Looking beyond –
The World after COVID
A gift in your will can help us continue to fight life threatening diseases such as COVID-19, Parkinson’s, mental illness, and other degenerative diseases. Your legacy will support the students, academics and researchers working for the good of us all.

If you would like to discuss any aspect of leaving a gift in your will to medical research, student support or another part of the University, please get in touch.

To find out more please call Caroline on 01865 611520, or email caroline.reynolds@devoff.ox.ac.uk

www.development.ox.ac.uk/legacies
Focus on net zero
The University is moving towards net zero carbon emissions as soon as possible in an urgent stepping up of environmental ambitions, a plan students have welcomed.

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From the editor

Oxford came into the COVID-19 pandemic with a vaccine platform already developed for a pre-existing coronavirus. This allowed an Oxford team to steal a march, with human clinical trial results anticipated as we went to press. June also saw global headlines about dexamethasone, a cheap, widely available medicine shown by another Oxford team to be effective in COVID-19 patients, a genuine breakthrough. As these stories unfold, do visit the University’s special website www.ox.ac.uk/coronavirus.

2020 was a year that shook the world and demonstrated the underlying fragility of our tenure on earth, but balancing the virus is everything else that we call ‘normal’. The University plans to be ‘normal’ again in time for Michaelmas Term. There is also incredibly positive news from across the University to balance the impact of the pandemic, so in this last print issue of QUAD we have struck an editorial balance. The cover story is an extended conversation with Oxford minds, hence ‘The World After COVID’.

If the elephant in the room remains climate change and how we ‘flatten’ that curve, how we achieve it should have co-benefits now. Capitalism is in need of reform; the world will be slower; job creation schemes could be green; visiting your doctor has gone online; the illegal wildlife trade and factory farming require radical reform, and Oxford may get real bike lanes for the first time. Finally, there are other threats besides pandemics, and maybe future pandemics as well. We would do well to heed the warnings this time. This is where universities come into their own, none more so than Oxford and its Medical Science Division.

Below: The pandemic of 2020. The different lines represent different OECD countries. Each line goes out to the right as COVID-19 deaths increase. As the line heads left and down the virus wanes, but the zig-zag pattern shows residual spikes. China is almost imperceptible. The US experience is the biggest outlier – the big blue line – but don’t forget that the USA is much bigger than one European state. Both the US and UK experienced steep fall-offs at the end of May, a cause for hope.

Huge thanks to Professor Danny Dorling and Kirsten McClure for this graph.
Oxford partners with AstraZeneca to defeat COVID

Oxford is ahead in developing a vaccine for defeating the pandemic.

Oxford announced a landmark agreement to partner with UK-based biopharmaceutical company AstraZeneca for the further development, large-scale manufacture and potential distribution of the COVID-19 vaccine currently being trialled by the University.

The partnership, formalised in May, allows for rapid vaccination around the world if the COVID-19 vaccine proves to be effective, with first human clinical trial results due in June.

It was the first such partnership to be formed since the UK Government launched a dedicated Vaccines Taskforce in mid-April. It also came alongside £20 million Government funding for Oxford’s vaccine research and clinical trials.

Under the new agreement, as well as providing UK access if the vaccine is successful, AstraZeneca will work with global partners on the international distribution of the vaccine. By late May the company said it had secured total manufacturing capacity for one billion doses with first deliveries anticipated for September 2020.

Both partners have agreed to operate on a not-for-profit basis for the duration of the coronavirus pandemic, with only the costs of production and distribution being covered. Oxford University and its spin-out company Vaccitech, who jointly have the rights to the platform technology used to develop the vaccine candidate, will receive no royalties from the vaccine during the pandemic. Any royalties the University subsequently receives from the vaccine will be reinvested directly back into medical research, including a new Pandemic Preparedness and Vaccine Research Centre. The centre is being developed in collaboration with AstraZeneca.

Professor Sir John Bell, Regius Professor of Medicine at the University, says: ‘Our partnership with AstraZeneca will be a major force in the struggle against pandemics for many years to come. We believe that together we will be in a strong position to start immunising against coronavirus once we have an effective approved vaccine. Sadly, the risk of new pandemics will always be with us and the new research centre will enhance the world’s preparedness and our speed of reaction the next time we face such a challenge.’

The Vice-Chancellor, Professor Louise Richardson says: ‘Like my colleagues all across Oxford, I am deeply proud of the work of our extraordinarily talented team of academics in the Jenner Institute and the Oxford Vaccine Group. They represent the best tradition of research, teaching and contributing to the world around us, that has been the driving mission of the University of Oxford for centuries. Like people all across the country, we are wishing them success in developing an effective vaccine. If they are successful, our partnership with AstraZeneca will ensure that the British people and people across the world, especially in low and middle income countries, will be protected from this terrible virus as quickly as possible.’

For further University COVID-19 news please visit: [www.ox.ac.uk/coronavirus](http://www.ox.ac.uk/coronavirus)
The University has appointed Hopkins Architects to design the Stephen A. Schwarzman Centre for the Humanities.

The Stephen A. Schwarzman Centre for the Humanities, announced last year, has been made possible thanks to one of the largest ever gifts to the University, of £150 million by philanthropist and businessman Stephen A. Schwarzman.

Anticipated to open in academic year 2024-25, the building will give Oxford’s Humanities a new home with state-of-the-art academic, exhibition and performance spaces, a dedicated hub for engagement with schools, a new Institute for Ethics in AI, a new Humanities Library, and much-needed space for Humanities graduate students and researchers.

Previous designs by Hopkins Architects include Harvard University’s Smith Campus Centre, Yale University’s Kroon Hall, Princeton University’s Frick Chemistry Laboratory, Glyndebourne Opera House and the London 2012 Olympic Velodrome.

The building will be situated on the Radcliffe Observatory Quarter, between the Woodstock Road and the Walton Street. Professor Karen O’Brien, Head of Humanities at Oxford University, said: ‘We were impressed by Hopkins’ track record in creating world-class arts and educational institutions, designing beautiful buildings in sensitive historic settings, and their commitment to creating environmentally sustainable buildings.’

Following broad consultation with faculty and students, the University hopes to unveil an initial design to the public later this year. The public can then provide feedback before planning permission is sought from Oxford City Council.

O’Brien says, ‘Our aim is to create a building which becomes a treasured resource for the whole of Oxford, where anyone can come to enjoy high-quality performances, exhibitions and lectures. We are committed to making this Centre, and the landscaped spaces around it, accessible and welcoming to all. People can interact with the Schwarzman Centre long before the building is completed – we have already started a programme of cultural events.’

The building will house the University’s faculties of English; History; Linguistics, Philology and Phonetics; Medieval and Modern Languages; Music; Philosophy; and Theology and Religion; and the Oxford Internet Institute, as well as a new library. It will also house the University’s new Institute for Ethics in AI.

The building will have flexible performance and exhibition spaces for music, theatre, film, dance and art, including a 500-seat auditorium and a 250-seat performance venue. These venues will feature programming from Oxford students and faculty, leading international artists, and regional arts organisations.
Oxford, race and access

George Floyd’s death at the hands of police in Minneapolis on May 25 sparked global protests and brought global focus on communities and institutions, including Oxford, to take further action on racism.

The University responded with an open letter from the Vice-Chancellor and Heads of House, which acknowledged a ‘collective failure to address the issue of systemic racism properly.’

The University’s response opens a new chapter while building on concerted efforts to widen access at both undergraduate and graduate levels.

The letter announced a new fundraising initiative for scholarships for black students and an access track within the UNIQ summer school, to meet the specific needs of black students applying to Oxford. Other initiatives include an institution-wide consultation on revising its Race Equality Charter action plan.

Recent figures show that of Oxford’s 2019 UK intake, 22% (558 students) were Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) (up from 16% in 2016) and 3.2% (80 students) were black African/Caribbean (up from 1.3% in 2016).

These figures reflect a broader commitment of the University to boost the total proportion of students coming to Oxford from under-represented backgrounds from 15% of the current annual UK intake to 25% of that intake by 2023. Last year the University announced Opportunity Oxford and Foundation Oxford, aimed at students from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds and others who have experienced educational disruption, respectively. These major new programmes will offer transformative educational paths for up to 250 students and help achieve the 2023 ambition. 2020 will also see the launch of the University’s first scholarship programme for UK undergraduates of Black African and Caribbean heritage who come from disadvantaged backgrounds, which was funded by the generosity of Arlan Hamilton, an international entrepreneur assisting under-represented business founders.

The University is also pushing urgently to address access at the graduate level, with a UNIQ+ summer school beginning last year to complement the existing UNIQ summer school, an immersive one-week summer school that began in 2010 and was expanded by 50% (500 places) in 2019.

Owing to the COVID situation, the UNIQ+ 2020 programme for prospective graduate students is digital-only. In its first cohort in 2019 over 5% of participants identified as black, higher than the general population. In an open letter to the Oxford Student Union, the Vice-Chancellor acknowledged that inequality at the graduate student level ‘is the first step in the ‘pipeline’ issues which persist all the way up to senior professors.’
Oxford’s 39th college was established on 7th May 2019 as a graduate society at the University, similar to Kellogg College and St Cross College. It is the first new college to be founded in thirty years and will welcome its first students in October 2021.

Subject to Congregation approval at the time of going to press, Reuben College is the name of the new college following a landmark £80 million gift from the Reuben Foundation in June 2021.

Situated in the heart of the University Science Area, the college will share its building with the historic Radcliffe Science Library and a new Museums Collections Teaching and Research Centre.

The building is currently undergoing an extensive programme of refurbishment, which will create exceptional new spaces and facilities for teaching, study, research, public engagement and social interactions.

Reuben College will be a vibrant research and social community that draws together researchers from different disciplines to explore some of the big questions of our time.

Drawing on expertise from all four Divisions of the University, the college will address three central areas of knowledge in the 21st century:

- **Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning** – addressing problems of global significance from billions of data streams, people and sensors; which will involve not only computer scientists, engineers, mathematicians and statisticians, working on fundamental principles or applications of AI, but also neuroscientists and biologists interested in characterising human intelligence, philosophers working in philosophy of mind and social scientists exploring ethical issues.

