an orthopaedic surgeon,' says Michèle. 'But then I started reading voraciously – Margaret Atwood, Mordechai Richler, Camus, Baudelaire, Goethe, Henry James, Thomas Mann. Literature spoke to me. It explained the world in a way that resonated with me. It got at something meaningful and, to me, substantial. I then wanted to see how the books I loved were connected to everything else, which is why I chose to do a liberal arts degree as an undergraduate.'

She adds: 'An interest in making connections is something that I look for when I'm interviewing prospective students today – even if it's simply what they've read around, say, *Death of a Salesman*. I'm curious about where a book has taken them. You can read a Victorian novel in isolation, but I think it's much more rewarding to look at books in their wider contexts.'

'I've always been interested in what is happening at the margins'

Michèle has several books under way, including a biography of the Irish playwright Oscar Wilde and his transformative voyage to the United States. She is collaborating on two more books that contextualise literature from the 19th century to today. Along with her colleagues Professor Laura Marcus and Dr Kirsten Shepherd-Barr, she is co-editing a 40-chapter volume on cutting-edge approaches to late-Victorian and Modernist British literature. She is also co-editing a book on the Oxford alumnus and Booker Prize-winner Alan Hollinghurst. Both books are due out in 2016. 'My research on Hollinghurst grew organically from my other projects on decadence, queer history and aesthetics – Hollinghurst is also invested in these traditions,' she explains.

'I've always been interested in what is happening at the margins and on the peripheries,' she adds. Since coming to Oxford six years ago, Michèle has helped broaden the diversity of the authors represented on the English curriculum by organising Faculty lecture circuses on 'blackness' in 19th- and 20th-century literature, and discussing representations of racial and ethnic otherness in her popular 'Adventures in 19th-Century Literature and Culture' lecture series.

'I find cultural and literary borders and intersections fascinating. Perhaps that perspective comes from growing up in a multilingual, multifaith family in Montréal, a very diverse, multicultural city,' she reflects. 'The literary theorist Terry Eagleton once described Oxford as a margin that thinks of itself as a centre. I also think Oxford is a margin – but a good margin and one I'm glad to be a part of.'

A STUDY
OF RIVALS:
MICHÈLE'S
FIRST BOOK



More at www.english.ox.ac.uk/about-faculty/faculty-members/20th-21st-century/mendelssohn-dr-michele



Spratley Studios

AN INTIMATE SCHOOL OF ART

Julia Paolitto explores the close-knit yet dynamic world of the Ruskin

The Ruskin School of Art has a very exciting year ahead. In October it will open a brand new, state-of-the-art fine art practice space while welcoming the first students onto its MFA (Master of Fine Art) course.

Much of how the teaching and production of fine art at Oxford is undertaken in practice is still a relative mystery to many members of the University outside the Ruskin. In one sense this isn't surprising – although the school was founded in 1872 by art critic John Ruskin and the first Bachelor of Fine Art courses started in 1978, it was only in 1992 that the BFA became a full honours degree. And while undergraduates on other courses spend their terms cycling through weekly reading and essays for tutorials, Ruskin students are more likely to be in a studio experimenting and discussing works in progress.

Amy Thellusson, who has just finished her BFA, says the close-knit nature of the department and the spread-out space and pace of work there creates a special experience that might be different to that of students in other subjects. 'The way of working here is incredibly liberating,' she says, 'which suits the nature of the work perfectly. It would be hard

to think innovatively and produce anything truly worthwhile by the end of the year if our workflow was constantly stopped and started by weekly deadlines.'

Ruskin students, like the school itself, are firmly connected to the art world and its distinct culture, but gain additional benefits as members of collegiate Oxford. Hanneke Grootenboer is Professor in the History of Art and took over as Head of the Ruskin in 2014. She says the school is exceptional for being a world-leading institution that is also 'an intimate art school: with an intake of 30 undergraduates and, with the new MFA, up to 20 postgraduates each year, we are a very dynamic, close-knit group.' But intimate doesn't have to mean insular – Grootenboer says a fundamental part of the school's strategy is to ensure it gains maximum advantage from its role as part of a large collegiate and research-

intensive university and its close access to collections such as the Ashmolean, Pitt Rivers and Natural History Museums.

