NEWS IN BRIEF

◆ The Bodleian’s rich collections of digitised books, manuscripts, maps, art and other materials can now be explored through a single website, digital.bodleian.ox.ac.uk. The online portal contains more than 100,000 digitised items and images, ranging from Victorian playbills and board games to the medieval Gough Map, which is believed to be the earliest map of the UK. The publicly accessible site, which brings together the Bodleian’s digital collections under a single interface, allows users to download images for non-commercial use, share images on social media and make private notes and annotations.

◆ A University spin-out developing new ways of controlling disease-carrying insects and pests is to be sold to a major US corporation for $160m. In a deal worth £9m to the University, Intrexon Corporation has agreed to acquire Oxitec, which was founded in 2002 by two Zoology researchers, Luke Alphey and David Kelly. The company uses a genetic modification technique they invented to design strains of insects which are incapable of reproducing effectively. The technology has implications for the control of disease-carrying mosquitoes.

◆ The Oxford Graduate Scholarship Matched Fund has been extended by a further £20m. Launched in 2012 to build an endowment that will fully fund over 165 graduate students at any one time for the expected duration of their courses, the fund now supports over 120 new scholarships each year. Including top-ups in July 2014 and February 2015, this new release of matched funding will double the initial allocation of funds, producing a total endowment of £200m for graduate scholarships.

◆ The Environmental Change Institute has launched a training programme for graduate students to improve understanding of the food system, which have resulted in about one billion people being hungry, two billion lacking sufficient nutrients, and over two billion being overweight or obese.

◆ A new set of University security policies has been approved by Council. Available at www.admin.ox.ac.uk/ouss, the policies set out how different aspects of security will be managed across the University and provide guidance on how the University aims to ensure the security of its staff and students, its estate and information. The Security Services website also provides advice on keeping yourself and your belongings safe, as well as information on building security plans and emergency action plans.

◆ Do you have any ideas about innovative ways in which the University can reduce its carbon footprint? If so, take part in the Carbon Innovation Programme, which is being run by the Environmental Sustainability team in conjunction with academic departments including the Environmental Change Institute and New Energy Systems Thinkers. The programme is designed to support staff and students in producing a business case for a carbon reduction project. A judging panel will review the proposals and funding will be allocated to the best projects for implementation. Email sustainability@admin.ox.ac.uk for details.

◆ Did you know that you can save tax and national insurance on your childcare costs by using the workplace salary-sacrifice scheme or childcare vouchers? The salary-sacrifice scheme is for those who use University nurseries, while childcare vouchers can be used towards fees for private nurseries, childminders, nannies, holiday play schemes and breakfast and after-school clubs. Information about both schemes, together with an overview of the new tax-free childcare scheme that is being introduced in 2017, is available at www.admin.ox.ac.uk/childcare.

◆ Getting help and support for IT has become easier with the advent of a single phone number for the central IT Service Desk. Simply call 12345 (01865 612345 from an external line) for any queries relating to central IT support. Existing methods of contact for specialist IT support teams will continue to operate. These include DARS, Financials, Student Systems, HRIS, NSMS and ITS3. Central IT support will continue to be provided in partnership with departmental or college IT support staff.
Large crystals of graphene can now be produced in minutes, not hours, using a new technique developed in the Department of Materials. The carbon-based material is attractive because of its high strength, impressive flexibility and low weight – but it is currently difficult to produce in large quantities at low cost. The new method, developed in Professor Nicole Grobert’s laboratory, uses a layer of liquid platinum silicide to smooth the surface of platinum foil. When methane gas touches that surface, the smooth layer encourages it to form large flakes of graphene. The resulting crystals are 30 times bigger than those produced using existing techniques, of equal quality, and can be made in 15 minutes rather than 19 hours. The research appears in Nature Communications.

Penalties don’t really work; people only obey norms if they feel the rules are applied fairly and accord with their own moral code – and that is likely to go for bankers too. That’s the conclusion of Christopher Hodges, Oxford’s Professor of Justice Systems, who has researched corporate behaviour, looking at theories of deterrence, behavioural psychology and what regulators and companies do to achieve compliance. He found that cultures based on blaming people for doing the wrong thing do not foster an environment where people volunteer information to allow the performance management system to operate. That has been convincingly shown in the aviation industry where a ‘no-blame’ culture keeps planes flying safely in the sky, he says, adding that his research shows every other sector and regulatory system needs to apply the same approach.

An Oxford project is using scientific methods to investigate what ancient words spoken in Europe and Asia over 6,000 years ago actually sounded like. Professor John Coleman, Principal Investigator of the Ancient Sounds project in the Faculty of Linguistics, Philology and Phonetics, presented his findings to the British Science Festival in Bradford last month. ‘We are taking a revolutionary new approach which combines acoustic phonetics, statistics and comparative philology,’ he said. ‘Rather than reconstructing written forms of ancient words, we are developing methods to triangulate backwards from contemporary audio recordings of simple words in modern Indo-European languages to regenerate audible spoken forms from earlier points in the evolutionary tree.’ In 2013 the project reconstructed the pronunciation of spoken Latin words for numbers. Professor Coleman now has an AHRC grant to extend this to Germanic languages like English, German dialects and Dutch, as well as Modern Greek.

Nearly half of all edits to articles about places on Wikipedia were made by people in the UK, US, France, Germany and Italy, according to Oxford Internet Institute researchers who geocoded Wikipedia edit entries on articles mentioning places. They also found there were more editors in the Netherlands than all of Africa combined. It is assumed that Wikipedia, the world’s largest and most used repository of user-generated content, offers a platform for ‘local voices’. However, this study maps where Wikipedia editors live and finds that local voices rarely represent and define their own country. Digital connectivity is only one factor, it concludes, with the network effects of the internet crowding out less ‘visible’ parts of the world.

