From solar-power aircrafts to Catz tutorials
Paul Brooks (1985, Physics)

Breaking Barriers: How a Women’s Studies Graduate Took the Lead in Abolishing the ‘Period Tax’
Laura Coryton, MBE (2018, Mst Women’s Studies)

2023 Nick Young Award winner
Libby Bull (2019, History & English)

Insights from the 2023 Kahramanmaraş Earthquakes EEFIT Mission
Dr Orestis Adamidis

A conversation with St Catherine’s College Research Associate in Medical Sciences
Dr Gurman Kaur
Last year, I began my report by saying that the 2021-22 year had been my first normal year as Master, and I was fully expecting that this would be my second normal year. However, though most of this year has been what you may describe as normal, turning back in time now to the successful year we had until RAAC hit us, the 2022-23 academic year was yet another fabulously busy year in College. We had a full calendar of traditional Catz and Oxford events, including Gaudies, matriculations, Garden Parties and more, all outlined in our Development Report. I also had the joy of meeting and reuniting with Catz alumni and friends outside of Oxford, including trips to Heidelberg, New York, Boston, Singapore and Hong Kong, as well as Catz reunion drinks in Manchester and London.

Our students have been impressive academically as they always are. We were placed sixth again in the Norrington Table with fifty-seven matriculations, Garden Parties and Oxford events, including Gaudies, matriculations, Garden Parties and more, all outlined in our Development Report. I also had the joy of meeting and reuniting with Catz alumni and friends outside of Oxford, including trips to Heidelberg, New York, Boston, Singapore and Hong Kong, as well as Catz reunion drinks in Manchester and London.

Master's Report

areas due to the presence of Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC) in the roof structures. This included the Kitchen, Hall, JCR, SCR, Administration Block, Wolfson Library, the Bernard Sunley Building and the top floor of Staircases 1 to 16. We had already engaged independent consultants to undertake an assessment of the areas where RAAC had been used, but when new guidance was introduced, we had to restrict access to all areas where RAAC was present. We have since had further assessments and have been advised that measures would need to be undertaken for the spaces to be re-occupied.

In order to cause as little disruption as possible to the students who would be arriving for the Michaelmas Term, we immediately implemented remedial measures for the accommodation affected, and thanks to incredibly efficient work by our Bursars and some exceptionally good contractors, the affected student rooms came back into full operation within a couple of weeks. The other buildings will require more substantial work before we can start to use them again, so for the moment our Hall and JCR take the shape of marquees, and we have a portacabin kitchen. It is anticipated that these structures will remain in place during 2024 whilst work is being undertaken. Thanks to the dedication and hard work of our team, each one of whom has been fantastic, the College continues to operate as normally as possible. Our students have also been marvellously patient with the necessary changes.

We have started to develop a plan to raise the funds we need to save the College buildings for future generations of Catz, taking this opportunity to not just address the RAAC issue, but also to restore the estate to its original Jacobsonian splendour as well as ensuring that we modernise the functionality and, crucially, reduce the College’s carbon footprint to meet modern expectations.

What this, and the other crises the College has found itself in during the past couple of years, have shown is that the College has a tremendous capacity for getting together and dealing with difficulties in a very positive way. In order to cause as little disruption as possible to the students who would be arriving for the Michaelmas Term, we immediately implemented remedial measures for the accommodation affected, and thanks to incredibly efficient work by our Bursars and some exceptionally good contractors, the affected student rooms came back into full operation within a couple of weeks. The other buildings will require more substantial work before we can start to use them again, so for the moment our Hall and JCR take the shape of marquees, and we have a portacabin kitchen. It is anticipated that these structures will remain in place during
Senior Tutor's Report

Senior Tutor Professor Marc Mulholland writes about the academic pursuits of the College's student body this year.