In part this is a function of the school's history – particularly the role of its founding head, John Ruskin, whose influence at Oxford and beyond is still visible. Well before becoming Oxford's first Slade Professor of Fine Art in 1869, Ruskin had already been active in the establishment and design of the Oxford University Museum of Natural History in the 1850s. His teaching collection of more than 1,200 watercolours, drawings and prints is now part of the Ashmolean's collections and is still used by art students and researchers. And the school's continuing close relationship with the Department of Physiology, Anatomy and Genetics in the teaching of human anatomy is in no small part due to Ruskin's close personal relationship with Henry Acland,

Between 1990 and 2000 the Ruskin developed one of the first university websites, embraced the teaching of new technologies and more or less invented the interdisciplinary research model used in most UK art departments today



ruskin degree show
2015

who played a leading role in introducing the study of natural science into the University.

In the nearly 150 years since Ruskin established his School of Drawing in the University Galleries, his school has undergone a significant evolution – particularly in the last 25 years. Stephen Farthing, who became the Ruskin Master of Drawing in 1990, recalls writing to the author John Updike, one of the school's most distinguished alumni, asking if he would consider giving a public lecture in Oxford. 'He replied with a very gracious "no",' Farthing recalls, 'then closed his hand-written letter by telling me that he remembered the school fondly as "a charming little backwater".' Both Farthing and Ruskin Senior Research Fellow Paul Bonaventura agree that was probably an accurate description at the time, but all would change rapidly under Farthing's direction, which Bonaventura credits with transforming the Ruskin into 'one of Britain's most dynamic art schools'. Between 1990 and 2000 the Ruskin developed one of the first university websites, embraced the teaching of new technologies such as digital film-making, animation and web-based programmes that many fine art teachers had little experience with, and more or less invented the interdisciplinary research model used in most UK art departments today.

Spurred on by this period of accelerated

development, the Ruskin has firmly established its place at the forefront of practice, theory and teaching. Its undergraduate course has been consistently ranked top in the country by university subject league tables, and it doesn't hurt to have staff like the Turner Prize-winner Elizabeth Price (university lecturer and Ruskin BFA 1985–8), best-selling author and performance artist Brian Catlin and Max Mara winner Corin Sworn, as well as alumni like the youngest-ever RA member Conrad Shawcross and Saatchi New Sensations Award-winners Jack Stanton (BFA 2010–13) and Oliver Beer (BFA 2006–9).

While the Ruskin has arguably always benefited from being able to attract exceptional people, it now has the ability and networks to collaborate not just with other departments within Oxford but with galleries, museums and other art schools around the world.

When it opens in October, the redeveloped facilities on Bullingdon Road in East Oxford

FAR LEFT: ARTIST'S IMPRESSION OF THE NEW BULLINGDON ROAD BUILDING. ABOVE: WORK FROM THE 2015 DEGREE SHOW BY TOP ROW, FROM LEFT: NOELLE TURNER-BRIDGER, JULIA SKLAR, AILIS BRENNAN, ARIEH FROSH, SONIA BERNAC, AMY WILSON; BOTTOM ROW, FROM LEFT: EMMA D'ARCY, MADDY BOGACKI, JOE MACKAY, ZOË DUNN, MATEO REVILLO IMBERNÓN, LOUISA SIEM

will see a significantly expanded and public-facing site encompassing multimedia and studio space for students, and a public-facing project space that will allow passers-by to look in. 'We are all really excited that our new building represents the future direction of Ruskin that focuses on robust discussion and rigorous practice,' says Grootenboer. 'We are expanding not just in size but in depth and width. Our goal is to maintain our excellence in teaching and remain at the forefront of artistic research. With our current staff, new building and outstanding students, that won't be difficult.'