- **Environmental Change** – addressing the drivers, impacts of, and responses to, environmental change. This theme covers research ranging from the institutional, social and behavioural drivers of biodiversity loss and climate change; earth system changes (physical, biological and social); and responses to these changes (including human relationships with their environment).

- **Cellular Life** – involving research that seeks to understand the underlying mechanisms of living organisms, with an emphasis on the cell; and including approaches that look at processes, causes, cures, and impacts from social, economic, historical, or biological perspectives.

Much 21st-century research is interdisciplinary, and some of the most exciting research takes place at the boundary between two or more disciplines. This new college will provide the space, facilities and resources to actively promote interaction and exchange both among Oxford researchers and with the wider public, including industry, government and other organisations.

Professor Lionel Tarassenko is the founding President of Reuben College, and the first 29 Official Fellows have been recruited. Preparations are now underway to open for admissions in September 2020, and welcome the first cohort of graduate students arriving in autumn 2021.
Towards net zero

The University announced its intention to achieve by 2050 – earlier if possible – a net gain in biodiversity and net zero carbon status across all its activities.

Prompted by the Vice-Chancellor last year, a Environmental Sustainability Strategy Consultation was circulated earlier this year, which builds on existing policies from the past three decades.

Several projects have to date reduced the carbon impact of the University’s built estate from 81,003 tCO2e (tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent) in 2010 to 54,139 tCO2e in 2019. In addition to the cost of carbon reduction technology in all new buildings, the University has a dedicated £1 million per annum fund for energy and carbon reduction projects.

The new consultation envisages a much more far-reaching series of policies. As well as further reducing carbon emissions from energy, the University would bring sustainability into all areas of the University, including research priorities at the University, the student curriculum, biodiversity, sustainable food and resource use, international travel, domestic travel and investments.

Among many ideas in the consultation, which closed in mid-April, was an aspiration to reduce international travel as much as possible and offset what remains through an internally administered and verified offsetting scheme. Currently, staff flying internationally account for around half the annual emissions from University buildings, or 30,000 tonnes of carbon.

Another aspiration is to greatly reduce meat consumption across University catering activities. Another huge area of concern is the significant University estate plus its tenant farms and other landholdings. There is wide scope for habitat restoration, afforestation and other interventions to improve biodiversity, with the surrounding county of Oxfordshire noted for its losses in this regard over recent decades.

The University’s sustainability actions, current and future, can be further explored here: https://sustainability.admin.ox.ac.uk/home

A new partnership for Oxford

Oxford’s high cost of living is very well understood within the University community and wider city. Professor Louise Richardson, Vice-Chancellor of the University, has stated this is why the University will provide at least 1,000 affordable homes for University and college staff and the same quantity again of affordable graduate accommodation. Delivering such a large development in a socially and environmentally sustainable manner, plus further academic, spin-out and commercial spaces at Begbroke Science Park and Osney Mead, requires a partner with both expertise and a vision for the future of cities in this century.

Stepping forward last summer was Legal & General Capital, the early-stage investment arm of Legal & General Group. Signing the deal in June 2019, Legal & General Chairman, Sir John Kingman, said, ‘Universities are a key driver for the growth of cities, acting as a magnet for talent and incubator of growth and innovation. This partnership is a unique opportunity for two of the largest, most established and long-term UK institutions to work together to address Oxford City’s future needs, enabling it to continue to be a major centre of growth.’

Professor Richardson said, ‘My colleagues and I are delighted to have formed this partnership with Legal & General. We look forward to working together to address some of the most pressing challenges facing the University today. We will build much-needed graduate accommodation, subsidized housing for University staff, and new science parks, where academic departments, University spin-outs and commercial partners can work together to create new companies as well as high quality jobs.’

On the specifics of the 50:50 partnership between Oxford and Legal & General, Dr David Prout, Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Planning and Resources, said the agreement was designed to secure affordable rents over the duration of a lease on land whose freehold will continue to belong to the University.
100 Years of Oxford degrees for women

The exact day women were properly admitted to the University was October 7th, 1920. It had been a long time coming.

Before October 7th, 1920, women were not allowed to be admitted to become members of the University or to graduate. For the best part of half a century women had already attended lectures, taken exams and gained honours in those examinations. They had done so at the five women’s colleges: Lady Margaret Hall, Somerville, St Hugh’s, St Hilda’s and St Anne’s. They were, however, unable to receive the degree to which, had they been men, their exams would have entitled them. The new University statute of 1920, which admitted women to full membership of the University, enabled women who had previously taken, and gained honours in, University exams to return to matriculate and have the degree conferred on them. Consequently, at the very first ceremony at which women were able to graduate more than forty women did so. However, it was not until 1959 that the women’s colleges were given full collegiate status.

The University will celebrate the centenary of the admission of women on equal terms to men, but because of the pandemic we could not provide full detail at the time of going to press. On March 1st we began Women’s History Month by interviewing a group of remarkable women about Oxford today. See: www.ox.ac.uk/news/2020-03-01-womens-history-month.

See also the Vice-Chancellor lecture series Women of Achievement, the latest by Dame Helena Morrissey DBE, freely available here: www.ox.ac.uk/news-and-events/women-of-achievement.

*Turn to page 36 to read a poem from 1938 by Oxford’s oldest living alumna Anne Baker.

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Boswells is closing

Oxford’s landmark department store has shocked the city and University with its closure.

As one of you told us when we announced this story late last year, ‘What heartbreaking news! The impossible is happening.’

The all-purpose department store famous for having just what students need at a convincing price, first opened its doors in 1738, and is believed to be the second oldest family-owned department store in the world.

Approximately 70 employees were told the news in late November, the decision having nothing to do with the retail slump caused by COVID-19.

The Boswells board of directors issued a statement saying that they had been actively exploring all options to make the business work, ‘but due to prevailing adverse retail conditions has concluded that the store is likely to close in 2020.’

One of the Directors, Mr Jonathan Pearson, told The Oxford Times that the store had not made any money over the past two years, despite a new café that since opening in 2015 had won a loyal clientele.

Part of the existing Boswells shop is leased by the City Council, while another part is believed to belong to the owners and will be sold, possibly to create a hotel.

Left: Boswells began its last sale early in 2020, its closure having nothing to do with COVID-19.
Chancellor’s Court of Benefactors

The following people were admitted to the Chancellor’s Court of Benefactors at a special ceremony in Convocation House in 2019. The Court, which has more than 250 members and includes 26 fellows, celebrates and recognises those friends and supporters who have been outstandingly generous towards the University and the colleges.

New Members

Mr Muhammad A. Alagil
Mr Ben Delo (Worcester, 2002)
Mr William Wai-Hoi Doo, JP
Ms Jan Rees, OBE
Dr Wilson Sea
Mrs Maria Willetts (St Anne’s, 1974)
ASP Asset Management, represented by Mr Raymond Lim
KSI Education Ltd, represented by Dr Sabrina Cheung

New Year Honours 2020

We congratulate the following alumni and members of the University for the Honours they received at the start of the year.

The full list of 59 is online at:
www.alumni.ox.ac.uk/quad/article/new-year-honours-2020

Companion of Honour (C.H.)
Sir Keith Thomas (Balliol, 1952), for services to the Study of History

Dame Commander Order of the Bath (D.C.B.)
Dame Melanie Dawes (New College, 1984), for Public Service

Dame Commander Order of the British Empire (D.B.E.)
Professor Sarah Jane Whatmore for services to the study of environmental policy and flood management decision making

Knight Bachelor
Professor Sir Anthony Cheetham (St Catherine’s, 1965), for services to Material Chemistry, UK Science and Global Outreach
Sir Christopher Hampton (New College, 1964), for services to Drama
Sir Simon Stevens, (Balliol, 1984) Chief Executive of the National Health Service, for services to Health and the NHS in England
As the pandemic descended we decided at QUAD to focus ahead on what life would, or could look like on the other side. For whereas the world seemed to stop in its tracks as lockdowns began, a university as old as Oxford has endured wars, plagues and reformations and counter-reformations. Most of what went for normal before COVID-19 will return again in some form. The question is, what form?

We could also have asked: what was the world before COVID-19? Future historians will ask this, noting how globalisation had already run into bad weather, the scars of the last financial crash remained unhealed and social and racial inequality were ripe. As Oxford’s Professor of the History of Medicine Mark Harrison has noted, ‘When there has been extremism and tensions [following an epidemic], they have already existed...Epidemics in themselves don’t cause tensions, they expose them.’

Climate change was re-exposed in this sense, the brutal truth being that the slashing of climate emissions globally, amounting to an annual fall of perhaps 3-5%, makes an imperceptible difference to its pace and scale. As with the pandemic, the goal now is to try and ‘flatten the curve’, referring here to emissions rather than infections.

The University has a great deal to offer. Quite apart from a possible COVID-19 vaccine, the candidate for which rested on deep pre-existing institutional excellence in infectious diseases, research and ideas are back in fashion. This is where the pages that follow convey the thoughts of some of Oxford’s minds, whether considering the future of capitalism, the ‘pace of change’ of global society, the natural world and climate change, urban environments, food security, primary public healthcare and existential risks in the broadest sense.

**Top:** April 15, 2020: The Bank of England at 13:20, lunch hour. No-one in living memory had seen such a quiet scene, made more surreal by non-stop sunshine during the same month in the UK.
Repurposing capitalism

The Great Financial Crash of 2007–9 had already caused a raging academic debate about capitalism’s purpose, but the pandemic of 2020 blew it wide open, writes Richard Lofthouse.

The biggest single impact of COVID-19 was an economic collapse without recent historic precedent. Political disagreement over how to weight economic risk in relation to otherwise avoidable deaths from a virus has been one of the starkest themes of the pandemic.

‘Rebuilding the economy’ is now an emerging fault line for competing visions of what an economy should look like, with vast implications for capitalism itself.