In the Norrington table of University results for 2022, St Catherinie’s was placed at number six out of thirty-five, holding steady on the previous two years. Our score was 77.2%, compared to 77.7% for Harris Manchester at number three, which shows how closely we bunch at the top of the table. (I’m pleased to see our close neighbour do so well, not least because the annual Catz carol service is kindly hosted in Harris Manchester’s beautiful chapel).

Recent rankings have put us in what might be called the premier league: indeed our 2021 score of 79 per cent was only 0.8 per cent below that of the number two college. We need to be cognizant of what this means in its broadest sense. The Times Higher Education World University Rankings has named Oxford University as the best University in the world for the eighth year running. St Catz, with a large intake and moderate endowment, rests near the top of this pile. It is quite something to contemplate that a degree earned at our college has an authority anywhere in the world.

I have deep admiration for all our students who have put so much work in developing themselves and their skills. I applaud the splendid stimulation and support provided by our tutors.

Four of our alumni have been recognised in honours lists: Sonu Shivdasani has received an OBE for services to tourism, sustainability and charity, Professor Lesley Lokko has been awarded an OBE for services to architecture and to education, Dr Razvan Constantinescu has been awarded an MBE for voluntary services to the people of Ukraine and Clive Andrew Maxwell has received an MBE for services to Rail Transport.

It is with sadness that I have to report the death in October 2022 of Emeritus Fellow Donald Perkins; in December 2022 of Honorary Fellow Tom Phillips; in January 2023 of Emeritus Fellow Barrie Juniper; in May 2023 of Honorary Fellow and former Master Sir Brian Smith; in June of Honorary Fellow John Goodenough at the age of 100; in August this year Former Fellow Professor John Maitland Wright; and in September of this year Emeritus Professor Jose Harris. They are all fondly remembered for their contribution to the Catz community.

At the end of another eventful year in College, I want to thank all those who have gone above and beyond to create the unique atmosphere of St Catherinie’s: the Bursars, the Officers, the Fellows, our students and all those who teach them; all members of support staff, including administrative staff, porters, maintenance, kitchen and housekeeping. I am also grateful to our alumni, whose generosity and ongoing connection to the College make our community so exceptional. I look forward to new opportunities to meet you all.

Though I know that next year will be as unpredictable as any that preceded it, I look forward to working and enjoying my way through it with everyone involved in St Catherinie’s College. I think the College’s future, like our past, will very much be a question of Nova et Vetera.
were, of course, negative comments also. Not a few students felt that at times the workload demands are too much and they fear it can damage morale and even health. These are matters that we must consider very seriously. The Oxford degree at St Catherine’s should be stretching but not unbearable. I know that our tutors prioritise above anything the psychological welfare of our students, and we recommit to that conviction. Severe difficulties confront the Higher Education sector, including the fiscal tightrope many universities walk upon, depending as they do on overseas student fees that, with a shift in forces well outside this country’s control, could dry up at any moment. Oxford’s standing provides a crucial buffer against these threats, but we must not be complacent. By swinging together, we can ensure that St Catz and University will not only brave the problems that will no doubt present themselves, but will contribute to their solution.

At the beginning of Michaelmas, Final Honours School results for 2022–23 stood at fifty-one Firsts (compared to fifty-seven last year) and seventy-five 2.1s (compared to seventy last year). We still had nine classifications awaiting, a rather larger number than is usually the case, owing mostly to the Marking and Assessment boycott organised by the UCU union, itself indicative of stresses within the sector. There were forty-three graduates from sixteen different faculties and departments granted leave to supplicate for the DPhil. A further seventy-six were successful in other graduate examinations (20 with distinction and 22 with merit). We were awaiting 67 graduate results.

A few years ago, despite a year of lock-downs and the college boiler going kaput Catz had a historically excellent set of results at Finals. This year we have had another ‘black swan’ event, with emergency work required on the fabric of our buildings. Great efforts have been made and our college successfully received new and returning students. I will not suggest that adversity always makes for better results. But it is true that St Catherine’s has always been a college that values its human resources most highly and this, I think, has been a secret to its success.