The Ruskin homepage is at www.rsa.ox.ac.uk. John Ruskin's teaching collection, The Elements of Drawing, which includes a series of lectures by Stephen Farthing is at <http://ruskin.ashmolean.org> and <http://ruskin.ashmolean.org/education/8989/9033>

HIT THE GROUND RUNNING

The Language Centre's pre-sessional English courses help overseas students make the most of their time at Oxford, discovers *Sally Croft*

In a typical year Oxford recruits around 4,500 new students on to postgraduate courses. Many of them arrive from overseas and, while the offer of a place generally requires a high standard of English as well as academic excellence in their chosen subject, plunging into British culture and communicating in specialised English academic language can, for the students, be a daunting prospect.

To boost confidence and improve fluency, the University Language Centre offers pre-sessional English courses each summer. These small-group intensive one- or two-month courses are primarily intended to give students the confidence to take part in seminars and other academic activities, feel relaxed enough to talk to their supervisors and generally take part in college life.

'Students coming to study at Oxford are much better equipped to meet the demands of their academic life and integrate into the social life of the University if they do a pre-sessional course,' says Robert Vanderplank, Director of the Language Centre. 'It helps them hit the ground running; taught masters' courses, for instance, often start at such a pace that an international student can quickly feel out of his or her depth. If they do our course, they're usually ready for it and eager to go.'

The course is designed to help students develop their skills in understanding lectures, taking notes from lectures and written texts, reading academic texts effectively, writing academic assignments and giving presentations, as well as participating in discussions and social situations. 'It's definitely not a catch-up course,' stresses Deborah Mason, Assistant Director of the Language Centre, who runs the pre-sessional courses. 'Most Oxford postgrad courses require students to have a score of 7.0 or 7.5 in IELTS (an international test of English) and students will generally have reached the score they need or be very close to it. We don't formally examine them at the end of the course, but all of our classes and activities are designed to improve their performance in English.'

On arrival, students are given placement tests – a language proficiency test, a listening test, a reading/writing test and a speaking test – to help staff assess their strengths and weaknesses. As the course progresses, tutors provide feedback and extra help as needed. Expectations are high, says Deborah: 'The students are usually high-fliers in their own

universities and expect excellent teachers and our full support. Everybody wants to be in a class with people better than them so they are stretched, not coasting.'

Course tutors come from a variety of subject backgrounds and are all very experienced teachers of English as a foreign language. Students are encouraged to study the English terminology used in their own specialist fields and are taught about referencing and citation methods. Writing an essay or giving a presentation to fellow students about a topic within their own field is a valuable exercise, says Deborah. 'The students are a delight to teach,' adds course tutor Peter Saunders. 'They are excited by the prospect of studying at such a prestigious university and, for many, it is the first time they have experienced life outside their home country.'

Last summer 54 students attended the one- and two-month courses, with home countries as diverse as China, Japan, South Korea, Thailand, Armenia, Brazil, Uzbekistan and Tibet, as well as within Europe. Classes are taught on four days a week and there are extra sessions which last year included guest speakers, a scavenger hunt to familiarise students with locations around Oxford, a role play which involved making a radio programme and a simulation set in an imaginary country, culminating in a debate.

'Everybody wants to be in a class with people better than them so they are stretched, not coasting'

On Wednesdays there are trips to introduce students to British culture. As well as walking tours of Oxford and the joys of punting, students last summer visited Avebury, Salisbury Cathedral, the White Horse at Uffington and a variety of stately homes – where they were encouraged to ask the guides questions. 'We also encouraged students to meet outside the course via their own Facebook page and we tweeted information such as an "Idiom of the Day" from our Twitter account to broaden their vocabulary further,' says Deborah. Many students make



TOP: OVERSEAS STUDENTS OFTEN MAKE LIFELONG FRIENDS ON THE COURSE; BOTTOM: 'SCAVENGING' STUDENTS PHOTOGRAPH THEMSELVES IN OXFORD LOCATIONS THEY HAD BEEN GIVEN CLUES TO DISCOVER

friends for life during the course.

