OBSERVING RAMADAN IN LOCKDOWN

5 LESSONS FROM THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC
STAYING FIT AT HOME
INTERVIEW WITH EX-ISOC PRESIDENT
AND MORE!

OXFORD UNIVERSITY ISLAMIC SOCIETY
Ikhlaas

[Noun] Sincerity
Asalaamualaykum! Alhamdullilah, this magazine has been an idea spoken about for many years, and as a team it’s been our delight to see the committee work so hard on turning what was originally only a very vague idea into a professional 32 page magazine, ready for the community to read and enjoy. The central premise for this magazine is simple: we think it’s important that there exists a platform for cross-society communication, allowing ISoc members from across the community to contribute themselves and to read the contributions of their peers, serving to strengthen the brotherhood and sisterhood within the community and please Allah SWT. Ranging from artistic submissions to a welfare section, a student blog, a current affairs section, and more, we hope there’s enough variety here to allow people to engage with their favourite parts of ISoc’s offering insha’Allah.

Our hope is for this to be a termly magazine, with each issue centred about a certain theme. Of course, for this issue the most appropriate theme was Ramadan, and so in these pages you will insha’Allah find a variety of poetry on the month, reflections on Ramadan, tips on keeping fit and healthy, and more. In this particular issue, we’d also like to offer you the first glimpse of the upcoming History of ISoc project, with a shortened version of an interview of a past ISoc president, carried out by our Alumni Officer, Maryam, on the introduction of ISoc elections and the opening of our beloved prayer room.

We’d like to thank the incredible magazine team for making this a reality: Muaz, our Communications Chair and project manager for this first issue of the magazine, Basim, our wonderful and talented Media Officer, Abdul Lateef, our Events Officer and Noor, the editor of the magazine, have all done an incredible job. They’ve put in tremendous effort over the past few weeks and this project wouldn’t have been possible without all of them.

God willing, we hope that this issue is the first of many future issues to come, and that they will all serve to benefit the community and the membership, exposing the diversity of thought within the community and bringing all the different parts of our community together, especially now when we’re all apart.

Wasalaam,
In this section of the magazine, we will be hearing from ISoc members themselves about some of their experiences this term, and delving deeper into what life at Oxford has generally been like for them so far.
Salam! Fake it until you make it they said... turns out they were right. When you align yourself with the goal you're aiming for, more likely than not, you will be successful. But the most awe-inspiring thing about reaching a certain goal isn't getting exactly what you wanted, but realising how vast and expansive this world is, because just as you think you've reached a cul-de-sac, you find out that there are a thousand more roads for you to explore. And the adventure begins all over again.

I think that that pretty much summarises what my experience at Oxford has been like so far. Little did I know that I would find the wonderful ISoc, through which I would meet people who are beautiful inside-out; my naive pre-Oxford self thought I would spend all my spare time doing touristy things, little did I know that I would wake up every day to the beautiful sight of Worcester’s lake and not appreciate it because I was running late for my translation class - poor me thinking I would be sightseeing... and I certainly was not expecting to learn more about myself than about my degree.

I found out I actually could get up early, and I still haven’t quite admitted to my Dad that he was right all along and that waking up early was far more effective than staying up all night... but it’s fine he doesn’t need to know that, right? I also learned that one can still be homesick even if they are having a good time. Oxford was great, but 5th week blues was a real thing for me - which is funny because I distinctly remember, when first hearing about 5th week blues, having completely dismissed it as another superfluous piece of Oxford vocab... the irony.

I also learned that Oxford is particularly more beautiful when I didn't have an imminent deadline looming over my head. I remember after leaving my last French tutorial for the term in Hilary, how suddenly the curtain of clouds in the sky parted to reveal the luminous sun, the birds were immersed in a philharmonic orchestra of their own, the wind was softer making the leaves dance - was I exaggerating or was my college always this beautiful? I didn't have time to answer that question because I was now free and I just couldn't stop smiling, how could I not smile when I knew I had a whole afternoon to do exactly what I had been dreaming of for weeks - an evening to do exactly nothing!

One thing I was really grateful for was ISoc’s events during Freshers’ Week, because not once did I feel like I had to be the conventional fresher who was a slave to the sesh. And Alhamdulilah, having older brothers and sisters in the society was highly reassuring, I truly felt like I was welcomed into a family. I’m slightly sad I won’t be able to spend Ramadan at Oxford with this family that I’ve loved from day one. But regardless of where we are in the world, Ramadan is always special. I love seeing how much we can get used to not thinking about food, like that lovely feeling after Ramadan when you can say in utter surprise: Oh my goodness, I forgot about lunch! Because Ramadan polish-es us so that we revolve our lives less on food, and more on what is more important. I pray all of you stay safe and flourish in this blessed month. This is a month of healing, growing and learning, and I hope we do exactly that this Ramadan!

Yousra M’Barki
1st year, French & Portugese
Worcester College
I’m not even exaggerating when I say this, but honestly, being a part of OUISoc has been such a blessing. It helped me settle into university at the start and continues to provide me with a familiar, welcoming environment as everyone is so lovely and genuine. Throughout term, there is always a large variety of events, spanning from fun quiz nights to charity weeks, interfaith dinners and Islamic talks. There is something for everyone! These have provided me with a much-needed break from my hectic Oxford lifestyle, allowing me to have fun, expand my worldly knowledge and better my iman. Some may think that they are not religious enough to be a part of it or may even wonder if it is religious enough for them. The funny thing is, I found that there is a place for everyone at OUISoc. The main feel of this community is that we all have one thing in common: we care for each other and want to do good.

Even now with everything going on, with all the brothers and sisters in every corner of the globe, the sense of community is still there and if anything, it is stronger than ever, especially in this month of Ramadan.

Ramadan is such an interesting time of year for me – most non-Muslims think it is a tough time due to fasting, when little do they know it is the best time ever. I look forward to Ramadan a lot as it provides me with an opportunity to reflect on what I have achieved over the past year and, most importantly, on what I need to change. It is also a time to realign my perspective and figure out what is important, as I always find myself getting caught up in issues that genuinely do not matter in the grand scheme of things. As I have gotten older and have developed a better understanding of what Ramadan is, it has also provided me with an opportunity to explore Islam in new ways, as well as develop a deeper understanding of Islam as a whole. Ramadan has often coincided with academic commitments, namely exams, which I initially thought was a nuisance but now I realise is actually a blessing! During exam season, it can be really easy to completely ignore your physical and mental health as well as your family but in Ramadan I found that this wasn’t the case. Breaking my fast provides me with a meaningful break: it gives me a chance to be with family and catch up, it takes my mind off things as well and ensures that I am well fed and energised. Reading my salah has also acted as an excellent way to take a break from work, to recollect and refocus, and this has allowed me to develop a better work ethic. I was really looking forward to spending Ramadan in Oxford this year with my friends. That was not possible, but inshallah, next year I will be able to.