Indeed, there are some voices calling for capitalism’s demise, and indeed Oxford alumnus Neil Monnery (Exeter, 1980) has noted in a recent book (see p31), one of the most regrettable characteristics of currently ascendant rightwing populism is a resurgence in crony capitalism of the worst variety, the sort that defined Battista-era Cuba before it flipped to a Communist model in 1959. While Cuba ‘failed’, it did so less conspicuously than almost everywhere else the experiment was tried, on account of significant investment in healthcare and education.

Another alumnus George Monbiot (Brasenose, 1982) has in recent months called for the smashing of capitalism but from the perspective of wanting a habitable planet and seeing the inexorable connection between rampant material consumption and rampant climate emissions.

One person’s revolution is another’s ‘whole economy transition’, and this was no less than what outgoing Bank of England Governor Mark Carney (St Peter’s, 1995) called for in a landmark speech delivered on 27 February. He spoke at London’s Guildhall with a view to the UK’s hosting of the COP26 climate summit in September (now postponed), when people in London were still shaking hands with each other and the coffee shops had but a fortnight’s worth of trade ahead of them but didn’t yet know it.

Carney’s goal was to trigger the mass greening of global finance and investment. He said, ‘Achieving net zero will require a whole economy transition—every company, every bank, every insurer and investor will have to adjust their business models. This could turn an existential risk into the greatest commercial opportunity of our time.’

A few days later QUAD met Sir Roger Gifford (Trinity, 1973) (see p24), Chair of London’s Green Finance Institute (GFI) and Senior Banker for Swedish corporate bank Skandinaviska Enskilda Banken (SEB). The Green Finance Institute was only opened in 2019, and Sir Roger spoke openly about the need for a revolution. He wasn’t channelling Fidel Castro but spoke eloquently about attaching purpose to money, replacing an ethic-starved profit motive with climate and biodiversity imperatives that place an adequate price on natural capital, perhaps through a meaningful carbon tax.

This was all before the pandemic.

So too was most of a three-year-long British Academic research programme called ‘Future of the Corporation,’ whose academic lead is Colin Mayer (Oriel, 1971), Peter Moores Professor of Management Studies at Oxford’s Said Business School. Mayer has long nurtured a blueprint for the reform of capitalism. Once again we find purpose at its heart. His starting proposition is that ‘The purpose of business is to solve problems profitably, and not to profit from causing or exploiting problems’.

He casts stiff judgement over the predatory, asset-stripping tendency that invaded capitalism in the 1990s, followed in the noughties by the rise of the ‘activist investor,’ who typically bought enough stock in a company to secure a place on its board, to then typically drive short-term shareholder value.

One of Mayer’s points is not that such activity is invariably wrong but that where it is motivated solely by greed it usually wrecks havoc on the long-term prospects of the company.

He cites the Wells Fargo bank scandal and the broader ‘hollowing out of the American Midwest’; the case of what happened to aircraft maker Boeing since the effective reverse takeover by McDonnell Douglas; and the case late last year of Peter Polman at Unilever, a man of principles whose planned retirement was apparently accelerated by a briefly-tabled hostile takeover bid by US food giant Kraft Heinz, with unknown long-term consequences.

One of the ideas put forward by the first report from the British Academic Future of the Corporation research was...
that individual businesses would be required to identify their own unique purpose, and that it would be encoded in corporate law.

Another leading thinker at Oxford is Sir Paul Collier (Trinity, 1967), currently Professor of Economics and Public Policy at Oxford’s Blavatnik School of Government. The author of *The Future of Capitalism* offered in that book, published two years before the pandemic, a *mea culpa* on behalf of economists who he says became ‘lazy’ about globalisation, believing wrongly that greater efficiencies in economic production would drive greater prosperity for all, even if unequally.

Possibly the largest single idea (and immediate reality) arising from the pandemic is that it slammed the brakes on globalisation, symbolised in recent months by closed international borders, grounded airliners and ascendant nation states.

Collier, a development expert, has long argued that globalisation has not been good for all and the ‘bottom billion’ global citizens are often on a ‘down escalator.’ Some of the ‘new anxieties’ of 21st-Century Capitalism, as he terms them, extend right across wealthy states too and concern provincial disadvantage and a lack of tertiary education, the latter a prerequisite for getting on the economic ‘up escalator.’

Collier and Mayer agree that there are always solutions when capitalism derails itself, as it did in the 1840s, the 1930s and most recently in 2008–9, or in 2020 when it was simply de-railed. The point is to correctly deduce what went wrong and then articulate responses.

But Mayer is also clear that not everything that is wrong with capitalism can be attributed to globalisation. He emphasises instead the ‘financialisation’ of capitalism, which returns the conversation to the earlier theme of companies being impaired by new owners whose principle motivation is greed.

One of the broad points argued by Mayer is that the era of Milton Friedman (1912–2006) is over.

He refers roughly to the past sixty years of capitalism, a period of dizzying economic growth in the west, but also one in which shareholder interests trampled on intrinsic purpose and created rootless, troublesome corporations.

Friedman, a Chicago economist, notoriously argued in a *Time* magazine article in 1970 that businesses’ sole purpose is to generate profit for shareholders, an idea that gained wide traction during the 1980s and beyond.

Neither a radically impaired natural environment nor the abject poverty of the ‘bottom billion,’ nor indeed a pandemic, can permit such a value-devoid corporate environment to continue, says Mayer.

COVID-19 imposes an extreme short term ‘value’ test on capitalism, namely who will get a vaccine if it is successfully developed, and on what terms. Will there be a ‘green new deal’ of the sort called for by Oxford’s Professor of Environmental Economics, Cameron Hepburn? (see p18).

Unfortunately, the pandemic has also ravaged the macroeconomic numbers, apparently placing further severe pressure on the capitalist model. States have become hyper-borrowers, with many national debts soaring above 100% of GDP yet with austerity firmly off the menu, at least for now.

The uncharted fiscal waters unleashed by the pandemic have made every finance minister queasy.

Government bond yields fell into negative territory in the UK in May, signalling that the market was willing to pay the government to borrow, so worried was it about deflationary pressures. The worry is that such a situation could reverse and inflation take off as debt becomes unsustainable, resulting in a devastating bond market collapse.

The extraordinary thing is that none of these ideas are new even in the recent past – there has been extensive debate since 2007–9 about the political economy of sovereign debt, and whether a government might engineer a default without causing mass impoverishment or a war; how the US can possibly keep borrowing as it has.

As it stands the pandemic has just greatly intensified the very themes that were already keeping economists awake at night, zero or negative interest rates harming pensions and savings, distorted capital allocations and asset price inflation fuelling wealth inequality.

Despite all these problems there is a huge opportunity for intelligent reform, as evidenced by the international settlements struck during the bleakest days of World War Two.
So many views, so much to read, so little time and, in many cases, a lot less energy than before. Humour me, read on, as my take is a little different. Life after COVID-19 will be what some of us suspected it would be before COVID-19 arrived. Yes, of course the pandemic will have an impact; but there is an enormous danger in assuming that all that follows now follows because of what we have just lived through. Much of what happens next will have been on the cards anyway.

How can I be so naïve as to not think that the pandemic changes everything? It is partly because I finished writing a book just as the pandemic was starting. It had taken me six years to write and in December 2019 I was debating with the copy-editor final changes to various phrases. That is when the first known case of this new disease in Paris occurred – but no one knew. I signed off the manuscript of this book in January having crossed every last ‘t’ and dotted each ‘i’; just as the first news was coming out of China. Thus I did not fix what I wrote then in the light of what has happened since. The book is called Slowdown.

We were already slowing down. The slowdown had been gradual and had been going on for decades and so it had been rarely recognised. We had a tendency to ascribe particular events with special importance and to say that many of them created tipping points. However, look back at the long run and what appeared at the time – to you – to be all important fades in terms of significance, except as a warning that it can happen again.

In Slowdown I give the example of the 1918–1919 influenza pandemic – at least one order of magnitude more deadly than COVID-19 (hopefully two orders). I showed how it only dented the rise in global GDP in those years, which fell by 14% in 1918 but then rose by 16% in 1919. The First World War was mainly a European
‘The slowdown had been gradual and had been going on for decades and so it had been rarely recognised.’

Below: Worldwide passenger trips on aircraft per year (millions). While growth since 1970 has been uneven, it has been rapid. It accelerated sharply after 2011, rising to 4 billion seats by 2017.

The numbers of passengers fell worldwide in both 2001 and 2002 following the attacks on the Twin Towers in New York, when some 47 million fewer seats were booked worldwide. They also fell by 1.08% in 1992 when the price of jet fuel almost doubled to over $1 a barrel. Earlier they had fallen in both 1980 and 1981 when the price of fuel had similarly risen sharply.

Life after COVID-19 will be different, but we will never get to play out the counterfactual. We will now never know what might have happened had this particular disease not emerged this year or this decade.

So let’s go back to what appeared to be happening already. I titled my book Slowdown because I found that far more things were slowing down than people generally accepted. This included the rate of growth of GDP, slowing each decade since the 1950s; it included demography, and it even included the growth of personal debt, partly because it had grown so quickly before.

I found four things that were not slowing but clearly had to slow. These four things were not just still rising but also accelerating. You already know most of them. They were 1) the amount of CO2 we were emitting globally each year; 2) the surface temperature of the planet; 3) the number of flights being taken each year globally; and 4) the number of university graduates worldwide. Superficially, the pandemic has dented all four, but each would have had to have slowed at some point even without it. For example: the proportion of young adults who go to university cannot rise faster and faster for ever. At the extreme it would have to stop at 100%.

The graph on the left shows the trend for flights. And yes – COVID-19 has altered the deceleration in the rise so many were campaigning for, into a collapse – for now.

The number of people taking flights was a good example of something initially spreading exponentially (just like a pandemic). Step back and the exponential stage of air flight passenger growth was from shortly after the launch of the first 747 (1968) to 2020 and the global airline shutdown. Other trends will not be so abruptly halted – in fact the virus will not dent them visible.