'We recommend these courses to many of our students who narrowly miss out on the University's minimum language requirements,' says Julie Sheppard, Graduate Studies Administrator in the Department of Computer Science. 'They are excellent and give students a good head start – we feel they gain more from attending than by retaking the language test in their own country.' Marion Beckett, Graduate Studies Secretary in the Department of Materials, agrees: 'We're very pleased with the training and support our students receive from the excellent team at the Language Centre. Our students have commented both on the high quality of the teaching and on the value of the pre-sessional course as a transition period to overcome culture shock.'

Praise from the students themselves is also high. 'I learnt a lot of academic words and phrases, and I think my speaking ability improved,' says Chuhong Lon, studying Chemistry. 'My listening improved and I feel more confident in writing,' adds Law student Elise Romelly. Parichart Riewasathiratorn, taking an MBA, is also enthusiastic: 'It's a lovely writing course, especially the paraphrasing and sentence types section. This is the best writing class I have ever had.'

► Further information at www.lang.ox.ac.uk/courses/english-pre-ses.html

WHAT'S ON

EXHIBITIONS

Biosense

Until 24 August 2015

Oxford University Museum of Natural History

www.oum.ox.ac.uk/visiting/current.htm

A celebration of the University's multidisciplinary research into organisms and the natural environment.

An Elegant Society: Adam Buck, artist in the age of Jane Austen

Until 4 October 2015

Ashmolean Museum

Tickets £5/£4

www.ashmolean.org/exhibitions/elegantsociety

Exhibition of the work of Regency painter Adam Buck, providing a fascinating insight into the faces and fashions of the period.

Architecture for All: The Photography of Paul Oliver

Until 11 October 2015

Pitt Rivers Museum

www.prm.ox.ac.uk/exhibitions.html

Exhibition showcasing the work of Paul Oliver, the pioneer of vernacular architecture studies.

LECTURES AND TALKS

Schubert's last sonatas

Tuesday 28 July, 11.15am

Sheldonian Theatre

Tickets £25/£20/£15/£10

www.oxfordphil.com

Pianist Alfred Brendel discusses Schubert's last three piano sonatas. Part of the Oxford Philomusica Piano Festival.

CONCERTS

Menahem Pressler and Oxford Philomusica

Sunday 2 August, 8pm

Sheldonian Theatre

Tickets: £42/£30/£20/£10

www.oxfordphil.com

Distinguished musician Menahem Pressler performs Mozart's *Piano Concerto No 27 in B flat major* and Beethoven's '*Pastoral*' *Symphony*.

CONFERENCES

UAS Conference

Wednesday 23 September

Andrew Wiles Building, Radcliffe

Observatory Quarter

www.admin.ox.ac.uk/uasconference



ABOVE: *FIRST STEPS* (1808) BY ADAM BUCK; BELOW: *ALICE CONSIDERS HER OPTIONS*

An information and training event for University and college staff who are involved with or interested in administrative activities. Registration opens 1 September.

DRAMA

Much Ado About Nothing

Until 2 August

Old Schools Quadrangle, Bodleian Library

Tickets £22.50/£20.50

www.oxfordplayhouse.com

The Globe Theatre on Tour performs Shakespeare's comedy in the stunning outdoor setting of the Old Schools Quadrangle.

Alice

18 August–13 September

St Hugh's College

Tickets £20/£16

www.creationtheatre.co.uk

To mark the 150th anniversary of the publication of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, Creation Theatre will perform *Alice* in the gardens of St Hugh's.

FAMILY FRIENDLY

Afternoon Explorers: Leather

Monday 3 August, 1–4pm

Pitt Rivers Museum

www.prm.ox.ac.uk/events.html

Free drop-in session for children of all ages to learn about leatherwork and make their own leather case to take home.

Summer time travels: Anglo-Saxon kingdoms

12–13 August, 1–4 pm

Ashmolean Museum

www.oum.ox.ac.uk/visiting/

[OUMSFamilyFriendlyLeaflet.pdf](#)

Travel to ancient Britain at this free drop-in event. Find out how the Anglo-Saxons lived. Craft activities and object handling.