Hannah Raja
1st Year, Chemistry
Balliol College
The Key to this Lockdown

When there was nothing, even when nothingness didn't exist; The Almighty in His wisdom said ‘Be’ and so spouted the wonderous galaxy.
The heavens and the earth filled with abundant bounty that the grateful cannot deny.
He created man, he created woman.
And this is not a chance of nature, there is a plan and His plan is ordained.
Fellow humanity, He writes for us a life that is not all Milky way; the path is filled with regret, happiness, prosperity, remorse and sombreness.
And so, when Ramadhan unfolds itself during a pandemic, indeed we are asked ‘So which of the favours of your Lord would you deny?’ [55:38]
One does not doubt that the grounds of the local Musullas weep from loneliness.
But has a single one pondered over what a Ramadhan that is devoid of society can bring us?
Question me not, sadness burdens my soul.
But He is Al Hakeem, The Wise.
He gifts us with boundless time to nourish our depths,
Quench our thirst for self-reflection,
Mend our shattered selves,
And heal the cracks in our character.
So, despair not, for He, The Wadood, has provided a cure for every ailment.
Lies ahead of us is not a dreary Ramadhan in lockdown.
But rather a new sense of worship.
For those that do not believe, let them see for themselves.
For in this there surely is a clear sign for the seekers of the truth.

Hudaa Bax, St. Benet’s Hall

Three dates for Ramadan
Coral Benfield, Oriel College
Once again, exam season this year has fallen around the same time as Ramadan, which means that it is likely you are, or will be, revising and sitting exams while fasting. Though this will be a little more challenging, believe that you can do it, and the pride you’ll feel for your faith and restraint by the end of the fasting month will be hard to match. To help maximise your studying, here is a list of tips:

1. Organise an efficient work environment for yourself. Sit at a desk or table where you have a clear and organised space to work as this will help stop you from getting distracted. Try not to work on your bed or you may be tempted to drift off, especially since your usual sleeping pattern is likely to be disturbed.

2. Study with others where possible. Trying to keep motivated to work during Ramadan can be tricky, but you may find that studying with others makes this much easier. Whether you sit down with family members for designated study sessions or form a group with your friends, chatting to others regularly is a great way to check up on your studying and provide support for each other. We know that the lockdown has made this a little more difficult, but even forming a virtual study group can be very effective in keeping up motivation. This has been tried and tested on a very regular basis by several ISoc members and has worked extremely well for them (check the WhatsApp groups for more details).

3. Try changing up your study habits. Since you’ll have much less energy during the day, try switching up your revision styles and techniques. During the day, you’ll probably find it harder to concentrate for long periods of time, so try to avoid working through more rigorous textbooks or lengthy academic journals. Instead, try using revision techniques that make information quicker and easier to absorb, like flashcards or posters.

4. Figure out a routine that works for you. As your daily routine is changing during Ramadan, you’ll probably find that adjusting your working hours will work better for your studies. The daytime is now likely to provide the best opportunity for you to catch up on sleep, while the time between Iftar and Suhoor could be a great opportunity to revise while you’re feeling less hungry. The important thing here is to avoid overloading yourself during the daytime when your body is under the most stress. As an example, check out the schedule that we have drafted on the right.

5. Try not to overdo or over-estimate yourself. Nobody can revise for hours on end, so don’t expect that of yourself during Ramadan. When revising during the day, break up your study sessions with more frequent breaks to help take your mind off how hungry you are. It’s also important that you take some time completely away from your books and computer screen to stretch your legs. This will help you to absorb your revision more efficiently.

6. Make sure you eat healthily during Iftar and Suhoor. We know it can be tempting to stuff yourself with samosas and other fried foods, but this will only make you feel tired and lethargic, which could have a knock-down effect on your revision. Try to eat foods that will boost your brain power and provide sustenance for longer (e.g. fish, eggs, leafy greens and fresh fruits). Also, make sure you stay hydrated; the more water you drink each night, the better you’ll feel the next day.

7. Make sure you get your rest. As always, in order to retain information from your revision efficiently, you need to get enough rest. Make sure you’re catching up on lost sleep when you can so that you aren’t overworking your brain. This will help your concentration levels too.

8. Don’t be too hard on yourself! This is a time to test yourself and your endurance, but don’t worry if you realise that you aren’t as productive as usual. Your mind and body will be juggling a lot, but that’s okay because you won’t be alone in this.

Fatima Zahrah,
Exeter College
START YOUR DAY ON THE RIGHT FOOT
1PM – 3.30PM
Wake up, make Dhuhr. If you’re not fasting, eat something wholesome. Get dressed as if you’re going out for the day, so that you trick your mind into becoming alert. Let the sunlight into your room and complete a work session (not too much!) to start your day right. Alternatively, if you need to do meal prep/shopping/chores, prioritise that.

CHALLENGE YOUR HORIZONS
3.30PM – 6PM
Engage in some of your favourite hobbies, for example, juggling, Duolingo, meditation, drawing, or creative writing. You will have worked really hard the night before, so it is important now to do some things that aren’t work! If you’re going to do any exercise (not too much if you’re fasting!), now is a great time while the sun is up but the day not too hot. Get your chill on, enjoy the breathing space and get some fresh air.

BUT DON’T FORGET ALLAH
6PM – 7PM
One-hour ibadah session including Asr. If you struggle with thinking clearly towards the end of a fast, then do the ‘easy’ stuff – salah, dhikr, duaa. If you can’t do a full hour though, don’t push yourself. Remember that your body will testify against you on the Day of Judgement.

CAN YOU TASTE IT YET?
7PM – 8PM
Cook that tasty dinner! (But don’t taste it yet…)

YAY, ANOTHER DAY DONE!
8PM – 9.30PM
Get ready to break your fast (remember this is the best time for duaa!). After you’ve prayed Maghrib, call some friends, break fast together and get your socialising done.

SETTING THE MOOD
9.30PM – 10PM
Wash up, make Isha and Taraweeh, and prepare for a productive night by eliminating any distractions!

LET THE PRODUCTIVITY COMMENCE
10PM – 1.30AM
Three-hour work session. Now is the time to hit the books hard with a full stomach and an alert mind! Try to take regular breaks but be reasonable and moderate in deciding their length, so you maximise productivity. Check the tips section for advice!

EVERY BRICK COUNTS
1.30AM – 2.30AM
This is the time to nourish your soul and build your house in Jannah. If you struggled to make good ibadah at Asr time, do everything you can now – read Quraaan, memorise Ayat, practise recitation, learn new duas. Now is also a really good time to make Tahajjud and Witr, since it is the last third of the night. End your session by donating sadaqah to a charity online.