Ex-prisoners with common psychiatric disorders such as bipolar disorder and alcohol and drug abuse are substantially more likely to commit a violent crime after release than other prisoners. A study of almost 48,000 ex-prisoners suggests that diagnosed psychiatric disorders are potentially responsible for up to a fifth of violent reoffending by former male prisoners and two-fifths by female ex-prisoners. ‘One in seven prisoners have a psychotic illness or major depression and around one in five enter prison with clinically significant substance abuse disorders,’ says Seena Fazel, Professor of Forensic Psychiatry. ‘As these disorders are common and mostly treatable, better screening and mental health services before and after release are essential to prevent future violence and improve both public health and safety.’ He adds: ‘It underscores the importance of treating alcohol and drug misuse actively and with evidence-based therapies.’

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

BETTER SCREENING AND MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES COULD HELP PRISONERS AVOID REOFFENDING
People and Prizes

Professor Sir Tony Atkinson of the Institute of New Economic Thinking at the Oxford Martin School has won the Outstanding Contribution Award of the European Investment Bank for research on the Economics of Inequality and Economic Growth. Professor Atkinson established the modern British field of inequality and poverty studies and his work is predominantly focused on income distributions and the economics of public policy. An inequality measure – the Atkinson index – is named after him.

James Binney, Professor of Physics and Head of the Rudolf Peierls Centre for Theoretical Physics, has been awarded the 2015 Occhialini medal and prize ‘for his work on galaxy dynamics, in particular for developing an understanding of how galaxies exchange gas with the intergalactic medium and how this exchange controls the evolution of galaxy morphology’. The award is presented jointly by the Italian Physical Society and the Institute of Physics.

Dr Oliver Cox, Knowledge Exchange Fellow at TORCH, has been appointed to Arts Council England’s designation panel. The designation scheme aims ‘to identify and celebrate collections of outstanding resonance that deepen our understanding of the world and what it means to be human’.

Dame Kay Davies, Dr Lee’s Professor of Anatomy and Director of the MRC Functional Genomics Unit, has been announced as the 2015 recipient of the annual William Allan Award of the American Society of Human Genetics.

Marcus du Sautoy, Charles Simonyi Professor for the Public Understanding of Science, has received the award of Doctor of Science of the University of South Wales for his outstanding research record in mathematics and his exceptional contribution to the promotion of the public understanding of mathematics and science.

Luciano floridi, Professor of Philosophy and Ethics of Information, Director of Research at the Oxford Internet Institute and Fellow of St Cross, has received the Copernicus Scientist award for his work on the foundations of the philosophy of information. The award is given by the Institute for Higher Studies within the University of Ferrara in recognition of academic excellence.

Dr Ester Hammond, Associate Professor in the CRUK/MRC Oxford Institute for Radiation Oncology, is the recipient of the 2015 Michael Fry Research Award from the Radiation Research Society. The award recognises junior scientists who have made extraordinary contributions to the field of radiation research.

Glyn Humphreys, Watts Professor of Experimental Psychology, has won the British Psychological Society’s lifetime achievement award.

Martin McLaughlin, Agnelli-Serena Professor of Italian Studies, has been elected President of the Modern Humanities Research Association. The Association encourages and promotes advanced study and research in the field of the modern humanities, which includes the modern and medieval European languages, literatures and cultures.

Gesine Reinert, Professor of Statistics, has been named a Fellow of the Institute of Mathematical Statistics for her fundamental contributions to probability and asymptotic statistics, and their important applications in the life sciences.


Royal Society Recognition

The achievements of several Oxford scientists have been recognised by Royal Society medals and awards.

Prestigious Royal Medals have been awarded to: Dame Jocelyn Bell Burnell, Visiting Professor in Physics and Professorial Fellow at Mansfield College, for her pivotal contribution in observing, analysing and understanding pulsars, one of the most important astronomical discoveries of the 20th century; Professor Elizabeth Blackburn, Honorary Fellow at Jesus College, for her work on the prediction and discovery of telomerase and the role of telomeres in protecting and maintaining the genome; and Sir Christopher Llewellyn Smith, Director of Energy Research and Visiting Professor in Physics, for his major contributions to the development of the Standard Model, particularly his success in making the case for the building the Large Hadron Collider.

The Michael Faraday Prize and Lecture has been awarded to Katherine Willis, Professor of Biodiversity, for her excellent work in science communication.

Weston nominated

The Weston Library, which has undergone an £80m transformation, has been nominated for the ‘Building Project of the Year (£10m to £50m)’ award at the British Construction Industry Awards. The winner will be announced on 14 October.
NEW HEADS OF HOUSE
Four new Heads of House took office this term.

Brasenose College
John Bowers QC became Principal of Brasenose College on 1 October. He is a leading human rights and employment lawyer with particular focus on matters of equal pay, discrimination, minimum wage and unfair dismissal, and sits as a Deputy High Court Judge. He is an approved counsel for the Equality and Human Rights Commission, and has written numerous books on human rights and employment law, including standard texts on whistleblowing and industrial action.

Green Templeton College
Denise Lievesley CBE, formerly Professor of Social Statistics and Executive Dean of the Faculty of Social Science and Public Policy at King’s College London, became Principal of Green Templeton College on 1 October. A social statistician, she has contributed to the formulation of national and international policy on statistics. She is active in developing social research methods and research ethics and is an avid campaigner for evidence to be used as the basis for the development of sound public policies both within the UK and more widely. She was the first Chief Executive of the NHS Health and Social Care Information Centre; the founding Director of UNESCO’s Institute for Statistics; and Director of UK Data Archive. More recently, she was a UN Special Adviser on Statistics, based in Addis Ababa. Professor Lievesley has served as President of the Royal Statistical Society (1999–2001), the International Association for Official Statistics (1995–97) and the International Statistical Institute (2007–9), of being the first woman to hold this last office. She holds honorary doctorates from City University and the University of Essex and is a Fellow of UCL and of the Academy of Social Sciences. She was appointed CBE in 2014 for services to social science.