I’ll end with one example that may surprise you – global life expectancy. Fewer than 1% of all the people who will die in the world in 2020 will die of COVID-19. 60 million people die a year, and as I write 300,000 have died from the disease, half a percentage of 1% of all the people who will die in the world in 2020 will die of COVID-19. 60 million people die a year, and as I write 300,000 have died from the disease, half a percentage of sixty million; and the growth in COVID-19 mortality is slowing abruptly.
The mango and food security

Saher Hasnain considers Pakistan’s response to COVID-19 and its broader implications.

Hunger pandemic. Poverty tsunami. 500 million people nudged into poverty. 300,000 dying daily of starvation for the next three months. Dealing with the reality behind these headlines is massively complex, but the brute fact is that they predate the pandemic. COVID-19 has made it all worse.

How do we broaden our horizons and look far enough ahead to ensure that our responses to the present crisis don’t hamstring us down the line? It is too easy right now to narrow our horizons at the expense of lucid thinking and sensible action.

‘Pakistan is the fifth most vulnerable country in the world for climate change’

Allow me to connect some big problems by presenting the King of Fruits. The Pakistani mango is a bright and wonderful presence in our exquisitely blistering summers. It is an entirely different beast when compared to those mangoes one occasionally finds lurking in British supermarkets. With over 1,500 varieties, of which at least 30 are grown commercially, the mango is an important element in a Pakistani summer. The vivid fruit weigh down produce stalls and brighten up food markets.

One does not simply eat a mango. One surrenders to it.

The mango and many other fruits and vegetables are threatened by COVID-19. Mangos cannot be stored for long, and time is running out to harvest and ship this year’s crop.

Nearly two million tonnes of Pakistani mangoes are typically shipped annually to over 50 countries, but in 2020 it may not happen.

Conflicting COVID-19 policies now mean that laborers cannot travel, transporters cannot operate, food prices are low, the harvest is at risk and food producers suffer. Pakistan is one of the many countries projected to face severe food insecurity as a result of COVID-19.

In so many other ways the crisis was already well underway because of the rapidly creeping spectre of climate change. Fruit crops are falling prey to extreme weather events, shifts in temperature and rainfall, and ravenous pests. These maladies have a crushing impact on the wellbeing of ordinary citizens. At least half the country’s households face food security stress of some form. Almost 40% of children under 5 are stunted. The situation is dire now for millions of vulnerable people. It will get worse.

Why would any of this matter to those not from the region? Let us explore this complex question through pathways for change.

Pakistan under the leadership of Prime Minister Imran Khan (Keble, 1972) has already implemented an unusual measure to cope with the costs of the crisis. The unemployed are earning money through the 10 Billion Tree Tsunami project. This is a government initiative to reforest parts of the country, begun in 2014. Now expanded, it’s an attempt to alleviate COVID-19 hardship but not forget climate change.

Pakistan is the fifth most vulnerable country in the world for climate change. Besides the catastrophic environmental, social, and economic costs, it is climate change’s impacts that spell a death knell for the fruit and vegetable sector which supports millions of people in the country.

Agri-food reforms are firmly on the menu too. The Ehsaas Poverty Alleviation Program has helped over 12 million families by providing emergency cash assistance to those affected by the lockdown. Barriers to financial inclusion and empowerment are also being removed by improvements to mobile and internet banking. The critical factor now will be to continue developing the necessary institutional and policy support to ensure that these programs can function as long-term social and financial safety nets for the most vulnerable of our population.

There is great room for innovation and optimism right now. It is easy to imagine the end of the world as we know it but let us make room for imagination. Let us now imagine biting into a wonderfully succulent mango. The fruit is joy and happiness, but is sometimes measured also in messiness. Humans are resilient. We will get through this to a new normal. Let us ensure that we don’t leave behind a great swathe of the population.

Saher Hasnain (St Cross College, 2012) is a Post-doctoral Researcher at Oxford’s Environmental Change Institute Food Systems Transformation Programme. She works on exploring food systems, their relationship with the environment, people, and the economy, with special focus on food system transformation in urban Pakistan.
For years, general practice was described as the ‘cornerstone’ of the NHS. Founded on the principles of what is known as ‘relationship-based care’ (a personal relationship with a single clinician who could in theory look after you from your cradle to your grave), general practice in the NHS was a service that almost everyone knew how to access – and one they frequently did. The average person pops in to see their GP five times a year, and only a tiny proportion are referred on for hospital care.

Because COVID-19 is so contagious, the way general practice works has changed dramatically. It has become impossible to walk into a GP surgery and ask to be seen. Patients must now apply online, phone the surgery or contact the national advice line NHS111. They must then wait – and will eventually get a call-back (phone or video) from a clinician, or offered a face-to-face appointment, possibly in a ‘hot hub’ – a restricted area on a chosen site where patients can see a clinician for other conditions, like pre-existing diabetes, kidney disease or heart complaints. The speed of change has been dramatic. Within three weeks of the first COVID-19 death in the UK, 93% of all GP-patient consultations were occurring by phone or video.

These changes to what used to be the family doctor service are radical, frightening and difficult. They cut to the core of what it is to care and be cared for, and what ‘good’ and ‘excellent’ health services look and feel like.

At an organisational level, this shift from in-person to what I’m calling remote-by-default consulting is the fastest and most extensive introduction of a radical service innovation since the NHS was established in 1948. Clinicians are faced with a triple novelty: a new disease (uncertain, serious, contagious), a new way...
of interacting with patients (phone, video) and major changes to workflows and clinical pathways.

At the time of writing, with the peak UK infection rate in the past, much is still at stake. Lives depend on GPs ensuring that the right patients get sent to hospital at the right time to ensure benefit from critical care without overwhelming the hospital with referrals. This requires accurate identification of cases for urgent referral, as well as monitoring of those with moderate disease – often through the medium of a new or repurposed technology.

The rapid emergence of new hardware and software products to support video consulting was a relatively small part of the story (all worked pretty well; none were perfect). Success of remote models of care is not just about the functionality of technologies but also about their clinical safety, how we make them work, and the extent to which NHS infrastructure can accommodate them quickly enough.

We know from health systems research that disruptive technological innovation, especially in heavily institutionalised environments, is complex, uncertain, challenging and risky. I’m delighted that my interdisciplinary team of researchers have just been awarded a grant from UKRI’s COVID response fund to explore the clinical, technical, organisational and professional challenges of the shift to remote-by-default.

We’ll be using a mix of different methods to generate a study – including making use of new technologies ourselves to offer our team as ‘virtual researchers-in-residence’ to help staff in different general practice sites adjust to the changes and collect data on what’s going well and less well.

Complexity theory tells us that timely analysis of emerging data followed by rapid adjustment of both technologies and processes at local level helps embed and sustain change. Just as important is building strong relationships and trust with individuals expected to deploy the changes.

My research team will also be collecting quantitative data and using sophisticated data linkage methods to correlate assessment scores recorded by GPs with subsequent outcomes in hospital. And, subject to patient and clinician consent, we’ll be video-recording actual video consultations and analysing the interactions using something called conversation analysis to get a handle on the interactional dynamics.

I hope we’ll discover a silver lining in the COVID-19 cloud, in the form of evidence-based knowledge that will help us sustain a more flexible service in general practice in the longer term. I for one would sometimes prefer to contact my GP by video than make an unnecessary journey to the surgery!

Beyond the UK there is a broader picture. Every health service in the world is trying to balance the trade-off between a conventional face-to-face service and the effective and efficient use of new technology to support remote consulting.

Achieving high-quality video consulting at pace and scale is not going to be easy. We hope that this Oxford study, when complete in 2021, will help generate evidence-informed guidance that will be useful in other countries.

Trish Greenhalgh (Univ, 1980), is Professor of Primary Care Health Sciences and Fellow of Green Templeton College. She accepted an OBE in 2001 for services to evidence based medical care.
Although there is not enough evidence yet to say how COVID-19 jumped from its original host to humans, there have been previous examples of viruses originating in wild animals causing disease epidemics in people.

Historically, over two-thirds of zoonotic viruses (viruses transmitted between animals and humans) have originated in wild animals, most frequently rodents, bats and primates. The transmission of zoonotic diseases primarily occurs when there is close contact between humans and animals.

In the case of Wuhan, there is a well-publicised theory of transmission involving bats via pangolins to humans, yet this remains unproven. Distressing images of pangolins, often in cages, were however quickly beamed around the internet at the start of the pandemic. Widespread anger among wildlife conservation and animal welfare groups erupted, sometimes followed by calls for a complete ban on wildlife trading and the markets where it takes place.

Unfortunately it’s not so simple and I’ve spent most of 2020 so far trying to untangle many knots of misunderstanding around these issues.

The first thing to say is that ‘wild’ and ‘domestic’ animals don’t separate as clearly as people think they do. Nearly half of all the infectious zoonotic diseases that have emerged in humans since 1940 have come directly from domestic livestock, even if they originated in wild animals.

That puts the spotlight on our own, heavily industrialised livestock and land use practices.

The danger is that in calling for a blanket ban on wild meat and wildlife trade, we might reap unintended consequences, either driving legitimate trade underground or accelerating land clearances for domestic livestock that destroy biodiversity.

Following the 2013–2016 Ebola outbreak, a universal ban on wild meat markets was imposed across West Africa. It pushed many wild meat markets underground, rendering regulation more complex and worsening food hygiene conditions, a key driver of disease spread. Past attempts to limit wild meat sales in Equatorial Guinea were only transiently effective. The hunting ban was not enforced but the shock to supply led to a sharp increase in wild meat hunting compared to hunting rates prior to the ban – not dissimilar to western consumers stockpiling toilet paper at the start of the pandemic.

Researchers estimate that if livestock such as cattle were to replace wild meat as a source of food in the Congo Basin, 25 million hectares of forest would be converted to pastureland. The net risk then of a new pandemic might rise, not fall. This is why we need to proceed with evidence while not losing sight of human rights and customary practices in places where wildlife hunting might actually be sustainable while intensive animal husbandry is not.