St Catherine’s has always been a college that values its human resources most highly and this, I think, has been a secret to its success.

Dr Jim Thomson, Tutor for Admissions, on the move to long-term online admissions interviews and an excellent year for outreach.

While this year marked the return of life to ‘normal’, the success of online admissions throughout the pandemic has led to the collective decision by all colleges to have all forthcoming undergraduate admission interviews take place online in future years. This decision follows extensive consultation amongst various stakeholders—applicants, colleges, schools and others—and we believe it will uphold our goals of not only admitting the best students possible, but also continuing to improve access for disadvantaged students, levelling the playing field for all of our applicants. Of course, there are subjects where online admissions interviews are more tricky due to practical considerations: Music, for instance, has a performance element which is submitted as a video recording. Despite some complications, the transition to online interviews has been successful overall.

We are proud to share that in weeks 9 and 10 of Michaelmas Term 2022, we held the most admissions interviews of any of the colleges—1,071, to be precise—with 514 shortlisted candidates taken from a pool of 925 applications (compared to 999 in 2021, 1,054 in 2020 and 926 in 2019).

During the 2022–23 academic year there have been significant staff changes in the Admissions Office. We welcomed Joanna Meacham as our new Outreach Officer in January and said goodbye to our Academic Officer (Admissions) Dr Holy Chalcraft, who left to join the University’s Student Funding Office. We were given help by temporary team members Harriet Walters and Rowan Alexander, before Alison Day joined us as Holly’s successor.

At the end of summer, we said goodbye to our Senior Academic Officer (Admissions & Access), Harry Twogood, who left to join the Brilliant Club’s operations in Bristol as Communities Officer. Harry had a huge impact on our admissions and outreach activities and he will be sorely missed by all. His replacement, Ruan Crag-Wood, joined us at the start of Michaelmas 2023, hitting the ground running for the next year’s admissions cycle.

It was an excellent year for Outreach, not least because of a major gift of $200,000 USD in support of our flagship outreach initiative, Catalyst, which should fund the programme for approximately ten years, for which we are extremely grateful. Having bounced back from the dip in activity caused by the pandemic, we were able to expand our outreach offering by over 250% relative to pre-pandemic levels. In total, we ran 118 events, reaching over 4,685 students. This is a major increase in our operations, and we look forward to continuing to expand our work with schools.

During May half-term, the College ran a series of in-person academic taster days in Geography, Modern Language and Linguistics, Women+ in STEM, and Music for Year 12 students across the UK. Despite train strikes, we had an excellent turnout and received extremely positive feedback from the attendees.

We hosted three open days in-person this year—on 28th June, 29th June and 15th September—and hosted a successful Offer Holders’ Event in February, with 91 of our 127 offer holders joining us for tours, conversations with subject tutors, lunch and a session about College life with the JCR. An alternative online event was also held for our international offer holders. As always, I am extremely grateful to the admissions and outreach team here at Catz for their hard work and dedication, and I look forward to the challenges that lie ahead for the team in the coming academic year.
Tutor for Graduates’ Report

Tutor for Graduates Professor Ashok Handa writes about the College’s new cohort of graduate students this year.

This was a busy and welcome year with so many Graduates on site making full use of the Ainsworth Centre and taking advantage of dining at High Table in Hilary and Trinity Terms. It was wonderful to see the Graduation ceremonies with family and friends able to join from around the world under the guidance of the new Dean for Degrees Professor Andrew Dickinson.

In Michaelmas 2023 we welcomed a further 219 graduate fresher students from 55 countries, continuing with a very international graduate community. The graduate community responded to the challenges set by the RAAC concrete crisis with the MCR committee working closely with the Home Bursar and conference team to organise an excellent graduate freshers week with enthusiastic participation from freshers and current students.