Jesus College
Sir Nigel Shadbolt took office as Principal of Jesus College on 1 August. He was previously Professor of Artificial Intelligence at the University of Southampton. He has been an advisor to the UK government across a range of data-related topics since 2009 and in 2012, with Sir Tim Berners-Lee, founded the Open Data Institute. He was knighted in 2013 for services to science and engineering. In addition to his role at the college, Sir Nigel takes up a professorship in the Department of Computer Science.

Lady Margaret Hall
Alan Rusbridger became Principal of Lady Margaret Hall on 1 October, having stepped down from his 20-year role as Editor-in-Chief of the Guardian this summer. During his editorship he led the paper to numerous awards, including the 2014 Pulitzer Prize for Public Service, the Burton Benjamin Award, the Ortega y Gasset Award, the European Press Prize and the 2014 Right Livelihood Award. He has been appointed the next Chair of the Guardian this summer. His previous roles include being a writer, journalist and newspaper proprietor and publisher. Rusbridger previously served as a visiting professor at Queen Mary (University of London), the City University of New York, and the University of Essex, and as a fellow at Nuffield College, Christ Church, and Brasenose College.

REGIUS PROFESSOR OF GREEK
Gregory Hutchinson, Professor of Greek and Latin Languages and Literature, University of Oxford, and Fellow and Tutor in Classics, Exeter College, has, with the approval of Her Majesty the Queen, taken up this post in the Faculty of Classics on 1 October. He also became a Student of Christ Church.

Professor Hutchinson’s work ranges across classical literature; his interests include the relationship between Greek and Latin literature, and between poetry and prose. He has written eight books: Aeschylus: Greek Lyric Poetry; Propertius: Elegies Book IV; Hellenistic Poetry; Latin Literature from Seneca to Juvenal: A Critical Study; Cicero’s Correspondence: A Literary Study; Talking Books: Readings in Hellenistic and Roman Books of Poetry; and Greek to Latin: Frameworks and Contexts for Intertextuality.

PROFESSOR OF ECONOMIC POLICY
Stefan Dercon, Professor of Development Economics, University of Oxford, Professorial Fellow of Wolfson College, and Chief Economist, UK Department for International Development, took up this post in the Blavatnik School of Government and the Department of Economics on 1 October. He also became a Fellow of Jesus College.

Professor Dercon is a development economist applying microeconomics and statistics to problems of development. Despite his current post as Chief Economist at DFID, he remains actively engaged in research and his diverse interests include research on risk and poverty, the foundations of growth in poor societies, agriculture and rural institutions, migration, political economy, childhood poverty, social and geographic mobility, micro-insurance, and measurement issues related to poverty and vulnerability.

VIEWFINDER FOUND
The viewfinder was discovered by a member of the university’s maintenance team in the cloisters at St Stephen’s House
NEW FELLOWS OF THE BRITISH ACADEMY

A number of Oxford academics were elected in July as Fellows of the British Academy in recognition of their research in the humanities and social sciences.

Dawn Chatty is Professor of Anthropology and Forced Migration and a Fellow of St Cross College. She is a social anthropologist whose ethnographic interests lie in the Middle East, particularly with nomadic pastoral tribes and refugee young people. Her research areas include conservation-induced displacement, tribal resettlement, modern technology and social change, gender and development and the impact of prolonged conflict on refugee young people. She was Director of the Refugee Studies Centre from 2011 to 2014.

Dr Felicity Heal is an Emeritus Fellow at Jesus College, where she was formerly Fellow and Tutor in Modern History. Her research interests include British Reformations; the English Gentry, 1500–1700; and Gift-exchange in Early Modern Culture.

Rana Mitter is Professor of the History and Politics of Modern China, and Deutsche Bank Director of the University of Oxford China Centre. A Fellow of St Cross College, he works on the emergence of nationalism in modern China, both in the early 20th century and in the contemporary era. He is particularly interested in the impact of China’s war with Japan in the 1930s and 1940s and in the development of Chinese politics, society and culture.

Kia Nobre is Director of the Oxford Centre for Human Brain Activity, Professor of Translational Cognitive Neuroscience and a Professorial Fellow at St Catherine’s College. She seeks to understand the principles of the neural systems that support cognitive functions in the human brain and investigates how neural activity linked to perception and cognition is modulated according to memories, task goals and expectations.

Andy Orchard is Rawlinson and Bosworth Professor of Anglo-Saxon and a Fellow of Pembroke College. His research interests lie in the field of Anglo-Saxon, Norse and Celtic languages and literatures.

Sally Shuttleworth is Professor of English Literature and a Professorial Fellow at St Anne’s College. She has published widely in the field of medicine, science and literature, particularly in the Victorian era, and is currently investigating 19th-century perspectives on diseases of modern life, and the growth of citizen science communities.

Annette Volfing is Professor of Medieval German Literature and a Fellow of Oriel College. Her research centres on medieval German studies and she has a particular interest in later medieval religious, mystical, philosophical or allegorical writing.

In addition, Dame Lynne Brindley, Master of Pembroke College and formerly Chief Executive of the British Library, was made an Honorary Fellow of the British Academy.

WANT TO CONFER?

Conference Oxford was set up over 20 years ago with 38 members, all of them colleges. Today it represents 55 venues across the collegiate University, from the Ashmolean to the Said Business School. The team, comprising Sally Dunsmore, Marie O’Connor, Matthew Morgan and Matt Brown, handles over 2,000 enquiries each year for a wide range of events, from small dinners to large residential conferences.