Ocean commotion

Thursday 17 September, 10.30am–12.30pm and 2–4pm

Oxford University Museum of Natural History

www.oum.ox.ac.uk/visiting/

[OUMSFamilyFriendlyLeaflet.pdf](#)

Free drop-in session for the under-5s. Step into an underwater world and touch real ocean objects. Make a marine scene to take home.

SPECIAL EVENTS

Guided bat walk

Thursday 30 July, 8.30pm–10pm

Harcourt Arboretum, Nuneham Courtenay

Tickets £15

www.harcourt-arboretum.ox.ac.uk

Join Karl Lofthouse for an evening guided walk through the arboretum, passing trees with known bat roosts.

Oxford Open Doors

12–13 September

www.oxfordopendoors.org.uk

One of the country's largest heritage events: explore venues across Oxford free of charge, from college gardens to University buildings.





FROM THE SUBLIME TO THE SOCIAL

*Matt Pickles meets the
University's sporty staff*

RIGHT: THE OXFORD ACADEMICALS DRAW THEIR TEAM
FROM MORE THAN 20 STAFF FROM DIVERSE DEPARTMENTS;
LEFT: THE ACADEMICALS IN ACTION

Ask someone what they associate with sport at Oxford University and they are likely to mention the Boat Race or Sir Roger Bannister's record-breaking run in 1954. But many staff in the University have sporting talents of their own.

'University staff are very involved in sport at Oxford, although we encourage more to become so,' says Jon Roycroft, the University's Director of Sport. 'There are staff members of many of the University's 84 sports clubs, although representation in the Blues teams is clearly restricted to students. I regularly see staff in the pool, gym and other facilities at Iffley Road and at the University Club on Mansfield Road.'

The University Club is the home of staff sport at Oxford. It has a large sports field, which is used for cricket, football and archery, and a floodlit artificial turf five-a-side pitch which can be hired by University members. It also has a well-stocked bar, where staff, students and academics conduct their post-match analyses.

Mansfield Road Football Club is affiliated to the University Club and runs three men's and two women's 11-a-side teams, as well as junior teams which are open to children of University employees and graduate students. The standard of football can be high. Indeed, the women's first team currently plays in the Southern Region Women's Football Premier League Division.

The five-a-side staff groups using the artificial turf pitch take a more social approach to their football. Spartak Botley FC is a group of staff and students from Physics, Plant Sciences and the University Offices that meets once a week for an hour's game. The game is organised by Dr Tomi Johnson, a theoretical physicist who has played as a striker every week for the last year and is still yet to score a goal. 'I always make sure to buy the first round after the match so my team mates will let me try again next week,' he says. 'When the goal finally comes, I am sure I will feel better than Goetze did when he scored the winner at the last World Cup.'



Oxford Academicals is a mixed group of five-a-side footballers, which plays every Monday evening after work. The Academicals began in 2007 as a group of staff from the Pitt Rivers Museum, but the group has widened to include more than 20 academic, administrative and support staff from departments including Philosophy, Psychiatry, Sociology, Politics and International Relations, Psychology, Latin American Studies, Queen Elizabeth House and the Oxford Internet Institute.

'I always make sure to buy the first round after the match so my team mates will let me try again next week'

'It is a great thing to do after a day of work,' says Dr Chris Morton, a curator at the Pitt Rivers Museum. 'You get to know people in other departments who you would not otherwise meet. It brings students and staff in a wide variety of different roles at the University together to play a team sport.'

Cricket is also a popular sport for staff, with the Bodleian Libraries and the University Offices entering teams into the inter-departmental Jack Cox tournament every summer.

Ruth Connor, a Divisional Finance Manager in University Administration and Services, has taken up cricket this year and plays for the University Offices. 'My team are a great bunch of people who are really supportive of all abilities in the cricket team,' she says. Ruth had a successful start to her cricketing career last month. 'Despite being only my first season of cricket, I was picked

to play in the first game of the season against Zoology and Plant Sciences, which we won,' she says.

The Bodleian Libraries' cricket team go on a tour every year. Last year they played in the West Country and this month they are visiting Winchester. Their team spirit is shared with all staff at the library thanks to some entertaining match reports in the Bodleian's internal newsletter, *Outline*.