It took a little while for everyone to get used to the temporary hall in the marquee and it was a mammoth effort from the Domestic, hall and kitchen teams to continue to serve high quality food in College until the full temporary kitchens were established.

With the temporary Senior Common Room located on the ground floor of the graduate Centre, there is much better appreciation within the Fellowship of the fabulous facilities of the Ainsworth Centre as well as improvements that might be made in due course as the RAAC concrete crisis is resolved. We welcomed to St Catherine’s a further 219 graduate fresher students from 55 countries, continuing with a very international graduate community.

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From the Library

Barbara Costa, College Librarian, says goodbye to our Fellow librarian Professor Gervase Rosser.

The College library saw two big changes in its team this year. The former library assistant Chloe Edwards resigned during the summer and Lucy Norman was appointed as the new library assistant working alongside the librarian Barbara Costa. She was recruited temporarily for three months, and then she was confirmed permanently from January 2023.

Lucy has experience both of Oxford college libraries and of running a school library. The new Library team have created a very good atmosphere which is both welcoming and tranquil. One of the Librarians’ main projects was the stock-check, normally undertaken every two years, and this year begun early because electrical works in the summer were meant to limit access during the vacation. Some volumes which have not been borrowed for many years and which were evidently not in current use were transferred to the library store room (they remain in the catalogue and can be requested at any time), creating needed space on the main library shelves for new books.

The library was designed to contain 60,000 volumes. We have now passed this total, but with judicious use of the store room, we can continue to maintain and renew the collection.

The other big change is the retirement of Professor Gervase Rosser, who very successfully covered the role of Fellow librarian and worked in college for more than 30 years, as a Professor of Medieval History and then of the History of Art. For the past three years, he has acted as the Director of the Ertegun Graduate school in Oxford. The library team express their gratitude to him and will miss his professionalism and kindness with students and colleagues. Their main wish is that he could still come to the library to share his expertise after his retirement.

In his last report to the Academic Policy Committee, Professor Rosser says: “I would like to conclude my final report to the Academic Policy Committee by underscoring that the library is the academic heart of the College. Because of our history, we do not boast extensive historic collections. But we do provide an outstandingly good range of books to support work in all of the undergraduate subjects taught in St Catherine’s: as good as, or in many cases better than, the resources of other Oxford colleges.

Graduates of the College naturally tend to find their more specialised materials in Faculty libraries and the Bodleian; yet many graduates also choose to work in the College Library because they love the space. And indeed, it is a wonderful and inspiring environment in which to work.”

Thank you, Professor Rosser! Professor David Womersley has been appointed as Fellow Librarian and Archivist starting in Michaelmas term 2023. We wish him good luck for this new adventure and we look forward to starting working with him.
This year marked intense activity in the Archives, which were recently relocated to the North seminar room in the library. These activities included, most notably: an exhibition, two displays of Archival material and the creation of an Archives Sub-committee which will meet on a termly basis to discuss policies, Archives activities and proposals of new exhibitions.

The exhibition, which was mounted in the library, was devoted to 'Pioneering Women in Ukraine' and was due principally to the work of a recent Visiting Scholar, Dr Margaret Vaysman, together with her collaborator Daria Nepochatova, Creative Women Publishing Ukraine. Their project, which has been supported by diverse bodies including the Scottish Funding Council and the Heinrich Böll Foundation, Ukraine, focuses on fourteen historic and living Ukrainian women who have made an impact in various spheres. The images on display are based on portraits made using a traditional Ukrainian technique of paper-cutting. Each figure is accompanied by her particular story. The exhibition was mounted by the project team together with Barbara Costa. It was marked by a launch event in the library on 30 November, when the curators presented the exhibition to current members of the College, benefiting the College community.

This was a unique display as it produced new archival material, namely the portraits, which were made from digital media and made into the physical objects necessary for the narration of the project. The physical portraits are now owned by the College Archive and are a testimony to both historical and contemporary knowledge and experience.