Understanding the root causes of zoonotic diseases and how they transmit to humans is one vital line of inquiry, but I would prefer to cast the net much, much further and call for a wholesale rebalancing of our relationship to nature.

As such, I hope that the future beyond COVID-19 brings many reforms. We need to clamp down on illegal and high-stress use of animals whether wild or domestic. We need to support well-regulated, cruelty-free trade in wildlife based on evidence that a particular trade is helping to protect wildlife and their habitats against threats whilst meeting livelihoods and food security needs. We need to limit the destruction of natural habitats and restore nature and we need to better manage industrial agriculture, preventing future disease outbreaks in humans and livestock by addressing animal welfare, pollution of the land and watercourses, and antibiotic resistance. It’s a tall order but there are no alternatives. We have to try harder.

E.J. Milner-Gulland (New College, 1985) is Tasso Leventis Professor of Biodiversity in Oxford’s Department of Zoology. She co-founded the Saiga Conservation Alliance in 2006 and was made an official fellow of Parks College in 2019. She is Director of Oxford’s Interdisciplinary Centre for Conservation Science.
Professor Cameron Hepburn (Magdalen, 2000), Director of the Smith School of Enterprise and Environment, University of Oxford, with co-authors including Nobel prize winner, Professor Joseph Stiglitz and well-known climate economist Professor Lord Nicholas Stern, published the report *Will COVID-19 fiscal recovery packages accelerate or retard progress on climate change?*  

Their analysis of possible COVID-19 economic recovery packages shows the potential for strong alignment between the economy and the environment. Their evidence suggests that green projects create more jobs, deliver higher short-term returns per dollar spend and lead to increased long-term cost savings, by comparison with traditional fiscal stimulus. 

The report authors hope that countries will seize this once-in-a-generation opportunity to incorporate climate criteria into national plans. 

Most G20 governments implemented significant short-term rescue measures in the face of the pandemic, subsequently outlining stimulus spending plans running into trillions of dollars. 

Professor Hepburn says, ‘The COVID-19-initiated emissions reduction could be short-lived. But this report shows we can build back better, keeping many of the recent improvements we’ve seen in cleaner air, returning nature and reduced greenhouse gas emissions.’ 

Drawing on a global survey of senior central bank and finance ministry officials, as well as learnings from the 2008 financial crisis, the economists catalogued more than 700 stimulus policies into 25 broad groups, and conducted a global survey of 231 experts. On average, respondents perceived a ‘green route’ out of the crisis to be highly effective economically. Examples of this include investment in renewable energy production, such as wind or solar. 

Other desirable policies include retrofit spending on buildings to enhance efficiency, natural capital investment for ecosystem resilience and biodiversity (afforestation, expanding parkland, enhancing rural ecosystems), and investment in education and training to address immediate unemployment from COVID-19 alongside structural employment opportunities from de-carbonisation. Clean infrastructure investment can include better transport with co-benefits to the health of a population through active travel (see p20). 

For developing countries, rural support scheme spending was also highly ranked. Conversely, unconditional airline bailouts performed the most poorly in terms of economic impact, speed and climate metrics. ‘Currently, the UK directs €10.5bn in subsidies to fossil fuels. Reallocating this capital to jobs-rich renewable energy projects would be a win-win for the economy and environment’, says Brian O’Callaghan, researcher at the Smith School of Enterprise and the Environment, University of Oxford. 

Hepburn says that since the report was released, ‘we have been spoken to by over 1000 officials in several national finance ministries and international institutions to support them as they look to detail their recovery plans.’ He noted that the EU recovery stimulus spending announcement in late May ‘appears to be heading in the right direction but we await the details.’  

www.smithschool.ox.ac.uk/publications/wpapers/workingpaper20-02.pdf
Walking, cycling and e-bikes

The pandemic may accelerate transport reform in Oxford, writes Richard Lofthouse.

They might not have the tacky glamour of the 1987 Steve Martin film *Planes, Trains and Automobiles*, but walking, cycling and e-bikes would surely feature in a 21st-Century remake.

This is partly because the global media chorused about the newly discovered wonder of clean air arising from lockdown, and partly because there is collective realisation that crammed public transport is now problematic but so too are space-inefficient private cars, for post-COVID commuting options in cities everywhere from Manila to New York.

Pre-pandemic, Oxford City and County Councils were already consulting about a reasonably ambitious scheme called Connecting Oxford, that would gradually clamp down on commuter parking and car access to the city centre.

The University position is to go further and faster, and the pandemic has surely provided the urgency. The City Council measured that pre-COVID-19, crossing Oxford by bus, at rush hour, from Summertown to Oxford Business Park took fifty minutes – an average of 6 mph.

This dismal example illustrates why Oxford suffers from poor air quality and an unpleasant environment for the already valiant army of walkers and cyclists, many of them students and staff of Oxford’s universities.

Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Planning and Resources, Dr David Prout (Wadham, 1985), says, “We are playing catch-up in Oxford. London as a whole has invested in fabulous new dedicated cycle lanes. And even less well-known areas of London have gone further in widening pavements and reducing carriageways. I think of Oxford not as the ‘cycling city’ but as the ‘City of Tarmac’.”

One of the problems Oxford faces is that so many workers live outside the city owing to high property prices. But this is where e-bikes come into their own, costing a fraction of a car but ranging upwards of 100kms. The problem is a lack of quality infrastructure to make cycling safe, with £200 million needed in Oxford according to former London Cycling Commissioner Andrew Gilligan.

As we went to press, the City and County Councils had obtained nearly £5 million from central government for better bike paths and pavements.

A recent report by the Oxford University-based Centre for Research in Energy Demand Solutions (CREDS) calculates that electrically assisted bicycles, if used to replace car travel, have the capability to cut car carbon dioxide (CO2) emissions in England by up to 50% (about 30 million tonnes per year).

The e-bike insight exemplifies a wider insight, that between 1990 and 2007, greenhouse gas emissions from transport in the EU increased by 36%, while greenhouse gas emissions from other sectors decreased by 15% during the same period. Cars became larger and heavier, offsetting their efficiency gains, while everyone drove more.

The University’s own sustainability consultation not only wants to reverse this but notes that flying will likely become its greatest single source of emissions, as energy consumed on site becomes greener. In 2018-19 staff flights accounted for 30,000 tonnes of carbon, and that figure does not account for any student movements to and from Oxford. This is why the likely new travel hierarchy will be to avoid travel wherever possible, COVID-style; then to reduce travel; to travel without flying, and only as a last resort to fly where there are no alternatives and offset the emissions.

The University also wants a freight consolidation hub to slash the number of diesel vans trundling around the University making deliveries, and has called for the addition of new infrastructure such as a railway halt at Begbroke. It will also build its Green Travel Fund and create an offsetting fund to invest in natural climate solutions that may range from reafforestation and habitat restoration locally to possible carbon capture solutions drawing on the geological expertise of the Department of Earth Sciences, no doubt in combination with other university and commercial partners.

But prevention is better than cure where emissions are concerned, and as every generation of students knows walking and cycling are the winning combination.
Reweighting risk

Humans will need to step more carefully after the pandemic, argues Oxford moral philosopher Toby Ord.

In a recent treatise on existential risk, moral philosopher Dr Toby Ord (Balliol, 2003) notes that the international body responsible for the continued prohibition of bioweapons (the Biological Weapons Convention) has an annual budget of just $1.4 million, ‘less than the average McDonalds Restaurant.’

A Senior Research Fellow at Oxford’s Future of Humanity Institute, Dr Ord’s argument is that we routinely underestimate risk as a species, thereby failing to address it as effectively and as cheaply as we could, before disaster strikes rather than afterwards.

He refers not so much to the catastrophic film fodder beloved of Hollywood – giant asteroids, super volcanoes and stellar explosions – but engineered pandemics, environmental catastrophe including but not limited to climate change, and the original existential risk that got this ball rolling in 1945, nuclear weapons.

The natural pandemic of 2020 was never an existential risk as such, but greatly interests Toby. He foresees radically better animal welfare as one possible outcome of the pandemic. ‘Regulating live animal markets and improving animal welfare would be a possible response to COVID-19, if this is indeed where the virus jumped across from animals to humans.’

But his deeper observation is our collective indifference to risk, amounting to a grand folly. His much larger hope is that in a post-COVID-19 world, humans can construct a clearer risk register for the human race and begin to address it.

COVID-19 was, in this sense, a warning shot to humans. ‘The risk of a coronavirus pandemic of this scale was well understood but the broader appreciation of the risk, leading to changes in human activity commensurate with the risk, was lacking.’

The same can be said for nuclear weapon control, state-sponsored bioengineering research laboratories whose safety record is much poorer than the public have been led to believe, and increasingly computing technologies, cyber warfare and forms of unaligned artificial intelligence that could be a truly ghastly prospect.

At root an optimist as well as a leader in the ‘effective altruism’ movement, Dr Ord readily cites our collective achievement in fighting poverty and improving life’s span for millions. Humans are a young species, in evolutionary terms.

And yet, he observes, ‘We have the power to end our story but lack the wisdom to ensure we don’t.’ Dr Ord is by no means the first person to argue that progress is double-edged, and the idea of the human species ending is also as old as humans.

What’s new is that an eschatological notion of the end of times has been replaced by a secular appreciation coupled with real destructive power epitomised by the atomic bomb.

Existential risk means exactly what it says, argues Dr Ord. ‘Either the entire population is killed or there is an unrecoverable collapse of civilisation; an existential catastrophe wouldn’t just destroy our present but our entire future.’

He estimates such a worst-case scenario at 1 in 6 over the next century, worse odds than offered by Cambridge astronomer Martin Rees in Our Final Century (2003).

‘Pandemics can be even more potent than COVID-19: the Black Death killed about a tenth of the world’s population. In some ways we are more vulnerable than we were then: disease can now travel much faster across the world and within our dense cities.’