The service provided by Conference Oxford makes it easy to find the perfect venue for your event. Just contact the team, tell them what you need and they will contact a range of venues on your behalf. They can also arrange for you to visit the venues and view the facilities to help you decide on the best option.

Clara Bowyer, Events and Venue Manager at the Oxford Martin School, has been using the Conference Oxford service for a number of years. ‘Booking dining rooms, particularly in term time, can be incredibly difficult,’ she says. ‘So we’ve used Conference Oxford to help us. Not only is the process really easy – you only have to fill in one form for responses from a wide range of venues – but the team are hugely knowledgeable about their venues and care deeply about providing the best service to their clients.’

If you’re interested in finding out more, why not sign up to one of the familiarisation visits that Conference Oxford organises each year. You’ll have the opportunity to visit three venues to view the facilities available, including accommodation. Programmes are published regularly at www.conference-oxford.com, or contact Marie O’Connor on 01865 287378 for more information.

Please also contact Marie if you’re interested in joining Conference Oxford as a member venue.
Much of Jeremias Prassl’s research relates to European Union law, including aviation law. As Associate Professor of Law and a frequent traveller himself, his interest in the rights of passengers seeking redress after flight delays comes as no surprise. Despite boarding planes at least twice a month, however, he comments that: ‘Curiously, I have never had a delay long enough to trigger passenger rights protection, so I haven’t personally been able to put my legal knowledge to the test.’

His other research interest is in employment law, in particular the legal definition for the employer, which can be complicated in cases such as agency staff and online platforms such as Uber. He has also tracked what he describes as the ‘fig-leaf’ effect of the financial crisis in eroding employment rights across Europe – a project which has taken off this year with a British Academy Rising Star Engagement Award to further his work in European employment law.

Jeremias was first inspired to become an academic by his tutors while an undergraduate at Oxford. ‘I think both of the areas I work in – EU law and employment law – have extremely supportive communities of scholars here,’ he says. ‘This is one of the things that I value most about being in Oxford.’ His interest in EU law was fired after a year of study in Paris as part of his four-year law course. After taking a master’s at Harvard Law School he returned to Magdalen College for his doctorate, where he is now teaching and researching following a three-year stint at St John’s.

Ten years ago the European Union waded into the field of passenger rights, which until then had been largely determined by conventions dating back to 1929 that were heavily weighted in favour of the air carriers. He explains: ‘Back then, if your flight was late, the airline would say “Sorry, but the weather was bad.” EU rules have tilted the balance back in favour of passengers: there is an obligation on carriers to provide you with food and drink, as well as hotel accommodation and financial compensation if your flight has been cancelled or delayed by more than three hours.’

Jeremias wants to raise awareness of some of the positive aspects of these changes. ‘You encounter quite a bit of resistance, particularly when you go to industry conferences,’ he admits, as disgruntled passengers can expect compensation of between 250 and 650 euros depending on the distance of their flight and the length of the delay. He explains there have certainly been discussions ‘where the passenger lawyers sit on one side, the airline lawyers on the other, and the academics forlornly in the centre’. Jeremias’s favourite case is that of Ryanair arguing that the eruption of the Eyjafjallajökull volcano in Iceland was a ‘super-extraordinary circumstance’, relieving it of any care obligation towards its passengers. He sums it up as ‘a brave argument, but one which the court fortunately dismissed rather swiftly’.

Two years ago Jeremias co-founded a series of edited volumes exploring the operation of EU Law in the Member States. ‘We often assume that EU law applies equally across the 28 member states,’ he notes, ‘when in reality the very opposite is the case’. The next volume will deal with how European passenger rights are enforced in a dozen different countries. ‘One of the things I like about researching and teaching law are the many opportunities to collaborate with practitioners and academics across the EU and beyond,’ says Jeremias, who also serves on the committee of the Royal Aeronautical Society’s Air Law Group.

So if you’ve suffered any delays this summer, what’s his advice? ‘The first port of call is always the carrier who operated the flight in question. If you don’t have any joy with them, the Civil Aviation Authority’s website is a good guide through the next steps, as with certain operators you might still be in it for the long haul!’

More information at www.law.ox.ac.uk/profile/jeremias.prassl and www.law.ox.ac.uk/projects/EU-labour-law
A TRUE PARTNERSHIP

Stephen Rouse travelled to poverty-stricken rural South Africa to learn about Professor Lucie Cluver’s work on an innovative parenting programme.
‘Take a look around. It’s impossible not to get involved.’ Professor Lucie Cluver and I are talking in Rhamnyiba, a small village in one of the poorest areas of South Africa’s Eastern Cape. Homes are often two rooms under a corrugated metal roof without power or running water. Unemployment is high, reaching 90% in some places. Gun and knife crime are constant dangers. Teenage girls can be sexually abused just walking to school. Only a few overworked social workers are available to help.

These threats cause stress, and that stress can directly damage family life. Sub-Saharan Africa is one of the worst affected regions in the world for the physical abuse of children.

Professor Cluver explains: ‘It’s not because the people are worse, but because of the scale of the problems they face. The parents are poor, the children are sick; it all becomes a very stressful combination.’ Hence her answer – ‘It’s impossible not to get involved’ – to my question about what drives her to research such seemingly intractable problems.

She has a record of effective impact on support for vulnerable African communities. A classics graduate, she was working as a social worker in South Africa when her employers suggested she take a DPhil at Oxford. Her subsequent work on the educational, psychological and sexual health impacts on children orphaned by AIDS has influenced South African government policy, health and community worker training and child protection policies developed by Save the Children, USAID and UNICEF. One Save the Children adviser describes her work as ‘a clear example of how a true partnership between researchers, policymakers and implementers can result in programmes that actually make a difference in people’s lives’.