WOAH, LOOK HOW THE TIME FLIES!
2.30AM – 3.30AM
Stuff that rumbly tummy (without being gluttonous) for the sixteen-hour fast ahead (whew!). Make sure there are sufficient proteins, carbs and fruit in your suhoor and plenty of water, for a balanced delivery of energy throughout the day. Try to finish 10–20 minutes before Fajr, to be safe.

ANOTHER AWESOME NIGHT COMPLETED
3.30AM – 5/6AM
Brush your teeth before you start your fast, take a proper shower and make Fajr. Now is a really good time to make your duuas – as many as you can think of. You may also wish to stay up for Ishraaq. Otherwise, head to bed, wind down with a good book and get some hard-earned Zzz’s – you deserve it!

Imaan Wallace,
Merton College
Reading books can be very time-consuming. Unlike when reading a good novel, where there is something about the experience itself that we may relish, sometimes we want to get through a text as quickly as possible but also maximise our understanding of it. Learning to do this more efficiently frees up time that we can spend doing other things. We’re taught how to read, but unfortunately many of us weren’t taught HOW to read.

This applies to us all – we’ll all be in situations where we’ll have to read something quickly. Finally! Something that unites Sciences, Humanities, and even Geography students (sorry Geography). So, in the spirit of unity championed by our ISoc, here are my 8 TIPS on how to read a book effectively:

1. Read a couple of (very short) book reviews
   - Contextualising the book is crucial – reading reviews will help you to identify the key ideas/debates within the existing literature and allow you to focus on the issues that make the book distinct (and therefore significant).
   - Exposing yourself to counter-arguments will immediately force you to be critical of the book.

2. Read the back cover – or abstract (if it’s an article)
   - Most back-covers/abstracts are very well-written – from reading them, you will know what conclusion the book will reach and how it’s going to get there.
   - It’s worth looking up any words in the abstract that you don’t understand – if the author has decided to use them there, they are probably going to be crucial to the overall argument.

3. Based on what you have read so far, write down a few questions that you want to have answered; spend at least 5 minutes on this
   - If you ever go onto autopilot when reading, stop. Remind yourself of your questions before continuing!

4. Use the chapter titles/subheadings (e.g. from the Contents Page) to identify the sections of the text that are relevant to your questions

5. Skim-read the relevant sections (bearing your questions in mind)
   - Spend around 30 seconds on each page. Highlight/underline anything that catches your eye – for example, graphs, tables, pictures, stats, definitions, case studies or thought experiments.

6. Scan-read (Scan? Scan-read??) the relevant sections – bearing your questions… (you get the point – I hope…)
   - Spend around 30 seconds per page. Use this time to do two things: firstly, understand what you have highlighted and, secondly, identify assumptions, premises and conclusions of the various arguments and how they all fit together.

7. Sketch out a rough argument map (as long as you can see the breakdown of the argument, there’s no right way to make one)
   - This tests your understanding well – if there are parts of the argument map that you cannot fill in, find and read the relevant paragraph again. Since you’ve already been through the text twice, it should be straightforward. Use this as an opportunity to reflect: ‘have I properly addressed the questions that I set out to answer?’

8. Reinforce your understanding
   - Read a book summary and/or talk to a friend that has also read the book (if possible). Make a note just in case you’ve missed anything.

In my experience, this process takes around the same amount of time as reading the text itself (once through, without taking notes) if it is a short text - if it’s a long text, it will save you hours! Either way, because you’ve been actively and critically engaged at each and every stage, the level of understanding you will have reached will be far beyond what you would have otherwise. Finally, using one or two of these techniques is better than using none at all!

Inshallah this has been of benefit.

Ibrahim Al-Hariri,
New College
Why even bother?
With most of us stuck inside, understanding the different ways to keep active is, now more than ever, essential for our mental and physical wellbeing. Staying physically fit allows us to maintain our muscle mass and bone density and helps to lower our blood pressure and cholesterol. Additionally, exercise keeps our immune system working effectively and can improve our cognitive ability – our active recall and executive function. Exercise also feels great! When we exercise, we release feel-good chemicals such as endorphins, dopamine and serotonin which help boost our self-esteem and mood.

All in all, exercise offers incredible benefits that can improve nearly every aspect of our health.

The fact that gyms are closed and that we’re keeping outdoor exercise to a minimum can mean we may feel like we’ve run out of exercise options. It can be easy to think that we are going to lose our strengths and gains and that working out doesn’t matter. That’s not true. This is a fantastic opportunity to step back and re-evaluate our overall fitness. We can use this time to focus on our mobility, posture, and perfecting our form. In fact, addressing our mobility and muscle imbalances will mean that we will be even stronger when the lockdown is lifted inshallah.

Improvise
Want to improve your cardio? Go for a run, cycle or find a free online exercise class. Want to improve your strength? Watch Athlean X videos and perform bodyweight and kettlebell exercises. Don't have any weights at home? Use bags of rice or a rucksack full of books.

Marginal gains
Being consistent and integrating these into our routine is essential for long-term success. We can all challenge ourselves to do one more rep than we did during the last workout and to finish a run one minute faster the next time round.

DON’T HAVE ANY WEIGHTS AT HOME? USE BAGS OF RICE OR A RUCKSACK FULL OF BOOKS.

Stretch
We’re all probably sitting more than we’re used to which means potentially tight hips, hunched up shoulders and a forward head posture. Using a foam roller can be a great way to prevent injury, improve range of motion, and therefore, help correct imbalances. Similarly, using resistance bands or bandages can be great for full body mobility, and there are various related exercises you can find on YouTube.

Ramadan
Deciding to exercise during Ramadan is a personal choice and one that should not be taken without caution. Some may decide to exercise in the morning or to exercise after suhoor. In any case, it’s important to look after our bodies and ensure that we reduce the intensity of our exercise to prevent injury from bad form, fatigue and dehydration. We can focus on mobility, stretching, and maintaining muscle.

Taking a holistic approach
Ramadan is a month in which our discipline and self-control is put to the test and developed. This can be the perfect time to use the reduced window for mealtimes to really cultivate a healthier diet. As we all know, healthy living is a lifestyle and so we have to ensure that we drink two litres of water a day, have a regular sleep schedule and that we stay in contact with friends and family members through WhatsApp, Skype, Facetime and other social platforms.

Yusuf Ben-Taritfe, Balliol College

Disclaimer: This article is for general information only and should not be treated as a substitute for advice from your own doctor or physiotherapist. The exercises and other advice given are not suitable for everyone. You should not begin any regular exercise routine without consulting a qualified health practitioner, particularly if you are pregnant, have an acute respiratory illness or any chronic or recurring conditions.
DAHI BARAY (DAHI PAKORIAN)

This is a classic Indo-Pak Iftar dish consisting of fried chickpea batter dipped in a refreshing yoghurt sauce. It requires minimal ingredients and is actually very simple to make, involving just two steps: making the yoghurt sauce (about 5-10 minutes) and frying the chickpea batter (another 5-10 minutes).