Countering the doom is modern medicine. 200 years ago we didn’t even know what a virus was. Now we can look forward to a COVID-19 vaccine.

Dr Ord returns to optimism but does so waving a large red flag. He holds out the ‘possibility...that we end this period of heightened risk by getting our act together and rising to these challenges, becoming the kind of society that ends these risks and ensures that they don’t recur.’
Alumni at large

Engineering and planetary science, encouraging women in science, tech, engineering and maths, mental health initiatives and green finance: it’s a problem-solving crew in this edition of QUAD.

Anne-Marie Imafidon (Keble, 2006)
Looking back, Anne-Marie says that her own story was a funny one. ‘My desire to go to Oxford came about age 13. I did a career survey and it said I should be either a management consultant or a systems analyst. I’d never heard of either at that point. I was told that you’re 16 times more likely to become a management consultant if you go to Oxford. And in that moment, the deal was done.’

Fast-forward 20 years, and she is a tech industry leader. ‘It wasn’t until I was sent to speak at a conference on behalf of Deutsche Bank, at an event that had three and a half thousand technical women in it, that I realised, ‘Oh my goodness. This is what it’s like when I’m talking tech, but I’m not in a room with middle-aged white guys.’ Nothing against them, my managers have been amazing mentors; but for me it was like, ‘This is so different. This is such a different vibe, it’s such a different environment with different interactions. That was when I realised that I was a woman in tech, and one of few.’

This was the original inspiration for STEMettes, a social enterprise which encourages women into tech careers. She reports progress but the message is the same: ‘Women do it. If TV isn’t showing you, if the movies don’t, if the press isn’t talking about them, they’re there – they’re doing it. But also, you’re missing out on this party basically! And this party is going take over our lives. Our jobs are all going to robots and all these things are happening in technology. And so you really should be there, shaping part of it.’

‘It was about removing barriers and changing perceptions of what it was to be in STEM. It lights a fire under them, to then go and explore more... We’re also a safe space where we can suspend reality a little bit, and they can see it for what it really is, without encumbering all of the conditioning and the stereotyping.’

STEMettes is a social enterprise which encourages girls aged 5–22 to pursue careers in Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths. It was founded in 2013 by Anne-Marie Imafidon and Jacquelyn Guderley.

www.stemettes.org
Alumni mental health organisation It Gets Brighter steps up a gear amidst COVID.

It Gets Brighter is a not-for-profit student mental health organisation founded by Oxford students Emma Lawrance (Lincoln, 2012) and Joshua Chauvin (New College, 2011) in 2014–15.

Currently led by Rhodes scholar Vidal Arroyo (Univ, 2019), the organisation has come into its own with the pandemic, operating since day one as a platform on which peers are encouraged to post video testimony sharing their own narrative.

Arroyo says that never has there been so much demand for support from students and other young adults whose lives have been heavily disrupted by the pandemic.Knowing this he has launched a campaign with the hashtag #BrighterCOVID eos.

Emma, now Dr Emma Lawrance following her Oxford DPhil in neuroscience and a Mental Health Innovations Fellow at Imperial College London, says that while the pandemic has in some ways released people from some pre-existing sources of stress, nonetheless she sees the pandemic as having cast a pall over the mental health of millions of students and young adults. It has been a net negative.

She and Arroyo report that the pandemic has tended to exacerbate mental health challenges, especially as a source of isolation. Then there has been considerable anxiety generated by the virus itself, COVID-19, relationship stress as individuals have found themselves stranded far apart, and finally money worries as well. Ultimately, young lives have been put on hold, and that is a major shock.

Emma’s message is that ‘It Gets Brighter is providing a platform to share experiences and what helps make it brighter. By sharing these messages of solidarity and hope, we will spread kindness this Mental Health Awareness Week.’ She adds that people often report feeling ‘less alone’ having watched some of the videos of peers posted on the website.

Behind each narrative there is the encouragement to believe and see that bad mental health episodes often pass – in other words, it does get brighter.

Everyone is encouraged to upload their own message should they wish to share with others – and can do so anonymously if they prefer to.

Vidal, from Orange County California, who is pursuing his Oxford MSc in Research Statistics, says that his goal with the #BrighterCOVIDeos campaign ‘is to alleviate fear, build community, and bring hope to those who need it most.’

European Mental Health Awareness Week began on May 18 in the UK, and commences from October 4 in the USA.

www.itgetsbrighter.org
Twitter: @ItGetsBrighter
Sir Roger Gifford (Trinity, 1973)
We were lucky to meet Sir Roger in person early in March, just days before the world was turned upside down. Chair of London’s Green Finance Institute (GFI) and Senior Banker for Swedish corporate bank Skandinaviska Enskilda Banken (SEB), he is right at the centre of a global effort to repurpose the world of banking and finance towards a green horizon, banishing the negative ghosts of the great crash of 2007–8.

Sir Roger wants a revolution and isn’t afraid to deploy the ‘R’ word at all. ‘The real underlying revolution aside from environmental finance and reorientation to climate risk, is around attaching purpose to money,’ he says.

The green bond market is growing at warp speed and is already worth hundreds of billions of dollars, he notes. The role of the GFI is to mobilise the money, while the Bank of England narrates the regulatory framework, he notes. ‘There are scenarios where money can be raised demonstrably to address climate change, typically in renewable energy to begin with, but also anti-pollution, environmental degradation, flood defence systems, better infrastructure; you name it. If it fits into that green environmental box and there’s a financial way to solve it then that’s what this new market is about.’

‘The real underlying revolution aside from environmental finance and reorientation to climate risk, is around attaching purpose to money’

Green Finance Institute
www.greenfinanceinstitute.co.uk
SEB Group https://sebgroup.com
Oliver Montague (St John’s, 2008)

If the post-pandemic city looks different it’ll likely be because cars have been replaced by bicycles, or more likely still electric bicycles (see also p20).

This is where Oliver’s own experience led him straight towards powered two-wheelers. ‘I used to cycle to work every day and had to shower,’ he recalls. ‘One day I arrived, and my manager had arrived on his bike in a suit. He showed me that he had one of the English-made Power Bikes, which are still around but they’re quite old-fashioned now.’

Wanting one but not having the money – a familiar obstacle on the road to e-bike ownership until recently – Oliver ordered a DIY kit from the internet and adapted it to electrify his own bike. By improving the kit he realised he had the basis for a business, allowing ordinary bikes to be transformed rather than requiring people to spend large sums on new machines.

What started off in a bedroom with a dozen or so imported kits has grown into a full time job, a slick website, over £1 million raised in crowdfunding and a warehouse. Above all he has developed his own product, the Swytch Kit.

The Swytch Kit converts any old bike into a slick modern e-bike by swapping the front wheel for one with a motor and adding a battery pack to the handlebars, altogether for a weight penalty of 4kg, which can be mostly eliminated by leaving the battery at home if you just want to revert to normal bike.

It’s not just knowledge that Oliver gained through his degree course – he has also benefited from an engineer’s mindset. As he explains: ‘I think the success of the company is down to the fact that my co-founder and I have this optimism that we still cling on to (perhaps naively!) that we can work out how to do almost anything better than almost anyone else who has worked out how to do it.

‘I think that stems from my engineering degree: you go to a lecture, you get told something that doesn’t make any sense, but you have to do a tutorial on it the next day. You have no idea exactly how you’re going to work out how to solve these problems. But you have confidence that somehow, one way or another, by tomorrow, you will have worked it out. And one way or another, you do.’

www.swytchbike.com

Bethany Ehlmann (Keble, 2004)

Bethany completed two master’s degrees at Oxford, one on environmental management (MSc. Environmental Change and Management) and one on physical weathering (MSc by research, Geography).

She is today a Professor of Planetary Science at California Institute of Technology, more familiar as Caltech.

Her research focuses on the use of satellite data and rock weathering to understand environmental change and geology on Earth and other planets.

At Oxford, she discovered a fairly well-kept secret, the bit of the University that does space exploration, Atmospheric, Oceanic and Planetary Physics, a division of the Department of Physics.

She has done lots of research on the composition of rocks from Mars, to determine that Mars once hosted lakes, rivers and hydrothermal systems, on an active world once more like Earth over three billion years ago.

Her big focus now is a NASA competition that is hoped to result in an unmanned mission to the moon in the next three years. Ehlmann’s entry for mapping water on the moon, called Lunar Trailblazer, was selected as a finalist for NASA’s Small Innovative Missions last June.

Lunar Trailblazer is a small satellite so only carries two instruments: one, a shortwave infrared imaging spectrometer from NASA’s Jet Propulsion Laboratory, and a thermal multispectral camera from Oxford called Lunar Thermal Mapper. The Lunar Thermal Mapper is led by Dr. Neil Bowles at Oxford, and would help to determine the distribution of lunar water.

Bethany has her own research website: www.ehlmann.caltech.edu/index.html
AOPP at Oxford can be found here: www2.physics.ox.ac.uk/research/atmospheric-oceanic-and-planetary-physics
A change in Board leadership

Oxford’s new Alumni Board leaders will start in September. Director of Alumni Relations Christine Fairchild talks to the new Chair and Deputy.

Oxford’s Alumni Board has a long tradition of being led by galvanising and inspiring leaders, most recently Nick Segal (St Peter’s, 1976) and Helen Wright (Lincoln, 1988) serving as Chair and Deputy respectively.

As Chair, Nick brought his extensive legal experience to bear, and Helen her work as an educator. Both are retiring from the Board this year, and we thank them greatly for their efforts.

A new leadership team will take effect in September, chaired by James Dancer (Keble, 1994) and deputy Judith Tew (LMH, 1980). Christine Fairchild poses some pertinent questions.

James and Judith, how has your experience as alumni changed over the years?

**James:** Like many of us, I was so busy with life that I didn’t engage much at all for many years. I often came back to watch summer eights, though, and I became more involved with the alumni community. The ways alumni can engage have improved hugely – but there’s still much more we can do.