I was in South Africa as part of a tour made by the Vice-Chancellor, Professor Andrew Hamilton, to see research results on the ground.

Shortly after the visit Lucie became, at 35, one of the youngest female academics at Oxford to be awarded the title of full professor through the recognition of distinction awards. She is now Professor of Child and Family Social Work in the Department of Social Policy and Intervention.

For the past two years her team have been investigating child abuse in the Eastern Cape and a remarkable new intervention to tackle it. Teenagers and their parents or carers meet in local churches or community centres every week to sing songs, learn relaxation techniques and take part in discussions and role plays about the daily challenges they face. The sessions are led by community workers from the charity Clowns without Borders South Africa.

Working with the University of Cape Town, UNICEF and the South African government, Professor Cluver’s team have been evaluating the success of the programme. Results from last year’s pilot 12-week programme have been striking. The proportion of teenagers reporting physical abuse dropped from 42% to 12%. The proportion of carers reporting rule-breaking among their teenagers, such as carrying guns, stealing and fighting, dropped from 65% to 39%. Carers also reported feeling less stressed and less inclined to turn to drink to cope.

Sibongile Tsaoanyane, one of the Clowns without Borders session leaders, says: ‘When people start, they look dark, they’re frowning, stressed. But you can tell a very big change comes over them. Their appearance lightens, they gain weight. You can see them become a community, taking care of each other. It’s amazing.’

Professor Cluver adds: ‘Over the course of the 12 weeks families learned about positive parenting, such as how to praise one another, and manage anger without resorting to hitting or beating. They were encouraged to create a warmer, more loving relationship with one another. This in turn means that the teenagers may be at less risk of being involved in community violence because they’re more likely to enjoy spending time at home and therefore spend less time in risky community environments.’

A larger-scale evaluation is under way, involving 1,200 participants in the township of King William’s Town and surrounding villages. The programme has been extended to include workshops on budgetary planning, in an area where many have never held a bank account. The South African government, encouraged by the pilot results, already wants to roll the programme out in the Eastern Cape. Other low- and middle-income countries are also interested in the programme, which is free, for high-risk communities of their own.

The programme shows just how rigorous, evidence-based science can make a difference to policy and to the lives of some of the poorest communities in the world. As Professor Cluver says: ‘Some people believe that, because it’s Africa, you don’t need the best-quality science. But we believe that families here deserve the best.’

More information at www.spi.ox.ac.uk/people/profile/cluver
In the Hollywood film *Night at the Museum*, the exhibits at New York’s Museum of Natural History come alive at night. On 30 October the Ashmolean Museum will offer its own spooky late-night experience with a Halloween-themed event called DeadFriday. From 7pm to 10.30pm visitors to the museum will be able to watch performances and hear music and talks related to ghosts and spirits across cultures and through time.

DeadFriday is part of the highly successful LiveFriday series, which was started by the Ashmolean in January 2013. Visiting a museum is usually a passive experience of looking at objects behind glass cases, but LiveFridays are different. They are held in the evening and involve dance, music, magic, fancy dress and all kinds of games, which give visitors a different experience of the collections.

‘I went to a LiveFriday recently where soul samba played,’ says Victoria Bullett, a PA in the Development Office. ‘They also had live performers doing comedy and two “quack doctors” prescribing things to the public for their various ailments, which was very funny. I would definitely go again. It’s a brilliant way to bring the collections to life and the atmosphere is always buzzing and fun.’

‘It’s a brilliant way to bring the collections to life and the atmosphere is always buzzing and fun’

The events are popular with younger people who do not usually visit museums. It is hoped that by bringing them into contact with the museum’s collections, they will want to visit again in future. Alice Priestley is a Prospect Research Associate for the University. She attended last year’s Halloween LiveFriday event. ‘It was full of students so certainly a younger audience than usual – I guess as it was Halloween,’ she says. ‘The atmosphere was great – a brilliant mixture of music, the exhibits and activities, including Charleston dancing. I think the success of this one was the 1920s theme – people were wearing 1920s chic: flapper dresses, a fez, and then others had Halloween linked in. We felt as if we should have dressed up!’

‘One of the Ashmolean’s priorities is to work closely with academic departments across the University. LiveFridays are a good way of doing this because many events have been curated by Oxford academics. In May 2015 there was a LiveFriday on the theme of ‘Social Animals’, in collaboration with the Social Sciences Division. Eric Clarke, Heather Professor of Music, was the guest curator for a LiveFriday on musical technologies old and new in February 2013. ‘The event was very popular and a great example of how Oxford’s academic departments and collections can work so well together,’ he says. ‘Visitors had a go at DJing and learned about the way that all kinds of sounds – music and environmental – can be brought together.’

**Book now!**

Bookings for DeadFriday can be made in advance on the Ashmolean’s website: www.ashmolean.org/livefriday/2015-10. Entry is £5 per person. The Rooftop Bar and Vaulted Café will be serving drinks until 10.30pm.

On the same night, the Pitt Rivers Museum is hosting an event called ‘Day of the Dead’ in collaboration with The Oxford Research Centre in the Humanities (TORCH), as part of its AfterHours series (www.prim.ox.ac.uk/afterhours.html). The evening will explore cross-cultural responses to death, mourning, memorialisation and celebration with talks, music, workshops and performances. Oxford researchers will give short talks on different objects in the museum’s collections. 7pm to 10pm, entry £5.
**WHAT’S ON**

**EXHIBITIONS**

**The Selden Roll: a painted roll from Mexico**
Until 1 November 2015
Proscholium, Bodleian Library
www.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/whats-on
To celebrate the 50th anniversary of Oxford’s Latin American Centre, the Bodleian is displaying a spectacular painted roll from the Mixtec culture of 16th century Mexico.