This dish has always been special to me as it brings back so many memories of past Ramadans. Before I left for university, it would be my job to make this every single evening for our iftar meal at home. I’d be fasting and so would never really know how it would taste until it was time to eat. Every day we would modify it a bit until my mum figured out the exact proportion of salt and sugar and chat masala. But that was using our own spoons and not measuring spoons!

Another fond memory is of when my uncle and his family would visit us in Ramadan. Once they’d got in the car to make the five-hour journey, he would call me to make sure the dahi bhallay were ready for iftar that evening.

Last Ramadan, a friend asked if I could make ten litres of this for the Grand Iftar, which would be attended by over 300 people. I needed to figure out the exact measurements so I could scale it up because again, I wouldn’t be able to taste it on the day! So I did a test run at 2am (this time using measuring spoons!) and discovered that it also works really well for suhoor. A friend and I spent the next afternoon making 10L of this. We were absolutely hysterical from the scale of the massive cooking operation and it was an unexpectedly fun afternoon that I’ll always remember!

This is a tribute to this recipe, tried and tested and associated with fond memories, over many, many years.

**Ingredients**

### Yoghurt sauce:
- 500g yoghurt
- 1/3 - 1/2 cup water
- 1 tsp salt
- 1 tsp chat masala
- 1/4 tsp sugar
- Handful of chopped coriander
- 1/2 an onion

(Add everything in the yogurt and mix)

### Flour batter:
- 2 tbsp chickpea flour
- 1/4 tsp salt
- 1/4 tsp baking powder
- Water

**METHOD**

1. Mix salt and baking powder into chickpea flour and add enough water to get runny consistency

2. Fry in oil using a tablespoon, scooping up the batter, and using small flicks of your wrist to drop a bit of mixture into the oil to make small crispy mini-pakoras

3. Drain on tissue and leave to cool for about 5 minutes then mix into your yoghurt sauce

Watch the recipe on: youtube.com/watch?v=P02RQfJJUJHo
KHEER/RICE PUDDING

METHOD

1. Boil 1/4 cup of rice in water until it is mushy. Drain the rice and put it back in a non-stick pan.

2. Add in 1-1.5 cups of milk and a cardamom pod and let the mixture simmer on medium/low heat until thickened, occasionally stirring so it doesn’t stick to the pan. You can add more or less milk depending on the consistency you like.

Optional: Add in a knob of butter and/or cream with the milk if you want a luxurious kheer.

3. Sugar goes in right at the end just before you serve because it burns if cooked for too long. The amount depends on the person, anywhere between 4 tbsp to 1/8 cup, try adding it in gradually until you find the kheer delicious and coma-inducing.

Optional: Add in some grated coconut or chopped nuts if you really want to go mad.

EASY CUMIN RICE

A quick and easy, foolproof rice recipe. This cumin rice is delicious and so quick to make that it’s basically replaced boiled rice for me! The rice turns out fluffy, well-cooked, and with each grain separate, exactly how rice should be!

METHOD

1. Fry the onions in the oil until medium to dark brown.
2. Meanwhile wash the Basmati rice (no need to soak) until the water runs clear.
3. Boil a kettle and pour in 1.5x the amount of boiling water into the pan, so in this case 3/4 cup of water.
4. Add in the rice, salt, and cumin seeds.
5. Cover the pan with its lid and turn the flame to high for 2-3 minutes so the water boils and the pan can fill with steam.
6. Once you see steam appear from the pan, turn the steam down to low and cook for 10 minutes.

Ingredients

1/4 cup rice
1-1.5 cup milk
Cardamom pod
Sugar

Ingredients

1 tbsp oil
1/4 onion
1/2 cup Basmati rice
(makes 2 servings)
0.5 tsp salt
0.5 tsp cumin seeds

Hira Javaid, St. John’s College
Understanding the Geometric Nature of Arabic Letters

About the Writer

Award winning artist Maaida Noor began her career in 2009 when the Mica Gallery in Knightsbridge, London showcased 20 small pieces of her calligraphy. Since then, Noor has had her art displayed across the UK in many exhibitions and galleries. She continues to inspire and reach people through collaboration with global brands such as Jo Malone, Molton Brown, AERIN, Estee Lauder, HP Latex, and many more.

Noor’s journey into the world of geometry and traditional Islamic illumination first started in 2014 when she began studying at the Art of Islamic Pattern. Having also obtained The Open Programme diploma from ‘The Prince’s Foundation School of Traditional Arts’, Noor knows how to use the traditional methods of producing Islamic art. However, her appreciation of these historic practices is combined with a desire for self-expression, a love of watercolour as a medium and an acute sense of colour. Consequently, she uses a mixture of ancient disciplines and modern expressive techniques. This integration of verses of Islamic scripture, sacred geometry and biomorphic patterns and an expressive watercolour medium is unique to Noor.

We are honoured to have artist Maaida Noor feature in this edition of the OUISoc magazine. We hope you enjoy her insights into the geometrical nature of the Arabic letters that we so often read yet know so little about.

Follow Maaida Noor’s instagram @maaidanoor, and see her website https://maaidanoor.com/ for more.
Ibn Muqla (886 – 940 A.D.)

The history of proportional cursive Arabic scripts goes all the way back to 10th Century Baghdad; the heart of the Abbasid Empire. The beloved city of Caliph Ma’mun who raised philosophers, scientists, theologians, grammarians and calligraphers under his wings. A city which produced more paper and books at the time than the whole of Europe put together.

Amongst the Calligraphers of this time, Ibn Muqla (886 – 940) was the most famous of them all. He is known as the prophet of the Arabic script. Born in Baghdad, he was also a gifted mathematician, scholar, poet, natural scientist and a prominent political figure at the Abbasid court.

It was him who was first to propose a theory for the dimensions of the written characters, keeping them in harmony and symmetry with each other and him who also developed and improved several styles of cursive scripts. Synonymous with being the greatest Arabic calligrapher of all time, he was indeed an architect of script. His doctrine of proportion holds to this day and can easily be used to check whether or not the proportions of a work of calligraphy are correct or not. He was able to restrict the cursive scripts (which exceeded 20 styles) to be only 6 scripts; Thuluth, Naskh, Tawqi, Reyhan, Muhaqqaq and Reqa.

The most known students of Ibn Muqla who carried his legacy are Ibn Al-Bawwab, Abū Hayyān al-Tawhīdī, and Yaqut al-Musta’simi who gained such timeless reputation and famousness for mastering and perfecting the script.

The Proportional Script and the Dot System

In Arabic Calligraphy, the dot, which in Arabic is called the Nukta, is used as a measuring unit for the alphabet. It’s a rhomboid, the size of which depends on the width of the pen as it is pressed down on the paper. All the other letters, whether horizontal or vertical, are adjusted to the size worked out by Ibn Muqla and determined by a given number of dots.