Members of staff are involved in almost all sports in Oxford, often training alongside students in the University sports teams. They take part in archery, tennis, table tennis, netball, triathlon, hockey and boxing – to name but a few on a long list. Unsurprisingly for such an international body of staff, some people also play ice hockey (see www.oxfordicehockey.com), ultimate frisbee and American football. It is a wonder that anyone gets any work done.



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For details of a range of sports activities, see the University Club pages at www.club.ox.ac.uk. If you would like to play with the Oxford Academicals, contact *Blueprint* on blueprint@admin.ox.ac.uk and we'll pass your details to the team organisers

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WHY AM I HERE?

JOHN MAY

Gardener with the University Parks Team, Estates Services

What does your job involve?

Maintaining the gardens and grounds around the whole of the University, and for the Parks' private customers such as colleges and local businesses. That entails high-quality turf maintenance including cylinder mowing, scarifying and over-seeding. I mow about three and a half miles a day in the growing season and it's been estimated that during my career I must have mown the equivalent of at least once round the Equator (29,901 miles)!

How long have you been doing it?

On 8 July I celebrated my 47th anniversary working as a gardener with the Parks team, which I suppose makes me one of the University's longest-serving members of support staff.

What's changed?

The staffing levels have certainly changed: there were 11 of us when I started and I took home a weekly wage of £10 10s (£10.50), paid in cash in an envelope. Nowadays we have 35 members of staff. The University has grown, and we now have several private customers – we regularly look after more than 200 sites. There's also been a big change in working practices. There is much more health and safety awareness, and we now use powered machinery for a lot of our work. I used to clear up leaves with a wooden rake, now I use a powered blower and vacuum.

Another huge change was the total devastation caused by Dutch Elm Disease in the late 1960s and 1970s. We lost over 100 trees, some dating back to the civil war. Up until then, we'd had one of the finest elm collections in the country.

Nowadays we host many events in the Parks, including Race for Life, the Muscular Dystrophy 10k (Town & Gown) run and Gifford's Circus. We're currently also hosting the English Repertory Theatre's productions of *Hamlet* and *Blithe Spirit* for three weeks, until 1 August.

Your favourite place?

I like the whole of the Parks, but particularly the pond area, and the area near North Lodge. The pond area is

beautiful in the autumn when all the leaves are changing colour and it's a real magnet for wildlife, particularly birds and amphibians. I also love the seasonal displays of colour and the Wellingtonia trees, near North Lodge. Those trees were planted around 1880 and are the oldest surviving plantings in the Parks.

Was being a gardener your childhood ambition?

I always thought I would work for the railways, and I still enjoy visiting railway centres.

So how do you come to be doing this?

Just before I left school I had an interview for a post as groundsman for the University Parks sports facilities. I didn't get the post, so I went to Worcester College for an interview – I didn't get that one either! I persisted and secured a post at Lincoln College sports ground. I was there for two and a half years but once I was 18 I was told to look for a new job, as they only wanted school leavers – they would have had to pay more for adult staff! This time I managed to get a post at the Parks, but on the Gardening Team.

What do you most enjoy/dislike about your job?

I like all aspects of my job and I don't really dislike any of it. I'm not so keen when it snows, though – having to make my way to work through the snow, only to spend my day clearing snow so others can get into work! Having said that, we do get some fantastic snow sculptures in the Parks: igloos, sharks and of course lots of snowmen – one year someone created a fantastic lifelike snowman sitting on one of our benches, complete with a real cigar.

Any embarrassing moments?

In 1983, on my way back from one of our sites in the Parks electric vehicle, which has a top speed of 12mph (downhill, with the wind behind it), I discovered I was holding up a royal car containing the Queen, much to the consternation of her police escort.



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VIEWFINDER

WHAT AND WHERE IS THIS PLENTIFUL PLANT, AND HOW CAN YOU WIN TICKETS TO THE OXFORD WINE FESTIVAL? SEE P4.