In Trinity term, the portraits were loaned to the Taylor Institution Library, which hosted a panel discussion about the exhibition. The panel saw the participation of the librarian Barbara Costa speaking about the College experience of the exhibition alongside Dr Margarita Vaysman; Daria Nepochatova; Nick Heam, Russian and French Subject Consultant at the Taylorian; and Dr Pany Xenophonotos, panel chair.

Barbara Costa and Lucy Norman have mounted two more displays in the library exhibition space. One was dedicated to the memory of Professor Richard Parish, Tutor and Fellow of the College, who died on the 1st of January 2022. The memorial exhibition included his publications and other records of his research, and recollections of his reading party for students. Professor Parish was a specialist in seventeenth-century French literature, with expertise in many areas, ranging from drama to philosophy and theology.

The other display, curated by Lucy Norman, comprised posters and photographs from the College Archive which record dramatic productions mounted in St Catherine’s. This display was designed to encourage interest in the history of student life in the college, and to encourage future contributions of similar ephemeral records to the Archive.

Barbara Costa, College Librarian, writes about a special exhibition on Ukrainian women.
From the Development Office

Welcome to the ‘new’ Year – for the first time in full colour, ushering the College into a new era whilst simultaneously being more cost-effective than previous editions. We are excited to debut the redesign and would love to hear feedback from the Catz community on it.

This was an exciting year in the Development Office, with the launch of our alumni survey, a successful Telethon campaign and a busy events schedule that welcomed Catz alumni both back to college and to social gatherings around the world. Next year looks to be just as active for our team as we will be launching a capital campaign to address the RAAC crisis in College and bring forward our sustainability plans.

Events in 2022-23

We were overjoyed to welcome many alumni and friends to College events over the past year. In September 2022 and June 2023, we hosted two Gaudies covering the Matriculation years 1983-2002. We welcomed almost 500 alumni and guests to revist College, reuniting with friends and sharing memories of their time at Catz with their former tutor. We also hosted Matriculants from 1972-1973 to celebrate their 50th year since Matriculation – an event that was impacted by the discovery of RAAC.

We also travelled the globe, both nationally and internationally last year, with Manchester Drinks at the Lincoln’s Inn in November 2022, two London Parties: one at the Reform Club in December 2022 and another at Stationer’s Hall in June 2023, a Law Reunion Event at the Innholders’ Hall as well as visits to New York and Boston in September 2022, and Hong Kong and Singapore in May 2023. It was brilliant to meet with the Catz community across counties and continents.

In November 2022, we hosted a special reunion for the Wallace Watson Award and Career Scholarship winners. We invited over two hundred Catz Couples for the Catz Couples Dinner in February. In March 2023, we hosted a lunch gathering for the Oxford Kobe Scholars, and in July 2023, we welcomed Rhodes Scholars to a special College celebratory dinner to mark the 120th anniversary of the Rhodes Trust.

In Hilary and Trinity terms, we welcomed current parents to our annual Freshers’ Lunch and Second ‘Years’ Garden Party hosted by the Master. We also celebrated our exclusive Dean Kitchen Circle of Legators at the Oxford Botanic Garden in June 2023 and our Foundation Scholarship Sponsors in College in April 2023.

Since the pandemic, we have all experienced the development of hybrid and online events. Thank you to all who joined us virtually for both our Update from the Master on her Fund for Enhancing the Student Experience and Catz Fellow Phil Torr’s talk: A Career in AI, thoughts and reflections.

We are also grateful to our alumni who came to College to speak to students about their careers at our Tech Careers Talk in November 2022 and our Law Careers Event in May 2023. Thanks to all who attended these and many more of our in-person and online events throughout the year. Our upcoming events are listed on the Catz website and shared regularly in event update emails. For more information or to register to receive event updates, please email the Catz Development Office. (development.office@stcatz.ox.ac.uk).