The first letter in the Arabic alphabet, Alif, is a vertical stroke, and was chosen by Ibn Muqla as the criterion for all written characters. Since then all calligraphers began by choosing the length of Alif as a measure in their script. In addition, the curves of many letters lie along a circle with a diameter corresponding to the length of the character Alif. This technique is referred to as ‘proportional script’, because all the letters relate to the size of Alif and the width of the pen (that is to say, of the dot it makes).

Keeping to these proportions is analogous to maintaining the rhythm of a musical composition. It introduces harmony to the script, making ‘music for the eye’. After years of practice, every master calligrapher does it instinctively. However, the dots always allow for a quick check as to whether or not the proportions are correct.

Arabic Calligraphy

With the spread of Islam increased the importance of the written word and its aesthetic expression in calligraphy. Initially the sole purpose of the Arabic script was embedded within the Sacred. Later on, it was used decoratively in or on palaces, yet it has always remained attached to the Sacred. Mosques, which of course contain no images or statues, are adorned with inscriptions as though they were huge books in themselves. Thus, Arabic calligraphy became the most outstanding visual art form in the Islamic world and the contribution of the Ottoman and Persian calligraphers in keeping the tradition alive was remarkable.

If calligraphy was practised at first for purely religious reasons – to give an aesthetically pleasing and legible form to the sacred texts and heighten the spiritual atmosphere of places of prayer through the beauty, rhythm, reflection, and the variety it displays even in its unity – it later went further and developed into an art form of its own.

All calligraphy from maidaanoor.com
We hope that the Current Affairs section of the magazine will, inshAllah, act as an interactive platform to showcase the diversity of opinion that exists amongst ISoc members and provide individuals with an opportunity to give their take on some of the concerns that dominate our times. It is important that, to at least some degree, we engage with what is going on in the world as this can better allow us to make sense of our place within society. It seemed fairly obvious that the theme for this term’s issue should focus on the situation and implications surrounding the outbreak of coronavirus, given the extent to which this has heavily impacted the way that most of us would normally live our lives. It is important to set out from the start that the articles contained in this section represent only the views and opinions of their authors, and should not be taken in any way to necessarily be representative of the views and opinions of the ISoc committee or of the wider Muslim community in Oxford. It is hoped inshAllah that these community write-ins will form a basis for discussion amongst individuals and as such, facilitate the existence of even stronger bonds between ISoc members.
COVID-19 WAS A CULTURAL PROBLEM

On the 31st December 2019, China first officially reported the first cluster of cases of Pneumonia in Wuhan. Yet as cases rapidly rose across China, and scenes of chaos and overwhelmed hospitals and stressed doctors littered Chinese social networks, the rest of the world sat helpless as Covid-19 worked its way across borders, laying waste to health systems along its way. Despite the clear warnings of what was imminently approaching, every Western institution was utterly unprepared for the coronavirus pandemic.

This failure of institutions has greatly damaged the blind trust many of us had placed in systems we had grown dependent upon.

It’s all too easy to pin the cause on one political party or another, on one government or another. But the reality is that no Western country or city was prepared. We witnessed extraordinary sacrifice by many people within these institutions. But these were sacrifices that should never have been made.

It has very little to do with politics and everything to do with the smug complacency that has worked its way into every corner of “developed” nations.

We spent the last few decades sitting smugly complacent. Satisfied by the innovation happening in the world of bits and software. The pace of development in our ability to disseminate information across the world was certainly staggering.

Unfortunately this progress lulled us into a false sense of security. This was made abundantly clear as billions of us sat inside our homes staring down at our 1.4GHZ processor supercomputers, horrified as we scrambled to gather pieces of cloth for our front-line workers.

Globalisation allowed us to abstract away the real work of building stuff to “developing” nations. This created the extremely efficient yet highly brittle systems we have become accustomed to. Susceptible to total collapse at the first sign of volatility.

Only recently, on a 28-hour flight from China, a British airways crew filled a Boeing 777 jet with 2.5 million pieces of PPE equipment. Boxes of protective masks, gloves and overalls filled the seats of the plane while all the overhead lockers were also packed with supplies including ventilator parts.

Seven pilots and six crew made the trip to pick up the supplies and bring them back to be used by NHS frontline staff amid a nationwide shortage.

Why was this necessary? Medical equipment involves no rocket science whatsoever. At least the development of vaccines is hard! Making and distributing masks simply isn’t.

We could have these things but we chose not to — specifically we chose not to have the mechanisms, the factories, the systems to make these things. This was beneath us. Building stuff is something that “developing” nations do.

You don’t just see this smug complacency, this satisfaction with the status quo and the unwillingness to build, in the pandemic, or in healthcare generally.

You see it in education. Oxford University is a prime example. Covid-19 forced us to run a global experiment in virtual classes and lectures. This experiment in large scale education will undoubtedly prove that Oxford University is more than capable of teaching far more than the microscopic percentage of the 800,000 new 18 year olds in the U.K. each year, or the 120 million new 18 year olds in the world each year.

Why not educate every 18 year old? Isn’t that the most important thing we can possibly do?

The answer is simple. Higher education isn’t about education at all. It’s a zero-sum game. An exclusive club. Whether or not we like to admit it, almost all the value in our degrees comes from massive exclusion.

The very suggestion by our Vice-Chancellor to turn some of our courses into “massive open online courses” would invoke a lynch mob of parents, students, faculty and alumni, all desperately clinging onto their source of ego.

You see it in transportation. Where are the supersonic aircraft? Where are the millions of delivery drones? Where are the high-speed trains, the soaring monorails, the hyperloops, and yes, the flying cars?

In order to truly prepare ourselves for the coming decades, we need to return to our “developing” nation psyche.

We are clearly not “developed”. In fact we have barely begun.

We need to want to prioritise building new things more than we want to maintain the old. We must lay waste to the regulatory capture and the bundles of red-tape that have encompassed education, healthcare and physical infrastructure. New companies must build these things, even if incumbents don’t like it. Even if only to force the incumbents to build these things.

We need to build these things.

And if we don’t? Well then prepare your underground bunker and loo rolls, because the next time, that supercomputer in your hand isn’t going to protect you from whatever is working its way to your door.

Jibril Gudal, St. Hilda’s College
5 LESSONS FROM THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC

The following essay was triggered by a question someone posted on the ISoc group chat to reflect on some positive outcomes of the situation. I have learnt so much over the past weeks and despite how difficult and painful this situation is, I thank God for allowing me to see the silver linings and learn such powerful lessons that will stay with me a lifetime. I encourage everyone to sit down and think about the positive things they have derived from this situation as well.

1. Gratitude For Things We Take For Granted

The pandemic has made me incredibly grateful for the little things we always take for granted, like our health, freedom, living without fear, a sense of control over our lives, being able to go to work and travel, fully-stocked grocery stores, being able to buy whatever we wish, being able to eat with our friends, internet, video calls, take-away services, having friends and family in life that you love so much that it worries you sick, amongst many other things.