**Judith:** When I graduated I have to say that I saw alumni relationships only in the context of friends I had from college and my desire to stay in touch with them. As I grew older I realised the power of this community. My pride in the University has increased as I have grown older. Today I appreciate that Oxford can make a real difference to people’s lives as demonstrated brilliantly by the fantastic work Oxford is doing to tackle wide-ranging aspects of the coronavirus crisis.

James and Judith, how has your experience as alumni changed over the years?

**What are the strengths of the Oxford alumni community?**

**James:** Our alumni have an amazing diversity of experience. There are few communities that will have had as much positive impact on the world, I’d like to think.

**Judith:** We have an exceptional group of people with different aptitudes, drives and experiences but all connected by our time at Oxford.

**Where would you like to see the collegiate University focus its efforts to strengthen the community?**

**James:** Colleges do a marvellous job of connecting us to the places where we built friendships and spent most of our time at Oxford. Personally, I’d love to engage more with my subject, and with individuals who followed careers into government. I know others want to support initiatives on access and mentoring. The Bodleian or Ashmolean or the Pitt Rivers are all there too. I’d like to find ways for more parts of the University to engage with alumni.

**Judith:** Not all alumni see or realise the benefit from the wider community. I would like to see the colleges and departments working together to explain and sell these benefits of that wider community.

How do you think the Alumni Board can help?

**James:** I think this starts with seeing the alumni as a continuing part of the University community. For me, Oxford isn’t just the place I attended a quarter of a century ago, but a community I’m still a part of. Our role as a Board should be to help to build that community, and to strengthen the links between alumni and with all parts of the collegiate University.

**Judith:** The Alumni Board is a great facilitator to support the University in its communication with alumni and foster exchanges between them.

**What are the three words you would use to describe Oxford’s alumni?**

**James:** Global, connected, contributing.

**Judith:** My three (four!) words are talented, diverse, intellectually curious.

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www.alumni.ox.ac.uk/book-club
Sarah Pakes celebrates the impact and importance of donor support by looking back on the recently concluded Oxford Thinking Campaign.

Last October the Vice-Chancellor announced the end of the Oxford Thinking Campaign: after 15 years and thanks to the generosity of more than 170,000 donors, the campaign had met (and surpassed) its target. The final sum raised in support of the University and the colleges was an incredible £3.3 billion.

The impact that these funds are having is simply immense. The campaign has increased output from every corner of the University, enriching lives through the provision of scholarships, new academic programmes, cutting-edge facilities, access initiatives, public engagement activities and more. Through the campaign, Oxford’s mission to advance learning through teaching and research has received a tremendous boost, the effects of which will be felt far beyond the institution for many years to come.

As an internationally-renowned university, Oxford has long sought to utilise its intellectual and material resources for the benefit of the wider world. From ageing to obesity, vaccines to climate change, language preservation to AI ethics, the University’s research increasingly tackles issues of major global importance. Oxford’s students also play a vital role in this commitment, with many going on to lead the way in their fields and make significant contributions to both the economy and society.

It is for these reasons that philanthropic giving remains so crucial to the collegiate University and to the world at large. Donor support is a lifeline for any institution seeking to effect positive change in the world today. At Oxford it enables flexibility and fosters ambition, providing scope for curiosity-driven research and accelerating progress in time-critical programmes, while ensuring talented students have the opportunity to realise their academic potential.

With other sources of funding diminishing or becoming less reliable than they once were, the role of philanthropy in enabling the University to rise to future challenges is only set to grow. Indeed, as Oxford moves through the coming years, the support of donors will be vital in helping it to address a range of ambitious strategic priorities.
Building for the future

One project to which philanthropy will be essential is the creation of a new home for the humanities, which made headlines last year following Stephen A Schwarzman’s pioneering £150 million gift. The Schwarzman Centre (p4) will transform the way that Oxford teaches, researches and shares the humanities with the world. However, in order to bring this project to fruition, the University must now secure additional support for the building, a cultural programme of public engagement and a number of core academic posts.

Another significant project requiring donor support is the Life and Mind Building, which, once completed, will provide a state-of-the-art interdisciplinary space for biology and experimental psychology. A proportion of the £210 million required for the project has already been committed by the University. However, philanthropic investment in the building, faculty positions and research students will be vital if Oxford is to secure the future of ‘life and mind’ research for generations to come.

Running alongside – and indeed inextricably linked to projects such as these – is the University’s target to create 300 new graduate scholarships by 2023. Fully-funded graduate scholarships ensure that Oxford attracts the very best students from around the world, regardless of their financial circumstances, so it is essential that the University increase the range of support that it can offer. It is only with help from donors that this ambitious vision can be achieved.

As evidenced by the COVID-19 pandemic, higher education institutions such as Oxford have never been more important in training the scientific leaders of tomorrow, and in supporting governments and communities in tackling global problems.

Much of the time-critical work that Oxford’s researchers have undertaken in response to the pandemic has been driven by philanthropy, including vaccine development, drug trials and drug development, the creation of evidence-based clinical care guidance, and research into the feasibility and ethics of a coronavirus mobile app for contact tracing. This activity testifies to the vital role of philanthropy in underpinning research of truly global relevance, and in enabling Oxford to utilise its excellent intellectual resources to respond to major global challenges with speed and at scale.

To find out more about the impact of the Oxford Thinking Campaign, please visit www.development.ox.ac.uk/report.
The Frozen River: Seeking Silence in the Himalaya
by James Crowden,

The sun shone in pandemic lockdown, winter abruptly banished by spring, and then summer. So it might seem odd to lead this section with a book that acclaims the season of ice and snow. Yet this is a remarkable and special book peculiarly suited to our times, culmination of a life’s thought as well as a travelogue, historical anthropological note, spiritual reflection and adventure narrative.

Aged 22 in 1976, the author (subsequently Magdalen, 1977), previously a civil engineering student at Bristol and fresh escapee from the British army, goes to Zangskar, Ladakh to spend a winter in a small community in Padum.

He wants isolation and silence but also adventure, and the focal point of the broader narrative is travelling down the frozen river to trade butter, the winter trade route that allowed the community to obtain money income and the practice of centuries.

It was a dangerous business. The book is accordingly written in a spare, clarified manner like salt tea and tsampa: ‘Here they do not so much as waste a twig. Life is very precious when in the balance.’

Elsewhere the westerner is tied up by prolixity: ‘Talking about silence is immediately a contradiction,’ he says in the run of 300 pages of beautiful hardback.

Yes, there’s an Oxford element. He had telemark touring skis with him, ‘lent to me by Kenneth Lumsden, a sprightly consultant radiologist in Oxford.’ The Bursar of St Antony’s Major Peter Hailey ‘was, I think, a Buddhist, and he once told me over a cup of tea that he wanted to be reincarnated as a racehorse.’

But Oxford isn’t the book. The book is the people he met and the mountains and the animals treated like family, the yaks providing warmth to families in immediate closeness, indoors. At root it is an extended survival narrative but with a barbed edge, the building of the first road up the valley.

Crowden’s rational inquiry wanted to know what the road would mean. Progress? It hangs over the book like a curse. Yet so too life was as hard as the weather was indifferent, measles ‘swept through the valley every seven years or so,’ carrying away the lives of countless children. Not a pandemic but ordinary reality as in all human history. Disease.

China is a problem. Talk of insurgencies.

The cold is terrifying, the river ice sometimes transparent, sometimes bottle green, sometimes unstable.

The trek down the river is the heart of it.

‘Although we said nothing we understood the importance of our venture, the importance of each other and the magnitude of the mountains.’

Left: The author, centre, during the trek down the frozen river.
A Tale of Two Economies
Hong Kong, Cuba and the two men who shaped them

Having previously written dedicatedly about Hong Kong’s financial secretary in the 1960s Sir John Cowperthwaite, the author (Exeter, 1980) has written a remarkably enjoyable case study comparing Hong Kong’s success to Cuba’s failure, anchoring some of the narratives in the personalities of Cowperthwaite and Che Guevara, the latter much less well known as the architect of Cuba’s communist economic system.

The author went to Harvard Business School so you anticipate a slam dunk against those silly Commies. But not a bit of it. The mutual systems and individuals are treated with great respect, and Monnery is alive to contingency: what would you have done in their shoes?

Hong Kong itself narrowly avoided Communism (consider 2020!), while Cuba’s path was partly determined by the preceding crony capitalism of Battista.

Towards the end the discussion opens up into a wonderfully crisp series of notes that would benefit any PPE candidate. The Cuban experiment was much better than its North Korean counterpart, the two systems the only survivors from 40-odd Communist states in the early 1960s. Survival is its own, strange kind of success and in Cuba’s case rested partly on heavy investment in education and healthcare.

China sits apart now as a remarkable (is that the right word?) experiment in authoritarian Leninist politics and free market economics, the outcome unknown.

Meanwhile the ‘crony capitalism’ model has taken root in the west, whether we look at the Trump Presidency or at 82,000 lobbyists in Brussels, 7,000 of which apparently have access to the European Parliament.

Thus both models have things to teach us, the author points out.

Monnery omits any discussion of the dynamic between economic growth, biodiversity, natural capital and the climate, and of course COVID-19 came after the book. The climate crisis is the real reason why a moderately performing economy with strong checks and balances – Neil does turn to the Nordic model briefly – might be a more sustainable one over the longer term, in both senses of that word. The pandemic has raised the value of community and healthcare instead of profit at any cost.

There is a handy detail on page 195. Apparently the current Chancellor of the University, upon handing over Hong Kong to the Chinese in 1997, met Cowperthwaite and reportedly remarked, ‘So, you are the architect of it all.’

Magpie Lane
by Lucy Atkins, Quercus (2020) £15.40.