**Illegitimate objects**
Until 12 November 2015, Mon–Fri, 9am–7pm
Andrew Wiles Building, Radcliffe Observatory Quarter
www.maths.ox.ac.uk/node/14879
Researchers at the Mathematical Institute have worked with artists and poets to create an exhibition inspired by the plaster-model collection of mathematical surfaces owned by James Joseph Sylvester (1814–1897), Savilian Professor of Geometry.

**CONCERTS**

**The Turn of the Screw**
Thursday 22 to Saturday 24 October, 8pm
St John the Evangelist Church, Iffley Road
Tickets £20 / £15 / £12 / £5
www.sje-oxford.org
Oxford-based opera company Faded Ink Productions presents Benjamin Britten’s adaptation of Henry James’ ghost story.

**LECTURES AND TALKS**

**Colliding worlds: how cutting-edge science is redefining contemporary art**
Friday 30 October, 5pm
St Cross College
www.stx.ox.ac.uk/happ/events
Professor Arthur Miller discusses how artists are working with scientists to make extraordinary creations that may well change the world as we know it.

**‘We do not want to become refugees’: human mobility in the age of climate change**
Wednesday 4 November, 5pm
Oxford University Museum of Natural History
www.rsc.ox.ac.uk/events
Professor Walter Kälin discusses the different tools available to address displacement and other forms of disaster-related human mobility.

**How do antidepressants work?**
Friday 6 November, 5pm
Oxford University Museum of Natural History
www.some.ox.ac.uk/about-somerville/events
Catherine Harmer, Professor of Cognitive Neuroscience in the Department of Psychiatry, gives the Monica Fooks Memorial Lecture.

**CONFERENCES AND SYMPOSIA**

**Dignity and the novel since 1948**
Saturday 7 November, 10.30am–5.30pm
St Cross Building, Manor Road
www.torch.ox.ac.uk/fiction-and-human-rights
One-day symposium exploring how the concerns and forms of the modern novel may inform debate about the status and function of human dignity.

**FAMILY FRIENDLY**

**Egyptastic**
Monday 26 to Wednesday 28 October, 1–4pm
Pitt Rivers Museum
www.prm.ox.ac.uk/events.html
Discover more about Ancient Egypt at this drop-in event. Meet the Ancient Egyptian mummy and make an amulet.

**Owls for October**
Tuesday 27 October, 1–4pm
Harcourt Arboretum
Find out about the resident barn owl and get creative with some owl-related and autumnal crafts to take home. Drop-in event for children aged 4 to 11.

**SPECIAL EVENTS**

**DeadFriday**
Friday 30 October, 7–10.30pm
Ashmolean Museum
www.ashmus.ox.ac.uk/livefriday
In the run-up to Halloween, come along to this spooktacular late-night event, exploring ghouls and spirits across cultures and through time.

**Pitt Rivers AfterHours: Day of the Dead**
Friday 30 October, 7–10pm
Pitt Rivers Museum
www.prm.ox.ac.uk/afterhours.html
Late-night event exploring how communities across the globe celebrate, mourn and remember their dead.

**The Oxford dodo: culture at the crossroads**
Wednesday 18 November, 5.30–7pm
Oxford University Museum of Natural History
http://torch.ox.ac.uk/dodo
Event celebrating the life and legacy of the dodo at the Oxford University Museum of Natural History, which is home to the world’s only preserved dodo remains.
Let’s start with the obvious – it has nothing to do with a US president. The Kennedy Institute for Rheumatology has been a UK institution since its inception in 1965, with an historical link to that most British of brands, M&S (see box). But it has only been an Oxford institution for the last four years and physically in Oxford for the last two.

In 2011, when it became part of the Nuffield Department of Orthopaedics, Rheumatology and Musculoskeletal Science (NDORMS), the Kennedy brought with it a record of top-class research. The world’s first centre dedicated to arthritis was responsible for much of our understanding of human cartilage, paving the way for today’s osteoarthritis research. In the 1980s and 1990s its research into Tumour Necrosis Factor (TNF) found that anti-TNF treatments were effective in tackling the destructive inflammation that causes rheumatoid arthritis. That research led to a licensed treatment for the condition in 1999, and anti-TNF has also been found to be beneficial for a range of other conditions.

With that track record, why quit London and move 50 miles up the M40?

The answer seems obvious when you enter the Kennedy Institute’s building on the University’s Old Road Campus. The modern architecture highlights the fact that this is a purpose-built facility, only completed two years ago, and Kennedy Institute director Professor Fiona Powrie initially confirms that impression: ‘This is a wonderfully designed building. The labs are state of the art. That’s what you’d expect if you want to do world-class research.’

She points to the development of a germ-free facility as an example of the resources that have been made available by the move. It enables the Kennedy to raise mice in sterile conditions, which facilitates research into the effects of specific micro-organisms.

But do not be misled: the Kennedy was not simply seduced with promises of shiny new labs in Oxford. The Kennedy Trust for Rheumatology Research, the successor to the charitable organisation that once ran the institute and which still provides significant support, made a strategic decision that recognised how medical research was changing. Multidisciplinary research, bringing together specialists from across the sciences, is now critical. Professor Powrie explains how the Oxford move has enabled the institute to increase its opportunities to collaborate with other medical and non-medical researchers: ‘We are broadening the scope of what the smaller Kennedy Institute in London could do. Those people who moved here have embraced the opportunities to diversify their work. We are building networks with structural genomics and computational biology, for example. Access to that wider research environment is important.’