I also realised how blessed and privileged we are, even in this situation. The situation is so much worse for so many people. We are young, healthy, most likely able to fight off an infection, able to take care of ourselves, our jobs and finances are stable, our employer (the University) isn't forcing us to come to work, colleges/university are taking our welfare seriously, university is being considerate about deadlines and impact on work, etc. If you look at social media posts, you realise how much worse it is hitting some people - people have lost jobs, have no money, have become homeless, are distressed about not being able to feed their kids. We have it so, so much easier than most people. Even in this time, we are amongst the most blessed and privileged in society.

2. Being Humbled and Realising How Powerless We Truly Are

It's deeply humbling to see an entire planet suddenly come to a halt due to something we can't even see. We think we are in control of things and then God can send a tiny little virus to stop us in our tracks due to something we can't even see. We think we are so powerful and in control of things and then God can show us who really is in control. It's such a powerful wake-up call. This verse of the Quran and others have become so much more meaningful to me in light of all this:

“How the likeliness of this life is as the rain We send down from the sky... when the Earth is clad with adornments and beautified, and its people think they have all the power and control over it, Our command reaches it by night or by day and it becomes like a field completely mowed down, as if it hadn't been flourishing the previous day! Thus do we make clear Our Signs for people that think”
- Quran 10:24

How true! When we see the videos of cities after the lockdown, they are so eerily empty that it seems as if they were never bustling just a month ago. Such is the life of the world – so transient and merely an illusion.

“And to Him submits whoever is in the heavens and the earth, willingly or unwillingly, and to Him they shall return”
- Quran 3:83

This verse hit me like never before. Everyone on this planet, believer or unbeliever, has had to submit to whatever God decreed and we just cannot do anything about it. It makes us realise that we really are helpless and solely at the mercy of God.

3. Appreciating Spring Like Never Before

My favourite season has always been autumn. There is such a gentle melancholy in the air and such beauty as the leaves turn a hundred shades of amber before falling softly to the ground. It always reminds me of the bitter-sweet nature of life and the human experience.

But I have also always loved spring and watching the flowers bloom. Yet I had never truly appreciated spring as deeply as I do now. Even in these difficult times, God continues to show us His Love and Mercy and Kindness by showing us glimmers of hope: spring being the epitome of hope that things will thrive and be full of life once again after a period of being still and lifeless. And that God continues to bless us with nature and flowers and sunshine, particularly now to comfort us and give us reason to be happy and hopeful. And that nothing can stop nature or this cycle of life, the flowers will still bloom, virus or no virus.

I really only fully understood the power of nature after spending an afternoon in the gardens or some time watching the stars and realising that no matter how depressing things get, nature can still be so healing and comforting and bring us so much joy and make one completely forget about a pandemic for a while. And that it is out of His Mercy that He has left us with this treasure, gift, and blessing that we often forget to use to its full extent. How kind of Him that he has made this accessible to us wherever we are and in whatever situation, whether we are rich or poor, young or old, everyone gets to have this universal gift to mankind.

“He has subjected everything that is in the Heavens and the earth, willingly or unwillingly, and to Him they shall return”
- Quran 45:13

“So behold! The effects of God’s Mercy - how He gives life to the earth after its death”
- Quran 30:50
It made me ponder that God could’ve used the words, “look at God’s power” or “look at God’s ability” and for the first time I understood why He chose to use the word Mercy because primarily spring is a sign of His Mercy and Love and Kindness and a means to fill us with hope. And if it weren't for the pandemic and how much hope I derived from seeing spring, and how it made me feel enveloped in God’s Mercy, I never would’ve realized this so clearly.

4. Being Liberated from Needing People

I have never known so many wonderful people in my life and never had such meaningful friendships. But having such fun times with people, I had almost forgotten how to be happy just by myself. When I realised I wouldn’t see my beloved friends for weeks to come, I was distraught. I had barely just recovered from the trauma of being in a deserted Oxford during Christmas as I prepared for my viva and I really was not ready to bear it once more. However, it surprised me to learn that I could be locked up in a house, stuck in a foreign country, away from parents, with a pandemic outside, and still be so content and grateful to God and so happy that I wonder if I am just in denial about what’s happening around me and have gone nuts.

When certain friends who I had started to rely on for comfort and love became inaccessible in these difficult times, I had to learn to comfort and soothe myself. And I found God to be the most comforting of friends. This sense of being liberated from needing people was like a burden off my shoulders and I just felt light and self-sufficient. Of course, I still miss these people dearly but at least now I knew that I could continue to be happy even when I was separated from them for long periods of time.

5. Being Liberated from Needing Spring

Now strangely, when I concluded I did not depend on people for my happiness and that they were an extra blessing, I was comforted that I only needed God and nature (because it connects me to God). But then our college went into lockdown and I wasn’t allowed to visit the gardens that had brought me so much joy and hope. Once again, I was distraught because my coping strategy and respite would be the gardens. The parks outside were still open but they just weren’t the same, it was the college gardens and surroundings that I had the emotional connection with.

And so in the next few days, I then had to learn to cope with this new situation. Again, I was surprised to learn that I could still feel joy and happiness despite this. I remembered how one of the supplications I make most often in Ramadan and the main supplication for distress and sorrow that the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) taught us was:

“O God, make the Quran the spring of my heart, the light of my chest, the remover of my sadness, and the pacifier of my distress.”

This quarantine, I understood why this is THE ultimate “supplication for worry.” The amount of comfort and joy I derived from reading the Quran was testament to this. The way it relieved my sadness and worries was just miraculous. It really made me feel like spring was actually in my heart and not in the college gardens that I had been locked out from.

Funnily, I did not know what the Arabic word meant, so I always wondered which spring this was referring to – the season or a spring of water? And I thought to myself why not go with all possible meanings of the word and I wrote this little poem:

“There’s a spring in my heart. There’s a spring, and a spring, and a spring in my heart. And by each of these springs, I mean a different thing. There’s a spring of blooming flowers, There’s a spring of refreshing water, And there’s a spring made of metal, That makes my heart spring of joy. There’s a spring, and a spring, and a spring in my heart…”

Hira Javaid, St. John's College
During this lockdown period many of us have had time to reflect on what has been happening around us. We’ve managed to take the time to slow down our busy lives, focus on ourselves, our faith and our relationship with Allah. Many of us have also been thinking about the state of our society. We’ve witnessed the remarkable efforts of countless people volunteering to help those in self-isolation. Unfortunately, we have also seen healthcare workers risking their lives, and many dying of COVID-19. I think for many of us it has been quite clear that the government’s response to the coronavirus pandemic has been lacking, despite the advice of our nation’s top medical experts.