The author (pictured above), an award-winning feature journalist and Sunday Times book critic, explores in this fictional yarn the mystery of the disappearance of the eight-year-old daughter of an Oxford head of house. The copious number of references to the road of the title and other nearby haunts (Deadman’s Walk off Merton Street, for example) leads this reviewer to conclude that the author is imagining the President’s dwelling in Merton Street attached to Corpus Christi College. The author, on further investigation...attended Corpus, matriculating in 1987! No plot spoilers but Lucy knows Oxford inside and out and no surprise, page 161, the accusation of ‘deep, institutional misogyny. Those old men hated her because she was a young, attractive, pregnant woman without a degree.’ So there is an ace combination of crime thriller and firsthand experience that could only come from knowing the University so well, warts and all.
If you haven’t noticed, we’re in the era of Big Books Covering Everything. This is partly as a result of climate change, which affects everything. Smaller narratives seem piffling by comparison, and even these were until recently frowned on by academics in pursuit of ultramontane monographs where the price paid for complete mastery was public irrelevance. All that has changed. Starting with the former Governor of the Bank of England Mervyn King and the former Director of the Saïd Business School and fellow of St John’s College, we are greeted in *Radical Uncertainty* by the re-assertion of the distinction between risk and uncertainty. This distinction, which evokes a particular debate familiar to twentieth-century economist John Maynard Keynes, has been falsely erased by probabilistic reasoning dreamt up by overly optimistic economists playing to a Wall Street gallery, say the authors.

They offer up the most perfect illustration early on. President Barack Obama had to decide whether to attack the Abbottabad compound in Pakistan in which it was believed by some that Osama bin Laden lived. Some advisers were 95% certain he was there. Others 30%. Obama said later, ‘In this situation, what you started getting was probabilities that disguised uncertainties as opposed to actually providing you with more useful information.’ The fact was that there was radical uncertainty over whether bin Laden was there or not. Putting numbers on the matter was pointless.

The broader idea here is that economists and the investment community reduce life to puzzles and theories, but reality doesn’t play along. ‘It is not just that we do not know what will happen. We often do not even know the kinds of things that might happen.’

Like a pandemic, one might add, and while the book was signed off before COVID-19 entered our collective life it draws on numerous examples of relevance to the notion of politicians ‘relying on the science.’ That’s typically a wrong notion because politicians...
Happy century Cherwell

QUAD offers its heartiest congratulations to Cherwell, the student newspaper that claims to be the only truly independent one in the UK. In November, it’ll be a case of ‘Happy Birthday’ at the grand age of 100. Yes, we can’t quite believe it either.

Cherwell was conceived by two Balliol College students, Cecil Binney and George Adolphus Edinger, on a ferry from Dover to Ostend during the summer vacation of 1920. The early newspaper had a radical voice. Edinger recalled, ‘We were feeling for a new Oxford…We were anti-convention, anti-Prewar values, pro-feminist. We did not mind shocking and we often did.’

The Isis Magazine is older having begun in 1892, but Cherwell bought it in the 1990s. What is incredible about Cherwell’s longevity is that it has seemed to defy the law of physics for newspapers as business models. Not only has it always been independent of the University, but more significantly independent of the student union. In most cases student newspapers have a union to cushion a bad ad revenue month. Cherwell is still entirely independent: staffed and managed by students, who appoint their own directors and editors, and also who also raise all the advertising revenues.

How it managed to avoid a ruinous libel scandal beats us, but perhaps it’s down to the incredible list of Cherwell contributors. Merely the first four listed in the Wiki entry are, remarkably: Edward Heath, Evelyn Waugh, Graham Greene and John Betjeman.

Anyway, one of its many editors Nick Perry (Univ, 1974) says there’ll be a monster party in London and another one in Oxford, hopefully in November or as soon as the pandemic permits.

The operational note seems to be that Cherwell will be online for Trinity and hopefully back to normal for Michaelmas – we wish the editors well in surmounting the COVID crisis, a nightmare for the media.

Until then Nick is mounting a concerted effort to contact Cherwell alumni and other contributors to sister publications such as ISIS, Oxford Scientist / Bang and fashion mag Industry. Go to www.OSPlalumni.com.
Robert Burton was a scholar at the University 400 years ago and Librarian at Christ Church. He drew on the collections of his college and the Bodleian to seek to understand the human condition, in its full emotional range.

But his declared subject was ‘melancholy’. *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, first published in 1621, is an extraordinary and enormous attempt to grapple with the causes, symptoms, and treatments of a universal human experience.

Today, when clinical depression is cited as a leading cause of global disability, and there are many challenges to our mental health, a recently broadcast BBC Radio 4 series asks if we can still learn from Burton’s *The Anatomy of Melancholy*.

During the programme, writer and presenter Amy Liptrot digs into Burton’s massive 400-year-old text to reveal its riches, beginning her journey at the Bodleian where she meets Dr Kathryn Murphy from Oxford’s Faculty of English, a Burton expert. Together they look at books Burton owned where you can see his hand-scribbled notes, and reflect on Burton as a person and an Oxford scholar who devoted himself lifelong to the task of anatomizing melancholy.

With Burton as a guide, the series hears from leading experts in mental health research today, and from individuals who manage sadness and depression in a variety of ways – including the gardener and broadcaster, Monty Don, and pioneering cell biologist and author of *Malignant Sadness: the anatomy of depression*, Lewis Wolpert.

Professor John Geddes, Head of the Department of Psychiatry at Oxford University, meets Amy at Christ Church Cathedral, beneath the bust of Burton, and speculates about the range of mood in *The Anatomy*. His own specialism in mood disorders is pertinent and he explains how much earlier in his career he discovered a 19th-Century copy of the Anatomy in a bookshop, and how it has been with him ever since, front and centre to his career.

Each episode takes on a different theme from Burton’s Anatomy, covering causes such as: genetics (‘an hereditary cause’), inflammation (‘inflammations of the head’), inequality (‘poverty and want’), trauma (‘terrors in the night’) and possible ‘cures’ such as nature, ‘merry company’, ‘divine music’, sleep, friends and exercise.

The presenter, Amy Liptrot, who has written about her recovery from alcoholism in her 20s and the impact of her dad’s bipolar disorder, says: ‘In making this series, it’s been fascinating to compare the cutting edge of today’s psychiatry and people’s 21st-Century experiences with depression, with the ideas of Robert Burton. It’s often amazing how relevant and prescient he was, writing 400 years ago.

‘We’ve explored the part of melancholy in the human condition, how it can be alleviated and lived with – and the unique voice of Burton has been a brilliant guide though it.’

*The New Anatomy of Melancholy* is in 12 episodes and available now and for a year to come. Go to [www.bbc.co.uk/sounds](http://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds), then search ‘The New Anatomy of Melancholy’.
Sir John Houghton CBE FRS FLSW, meteorologist, climate change expert and Honorary Fellow of Jesus College has died at the age of 88.

Sir John was personally known to a great number of University members over his long life and career. He was a greatly-valued member of the community.

Sir John came up to Oxford from Rhyl at the age of 16 in 1948, having achieved the top A-level grades of any Welsh student. After graduating at the top of his year, he stayed on to do a DPhil in Atmospheric, Oceanic and Planetary Physics (1951) before spending a brief period with the Royal Aircraft Establishment.

Sir John returned to Jesus College as a Lecturer in 1958, becoming a Fellow in 1960. During this time he worked with a group of academics to develop instruments for space-based weather monitoring with NASA, and spent four years as Director of the Appleton Laboratory. Sir John was eventually made Professor of Atmospheric Physics and a Fellow of the Royal Society. He left Jesus in 1983 to become Director General of the Meteorological Office, where he developed a particular interest in climate change. He became Chairman of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change in 1988, a position which he held until 2002. In 2007, on behalf of the panel, Sir John accepted the Nobel Peace Prize that was shared by the IPCC and former U.S. Vice President Al Gore.

Sir John gave many generous gifts to Jesus College and established a Junior Research Fellowship concerned with the development of sustainable energy for the developing world. He was the author of a number of notable books on subjects related to climate change and earned many accolades and awards throughout his career.

It is also important to mention that he was a man with a strong Christian faith who believed science and faith belonged together. In 1998 he founded the John Ray Initiative (JRI) with other leading scientists with the aim of mobilising the church on climate change. In 2002 he convened a landmark conference in Oxford that brought together leading scientists, policy makers and church leaders from Europe and the US, to put forward the urgency of climate change. He was also a founding member of the International Society for Science and Religion.

Sir John’s contribution to both the College and the global understanding of the impact of climate change stand as a testament to his formidable intellect, vision and generosity of spirit.

Amid pandemic restrictions his family plan a very small gathering and funeral in Aberdyfi, followed later by a memorial service once the restrictions are lifted.

Left: Recent portrait of Sir John, courtesy of his family, with great thanks. It depicts Sir John overlooking the Dyfi Estuary from his home in Aberdyfi, Wales.
A Poem by Anne Baker

An alumna of Lady Margaret Hall
born 14th May 1914

An Oxford Memory
1938

Was it always summer in Oxford?
I remember the early dawn
With the dripping trees and the creaking oars,
And the Hymn to the Rising Sun
The golden light on Magdalen Tower
And a term that’s just begun

Bicycles in the Broad
Scholars strolling the High
With a sense of urgency,
and the perplexity
Of judging Eternity

But however deep in Kant
Or Spinoza, or Descartes – at three
One must not be late to appreciate
The Vice-Chancellor’s tea

And down in Christ Church Meadows
Where the sedge and kingcups grow
The Barges are floating expectantly
For the Brilliant Men who row

The days seem to stretch on forever
As we lie in the morning sun –
No hint of storm or terror
No heartbreak or searing gun

Far-off days, dreamy days,
golden and happy days
The Summer Term just begun.


In 1973, while serving as secretary to the Education Committee of the Order of Christian Unity, Anne submitted the influential paper to the Rt Hon. Margaret Thatcher, then Secretary of State for Education and Science, on ‘Ways whereby Christian Education in State Schools should be Saved’.

In 2017 she received the Childhood Champion award in 2017 from the NSPCC in recognition of some 50 years of volunteer work.

Anne is currently isolated in her Salisbury home, but not to be deterred, has been raising money through Just Giving for the NSPCC.
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For details on membership or a tour of the Club house on Pall Mall, please visit www.oxfordandcambridgeclub.co.uk or call 020 7321 5103

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