She adds: ‘Physically, we are located next to the Target Discovery Institute [which links advances in genetics, genomics, cell and chemical biology to identify areas for drug research to target] and the site of the Big Data Institute [which will analyse large sets of health data], while the Wellcome Trust Centre for Human Genetics is nearby.

A MULTIDISCIPLINARY MEDICAL POWERHOUSE

A move to Oxford is enabling the Kennedy Institute to expand networks and focus on a range of chronic inflammatory diseases, says Tom Calver.

‘I’m not going to recruit five of the world’s top researchers, but I am interested in recruiting five of their top people who show great potential’
We are working closely with each of those.’ Oxford has not just offered the opportunity to expand networks, but also to expand the Kennedy Institute itself. The Kennedy is changing from a focus on arthritis to addressing the range of chronic inflammatory diseases. These often share underlying causes and mechanisms, so the institute studies these fundamental issues rather than specific diseases. It will be a broad focus on chronic inflammation and repair in the human body. Inflammation is a critical part of the immune response, delivering critical disease-fighting and damage-repairing factors to wounds and infected areas. In inflammatory diseases, however, this goes wrong and it appears that the body continues to respond even after the initial cause has been addressed. In the long run this can see human tissues damaged and destroyed by a process that should be achieving the opposite.

The current research programme, led by 18 principal investigators, is still mainly focused on joint and gut research. Professor Powrie herself is an immunologist but she is clear on the need to broaden the Kennedy’s outlook: ‘We’re not full. We’ve got a good critical mass made up of people who moved from London and new recruits.’ As part of that, the Kennedy Trust is providing support for the Kennedy Institute to recruit researchers who are ready to make the move to running their own research group. As Professor Powrie puts it: ‘I’m not going to recruit five of the world’s top researchers, but I am interested in recruiting five of their top people who show great potential. Institutes don’t do science. It is the people in them. We are creating an opportunity for outstanding scientists to do their research and deliver their potential.’

The next few years look exciting for the Kennedy Institute. Not only is recruitment expanding, but the ambition is to develop new technologies to support the research programmes. At the same time, new networks will be established with clinical staff to build a centre that will encompass everything from basic research to translating that into improved diagnosis and treatment for patients.

Professor Powrie concludes: ‘There is a commitment from the Kennedy Research Trust to support a world-class medical research institute. That was behind the move of the London Kennedy Institute. The Oxford Kennedy Institute will develop a new identity, but our ambition is to do as well as they did.’

More information at www.kennedy.ox.ac.uk
A LIVING LIBRARY

The University’s internationally acclaimed Harcourt Arboretum is ripe for more research, Sally Croft discovers

Six miles south of Oxford, at Nuneham Courtney, lies the University's Harcourt Arboretum – 130 acres housing the best collection of trees in Oxfordshire, with specimens from all over the world and some of the oldest North American redwoods in the UK.

The arboretum, which is administratively part of the University’s Botanic Garden, was begun in 1835 by Archbishop Vernon Harcourt of Nuneham House, who commissioned William Sawrey Gilpin, an exponent of the ‘Picturesque’ landscape movement, to design and plant an 8-acre pinetum in his parkland. ‘The Picturesque movement uses the form of the plant to create the landscape, for example creating an evergreen backdrop, and then putting in front of the trees a feature of interest such as camellias or rhododendrons with particularly good seasonal colour,’ explains Ben Jones, the Arboretum Curator.

The Harcourt estate was purchased by the University at the end of the Second World War and although much of it was initially sold off, in subsequent years adjacent land has been purchased. In 2006 what was then an 80-acre site was extended by the purchase of a further 50 acres; 20 acres of this was planted up with 13,000 British native trees and 30 acres restored from intensively farmed arable land to wildflower meadows. Today’s site therefore comprises the arboretum, with its exotic plant collection; meadows with high floral diversity that are home to many pollinating insects and the invertebrates and birds that depend on them; and the native woodlands, where 18th- and 19th-century plantings are supplemented by newer additions.

As well as being a place of beauty, Harcourt Arboretum is home to important research. On the national level, the arboretum is a designated ‘safe site’ for the international conifer conservation programme. Conifers collected in the wild all over the world by the Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh, are distributed around the UK to see what grows best where. Specimens currently flourishing in Oxford include conifers from Vietnam, Chile, Morocco and Tasmania.

Internationally, the arboretum is a major player in two important projects. In 2012 the University of Oxford Botanic Garden and Harcourt Arboretum (OBGHA) planned and initiated a fieldwork project in Japan, one of the world’s biodiversity hotspots. ‘We have plants growing here that don’t exist anymore in the wild; one in five plant species is threatened with extinction’ the ArbNet international professional network of arboreta – the first ever university collection to do so. In December, Oxford staff from the arboretum and the Department of Plant Sciences will be travelling to Ethiopia to help deliver a training workshop on topics such as seed collection and documentation, propagation techniques, and maintaining a tree collection for conservation and public enjoyment.

Professor Simon Hiscock, who has recently become Director of the Botanic Garden and Harcourt Arboretum, is keen to encourage more University researchers to use the Nuneham Courtney site. ‘There are huge opportunities here, such as genetic diversity research, especially using the populations of rare Japanese birches,’ he says. ‘Genotyping these birches would reveal how much genetic variation is left in particular Japanese populations – an important consideration for conservation and breeding purposes.’

‘We have plants growing here that don’t exist anymore in the wild; one in five plant species is threatened with extinction’ not currently highly active in conservation. Seed is being shared with project partners in Japan, including the Ministry of Environment’s Seed Conservation project, and with allied institutions in the UK such as the Forestry Commission and the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew (home to the Millennium Seed Bank) and Edinburgh. Japanese flora are now growing well in Oxford and Ben is particularly pleased at the successful propagation of the world’s rarest birch, Betula chichibuenensis. ‘There are fewer than 30 of them left in the wild,’ he says. ‘But we now have three or four times that number growing in Kent.’