In recent years, across the world we have seen the rise of populist leaders, Bolsonaro in Brazil, Trump in the USA and Boris Johnson in the UK, who essentially gained office solely on the promise of delivering Brexit (yes, we still have that whole mess to deal with after this virus!) We also cannot forget the rise of the far-right across Europe, even recently seeing a local government coalition with a far-right party in Germany. Accompanying this wave of populism, has been a decline in the use of experts. After all, populists aren’t exactly popular for coming up with astoundingly intelligent policy ideas! It seems that our leaders have forgotten the true value of our nation’s best and brightest who, by the time they reach their high-ranking government advisory roles, have been world leading experts in their fields for 20 years or more. I think it’s high time we remember that Chris Whitty (the Chief Medical Officer for England and the Government’s Chief Medical Adviser) is the one who is a professor of infectious diseases, not Boris Johnson, or any of the cabinet for that matter.

Recent revelations have shown us that Boris Johnson missed several Cobra meetings in the early stages of the pandemic and took little action despite being told by his advisers, in January, that lockdown would be necessary to stop the virus spreading. Personal protective equipment (PPE) stockpiles were not increased, despite them only being sufficient for a flu pandemic, not a coronavirus pandemic, our lack of testing capability was not addressed, flights were not stopped - the list of inaction can go on. In Germany, around 500,000 people were being tested each week. The UK only passed that number of tests on 20th April. Why? I would guess it’s because Germany’s chancellor is a quantum chemist, our prime minister on the other hand didn’t even attend pandemic preparation meetings. In all seriousness, this goes to show the importance of listening to experts, not keeping business as usual to please the electorate, but stopping normal life to prevent countless deaths. It was the experts who truly understood and continue to understand the data being produced and the studies being conducted, not the politicians, in fact Chris Whitty gave a lecture at Gresham College in his capacity as the Gresham Professor of Physic on “Epidemics, Pandemics and How To Control Them,” a title which seems particularly apt in the current circumstances.

Just to be clear, I am not saying that our politicians shouldn’t be able to make decisions, otherwise there would be no point in elections, or the democratic process. Politicians, especially those in government, however, must recognise they are not experts at everything, that’s what advisers are hired for. They understand the data, they know how to analyse it and what action to take. Our politicians need to start listening, it’s already too late.

Bilal Qureshi,
Somerville College
As the death toll in Western countries rises multiple times of that in China, assumptions about governance and the superiority of capitalism as an ideology are being brought to question. The emergence of Covid-19 has challenged the supremacy of liberalist values of freedom which have failed to deal with the spread of the virus. The UK, which has a population of 70 million, has a death toll which is approaching twenty thousand and rising whilst China, with a population of 1.2 billion, has experienced less than five thousand deaths. The response of a repressive illiberal state has been shown to be far more effective than that of liberal Western nations even if the figures are blown out of proportion. This is in spite of the Chinese response being far from optimal itself.

We have witnessed during this crisis, billionaires calling for a lifting of the lockdown whilst living themselves in isolated private islands and extravagant yachts. Among the proponents to end the lockdown in the US are Dick Kovacevich, former CEP of Wells Fargo, who suggested that most Americans should return to work in April, insisting that we "gradually bring those people back and see what happens." It is true that in liberalism there is the belief that the prosperity of corporations and the elite must be preserved for the health of the economy. This is despite the concentration of wealth in the hands of a few and the net movement of wealth from the poor to the wealthy. The billionaires and the elite who play a pivotal role in shaping policy have been instrumental in the hesitation and delay in responding to the virus in the UK. It is true that when the first few cases of Coronavirus landed in the UK, the political elite were worrying more about a potential recession which was said to have been overdue than the well-being and health of the population. In the UK, the government failed to plan appropriately and failed to follow universally accepted scientific advice that was given. Instead, Britain opted for a method of mitigation, seeking herd immunity despite no proven scientific evidence and no accurate assessment of how many would die in such circumstances. Only when the economic impact of the crisis was understood and public pressure was strong enough did the government make the decision to enforce a lockdown.

Despite the implementation of a lockdown, it was seen that the tubes of London were full and it was found that there were unprecedented crowds in Snowdonia. It is easy to blame the masses without paying attention to the values that society has instilled in them, such as those of personal freedom which would inherently make implementing a lockdown more difficult in liberal nations.

Although China’s response to the crisis has managed to curb and restrain the spread of the virus at a much faster rate than Western nations, the authoritarianism and repression that is generally characteristic of their regime is horrifying. This can be seen in the imprisonment of millions of Uyghurs due to their belief in Islam, with reports of torture and harvesting of organs. This is the inevitable outcome when a contentious relationship in the first place exists, in any degree, between people and state.

It is clear that a global response is needed to the pandemic, but unfortunately there is no form of governance present today in which citizens follow legitimate orders of their state without the need for repression or coercion. So long as society continues, in any way, to instil the values of personal freedom in the individual, the interest of the community can never be effectively put first. Only when the masses are discouraged to embrace such values, will they listen to the orders of the state willingly. Only then will justice be delivered, wealth distributed amongst the poor and the lives of citizens put before economic interest.

Danial Farooq, Wadham College
The ISoc is a community that grows and benefits each year from the contributions of every generation. Each term, we will feature an article from an alumnus, sharing their experiences from previous years.
When I look back at my time in Oxford, some of the fondest memories I have are of Ramadan. I was blessed to have been able to spend three Ramadans in Oxford, each one better than the last. I’d never experienced anything like it, the strength of the community really shone through during the blessed month, and it was a privilege to be able to have iftaar and pray Taraweeh through the night with some of my closest friends and biggest role models.

Every year it seemed that Ramadan got bigger and bigger as the ISoc community grew. It started out with 30-40 people a night in my first year, and ended up with numbers regularly higher than 100 crammed into the prayer room in my final year. This couldn’t have been possible without the incredible work of the committee, the Ramadan subcommittee and the countless volunteers who helped out every night to fund, source, prepare, distribute and tidy up all of the food to feed everyone. Somehow, each year it got better as well, with the additions of joint iftaars with other societies, the LMH iftaar, and my personal favourite was the Big Iftar with the local community.

It’s an intense time for those helping out, and it does take its toll, especially when there are exams to manage as well, but that makes the rewards all the greater. It was always heartwarming to see how much people appreciated the efforts that were put in by the volunteers, publicly and privately. There was also an incredible amount of food donated each year by locals, grads, students’ parents and local restaurants, these were often some of the best meals too (sorry not sorry Kebab Kid). My personal favourite was always Harmein’s Indonesian noodles.

It felt like Ramadan really filled everyone’s hearts to the brim, and there was a feeling of fulfilment. It was especially important to make provisions for Ramadan given this was many people’s first experience of Ramadan away from their families. I can’t imagine how difficult it would be if we had to have iftaar on our own and not gather together every night.

It really is a shame that students can’t experience it this year, especially for those who only have one year in Oxford, and even more saddening is the absence of Taraweeh across the nation. But in sha Allah we can all find blessings in staying at home, spending time with our families and remembering Allah without any of the distractions of the outside world. For many of the students too, there will be no added stress of exams. I pray that everyone stays safe and healthy, and has a blessed Ramadan.

About the Writer
Haseem Shah studied Economics and Management at St Edmund Hall from 2015-18, and was an active member of the ISoc during that time. He was President of the ISoc in 2017-18, and Student Affairs Chair in 2016-17. He now works as an Equity Research Analyst at Mondrian Investment Partners in London.
Liban Saleh
OUISoc President, 2011/12

Liban studied for his undergraduate degree - an MChem - at the University of Liverpool. He then undertook his DPhil at New College, from 2009 to 2014, followed by a postdoctoral fellowship at UCLA, Los Angeles.

On completing his studies, he went into headhunting, working in various sectors, including finance, and has also founded a start-up alongside Adam Ali, a friend from his days at Oxford.

When I asked Liban what his defining memory of ISoc was, the response was definitive: “The day Adam Ali and I got an email from the Vice-Chancellor’s office asking to meet us about creating the prayer room”.

As his previous university had its own PR, Liban fully understood the difference a PR could make and was certain that he wanted to leave ISoc with a prayer room. Liban made it clear that the idea of a PR is not new: it dates back to at least the 1990s, with various ISoc members campaigning strongly for this and 2011/12 saw this ambition finally achieved.

The first step was convincing University management that the prayer room was a necessity. “We solicited some very specific contributions from the ISoc members. We wanted case-studies and pictures of UK Universities which already had a PR.” This helped overcome the argument about a lack of space - if other universities had space for a PR, so did Oxford. They also needed to create a strong business case for the PR. “This was quite easy - we simply made the (very real!) case that Oxford is losing students to Cambridge, Imperial, Birmingham etc. due to a lack of PR. Losing students is losing money.” The complete document was sent to the VC in September 2011.

“We were lucky that Prof. Andrew Hamilton was the VC. He had come from Yale and knew the importance of a PR to the reputation of the University, so was supportive of the proposal.” Soon after meeting with him, it was announced that the University had found a suitable space - Liban revealed that the PR was previously an old lecture theatre, so over Summer 2012, there was complete renovation of the theatre and surrounding areas, with the project costing £125,000.

“The PR was pretty much finished by September 2012, ready for MT 2012. We had an official opening ceremony with the VC and the Pro VC for Equality amongst others. I made them all sit on the floor which was great! They were all very serious about it though, and alhumdulillah the PR’s been kept in great shape since”.

Perhaps the most revealing aspect of the interview is what a blessing the PR really is. Liban told me of the difficulties faced with Jummah before its

OUISoc is pleased to announce the launch of a new initiative, focused on unearthing the history of our wonderful Society. Over the course of the year, we’ll be getting in touch with past Presidents and members to chart the Society’s progress. Insha’Allah we hope to upload this information on to our website, in the form of interviews, articles and pictures from the archives! To give you a taste of what’s going on, here's the first article we've produced!
establishment: a room would need to be found every term, keys would have to be organised, and someone would be required to bring all the prayer mats every week. ISoc finally had a home, a space where everyone was able to congregate.

I was surprised to learn the establishment of the PR wasn't the only major change introduced during his tenure. Liban's committee was in fact the first elected committee of ISoc! Traditionally, the outgoing Committee would help appoint the incoming Committee. A general air of apathy had settled over the ISoc, with many members feeling they had little say over the direction of the Society.

"The first Committee I was a part of was an interim Committee, formed to get ISoc back on its feet. We held consultation meetings with our members: they had some pretty strong views and some were quite emotional, but these consultations were really helpful in getting people back on side! People were largely supportive of the shift to an electoral process (although there were a few complaints that anybody could turn up and ruin the society from the inside!) Alhumdulillah, the process went well however, and the first elected Committee of ISoc was formed.

I was also intrigued to learn of a unique event during Liban's tenure, the first ever ISoc play! Liban stressed that "this was not actually an ISoc play, but rather a play written and produced by ISoc members," with the cast also featuring non-Muslim actors. “It was a fun process, but as with all things that you are trying for the first time, mistakes are made (too much swearing!) but ultimately I think most people appreciated what had been done!” Perhaps this is something the current committee could consider (ISoc Ertuğrul, anyone?).

I also learnt of some of the notable speakers involved in 2011/12. “We had both Sheikh Hamza Tzortsis and Sheikh Ajmal Masroor come in. Sheikh Masroor gave a talk on Valentine's day on marriage and Islam which was quite a successful event!”

So, in a year full of change for the ISoc, what was Liban's favourite event? Friday football, of course. It seems that as the ISoc has developed, this event has stood the test of time!

Liban's tenure was an exciting one, with the changes introduced shaping ISoc for years to come. Liban gave an extremely insightful interview (around 2 hours in total!) which we hope to upload, in full, onto our website in the near future. We thank Liban for his input and hope this can act as a strong foundation for the launch of our project.

If anybody has any questions regarding the History of ISoc Project, or would like to contribute, please feel free to contact maryam.amer@st-hildas.ox.ac.uk Jazak'Allah Khair!

Written by Maryam Amer
Edited by Yusuf Hassan
Everyone on committee is always willing to talk to you and help with any questions or concerns you may have. For more details, please visit www.ouisoc.org/ouisoc-committee
## OUISO Termcard - Trinity Term 2020

**REGULAR EVENTS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Time</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Graduate Study Session</td>
<td>Every Wednesday</td>
<td>3-5:30pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>Iftaar Zoom Call</td>
<td>Every day in Ramadan</td>
<td>15 mins after Maghrib</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tajweed Clinic</td>
<td>Every Saturday of Ramadan</td>
<td>6-7pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online Tutoring for School Students</td>
<td>Dates and times to be agreed between tutors and tutees.</td>
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**KEY**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>Religious Education</td>
<td>Ramadan Series: Allah (swt) communicating to us</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Welfare &amp; Social</td>
<td>Ramadan Series: Us communicating to Allah (swt)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Graduates</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td></td>
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All events are hosted on Zoom with links posted on the WhatsApp groups.
ACROSS
3. ISoc meeting point, no idea why it's called this though
4. Brothers-free zone
8. What we all go to quiz night for
10. ISoc Weekly … (no one actually reads to the bottom)
12. >>>> Cambridge eco mosque
13. ISoc hoodie, rep the society
15. What we all go to ISOC formals for
16. What the PR lacks
17. Fancy dress for exams

DOWN
1. Bigger rivalry than El Clasico?
2. Access initiative
4. When everyone tries to pose like an Oxonian
5. ISoc calender
6. Freshers can never go
7. New generation
9. A new beginning every Hilary
11. Exam de-stress
14. End of an era
"Our Lord! Accept (this) from us. Indeed! You are the Hearing, the Knowing."