OBGHA is also working with Ethiopian botanic gardens and arboreta, helping them to create a professional network and delivering training in establishing and managing tree collections for conservation. Harcourt Arboretum’s commitment to science and conservation work, and particularly its partnership with the Wondo Genet College Arboretum in Ethiopia, has recently been recognised by its receiving ‘level IV’ status from the international World Association of Botanic Gardens.

In 2014 the Arboretum’s new glasshouse complement was completed: the £1 million Climate Change Glasshouse. ‘We have the facility to do experiments on all kinds of ecosystems that could easily lend themselves to undergraduate projects – and the arboretum is very accessible, with buses from Oxford stopping right outside.’

Ben is equally enthusiastic: ‘The Friends of the Botanic Garden and Arboretum have recently funded 25 data loggers which record temperatures every 15 minutes and we’re now producing temperature contour maps across the whole site. There isn’t another collection in the country doing that to this level. It’s immensely valuable baseline data if someone wants to investigate species distribution, such as insects or plants in the meadow.’ He adds: ‘Here at the arboretum we’re creating a living library of material for students and researchers. We have plants growing here that don’t exist anymore in the wild. It’s not widely known, but one in five plant species is threatened with extinction.’

‘This is an exciting new stage for the arboretum,’ stresses Simon. ‘We have funding for new glasshouses and are very keen to facilitate research projects at all levels. We’ll be planting a “Jurassic forest” – an evolutionary glade of coniferous trees and ferns that were abundant in the Jurassic and Triassic periods before flowering plants – and, with something like 35,000 visitors a year and 100 school visits, I’d also love to raise funds for a visitor centre.’

Admission to Harcourt Arboretum is free (with University card) for all staff and students. Details at www.harcourt-arboretum.ox.ac.uk
Above: Autumn arrives at the Arboretum; left: young trees in the International Conifer Conservation Programme; a moment in the meadows.
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The Oxford Almanack 2016
The illustration for 2016 is a view of St Catherine’s College, Oxford from an original painting in water-colour and acrylic ink by Cathy Read. The remainder of the sheet consists of a calendar for the year which includes information relevant to the University as well as, for instance, sunrise and sunset times.

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DEPARTMENT FOR CONTINUING EDUCATION
UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD
What exactly does an archivist do?
Archives are rich collections of information which reveal histories and document past decisions and events. Archivists assess, collect and shape collections for future generations. My main role involves the day-to-day care and management of the Brasenose College archives. This includes monitoring the conditions of the material and the stores in which it is kept, as well as cataloguing the material in order to make it accessible to researchers. A lot of my time is spent answering enquiries from the general public as well as from within the college and University.

Whereabouts are you based?
I have an office in the tower on Brasenose's Old Quad. The view is wonderful and I particularly like that the college archives have been kept in the same room for hundreds of years. The tower interior has recently been renovated, and this autumn work starts on refurbishing our archive store so that we have a modern temperature- and humidity-controlled environment.

What’s in the Brasenose archives?
The Brasenose archives consist of items such as personal papers, accounts volumes, diaries, maps, photographs, deeds and digital records, as well as artefacts.

The collections are very diverse – one minute I’ll be working on accessioning a collection of digital photographs and the next I’ll be deciphering a Royal Charter from the 1500s. This year I’ve been working on developing the new archive store, whilst also collating, re-boxing and cataloguing many of the collections. That includes the statutes of the college dating from the 1500s as well as the records of college staff, which mostly date from the 1860s onwards.

What do you most enjoy about your job?
It’s very rewarding to help researchers find the information they are looking for, and I especially like the excitement you see when showing students some of the older documents and photographs. Of course, being the only person in the archive department can be challenging at times, but luckily the Oxford Archivists’ Consortium is a great group of archivists who offer support and meet up regularly.

How did you come to be an archivist?
As a child, I really wanted to be a vet – so absolutely nothing to do with being an archivist. In fact, I’m sure I didn’t even know what an archivist was!

My first job after graduating was as a Bodleian Graduate Library Trainee. The scheme really opened doors for me, and was a great opportunity to see how many interesting library and information jobs there were out there. After a year at the Sackler Library I ended up going to France to study for an MA. When I came back to England I worked part-time as an Archives Assistant at Brasenose and Wolfson Colleges, while studying for a diploma in Archive Administration. I’ve been Archivist at Brasenose since March this year.

Is the nature of your job changing?
Computers, the internet and born-digital records have changed the nature of archives and an archivist’s role significantly. However it’s a really interesting time to be an archivist. For example, many archivists are now expected to blend traditional skills such as palaeography (the study of historical handwriting) with an understanding of digital preservation. Records are now no longer written down on parchment or paper, indeed most are Word documents, PDFs and digital images, so it will be interesting to see how the nature of archives and the challenge of preserving them for the long term pans out.

Any unexpected or amusing items in the Brasenose archives?
When you are listing and cataloguing archives you are continually finding the unexpected. It’s especially nice when you read someone’s correspondence from hundreds of years ago, and it starts to bring history to life. Reading the college accounts, which cover the English Civil War, is fascinating.

One of my favourite items is a book of caricatures and sketches, drawn by a student and his wife in the 1870s. Also, when looking through a 1758 volume entitled Directions for the College Butler, I discovered the advice that it would not be amiss for students of Philosophy to be given a glass of wine every evening!

And finally, what would your colleagues be surprised to learn about you?
Being an archivist in Oxford is quite a physically demanding job (especially as you often have to move boxes and work in basement and tower stores). Two years ago I had major spinal surgery and now I have two rods and 16 pins in my spine. Luckily it hasn’t stopped me being able to do my job!