The Development Office

This year saw a number of changes within the Development Office team. After saying goodbye to Development Officer Ceys Baines, who left to go traveling, we welcomed Lucie Thorne-Spickova as her successor in November. The end of the year also saw the departure of Matthew Coller, Communications and Marketing Officer, who left to join the Said Business School. His successor, Alexandra Zaleski, joined us in January.

In the summer, we said goodbye to our Director of Development Laura Stoker who left to join the Commonwealth War Graves Foundation as their new Director of Fundraising. Laura had joined the College in January 2021 and helped the College weather the difficulties of the pandemic and ensured the College’s return to ‘normal’ was a success. We thank Laura for all her hard work and wish her all the best on this new chapter. Our Deputy Director, Anna Fowler, was appointed as Acting Director of Development in July and has ensured the office continues to support the vision of the College.

The generosity of our alumni and friends enables St Catherine’s to be a world-class academic institution, with the power to transform its students’ lives and inspire great contributions to our society.

Thank you

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Thank you to our alumni who participated in career talks for students:

Hogarth Andall (1989, Law)
Paul Brooks (1985, Physics)
Helena Horsburgh (2010, Modern Languages and Linguistics)
Nahida Khanom (2017, Law)
Kenny Lam (1996, Law)
Joanna Redmond (2000, Mathematics)
Lisa Roberts KC (1988, English)
Matt Robinson (2005, Law)
Zubin Siganporia (2007, Mathematics)

Thank you also to Gilliane Sills, Josette Bishop (1974, Mathematics) and our student volunteers for leading tours during the Gaudies.

Special Thanks

Adam Apt (1977, Modern History) for hosting our Boston Drinks at the Union Club of Boston.
Albert, Louise and Veronica Chan (2006, Medical Sciences) for hosting our Hong Kong Drinks at the China Club.
Anne Bevis Detwiler (1988, PPE) for hosting our New York Drink at the Cosmopolitan Club.
Penelope Harley (1983, PPE) for co-hosting our London Party in 2022 at the Reform Club.
Tony Henfrey (1963, Chemistry) for co-hosting our London Party in 2022 at the Reform Club and for hosting our London Party 2023 at the Stationers Hall.
Darnian and Rhiannon Hills for hosting our Singapore Drinks at The British Club.
Kenny Lam (1996, Law) for hosting lunch at the Hong Kong Club.
Lisa Roberts KC (1988, English) for hosting our Manchester Drinks at Lincoln House Chambers and our Law Reunion Event at Innholders Hall.

Thank you to our alumni who participated in career talks for students:
A Year in Development at Catz

Thank you to everyone who participated in the Alumni Survey 2022-23

489 respondents
151 subjects
81 matriculation years
94% of respondents said they had an ‘extremely positive’ (59%) or ‘positive’ (35%) experience as students at Catz

fun | challenging | stimulating | life-changing | formative

were the top words used to describe your time at Catz

2023 Telethon in Numbers

16 student callers
3000+ alumni reached
6 continents
£250,000+ raised

Catz Giving 2022-23

£27,840 paid to students in need during cost of living crisis
16.2% increase in total donations from 2022-23
Average donation increased by 13.44%
Donations of £50 or less account for more than £175,000 of annual fundraising

JCR Year Report

Jonas Fine Tan (2021, Psychology, Philosophy & Linguistics), the 2022-23 JCR President, gives an overview of the activities of the College’s undergraduates.

Having our first fully COVID-uninterrupted year at Catz meant that we were able to have activities in College again, returning the JCR to full swing! Students enjoyed the Oxford tradition of our regular Entz, which were brought to new musical heights with the newly-minted DJ society—started by our very own Entz Reps—honing the skills of our amateur and not-so-amateur DJs. Their work culminated at the end of the year with a very successful Leaver’s Boat Party held at the Isis Farmhouse, which was attended and loved not just by the Leavers, but by the JCR as a whole!

The Catz community’s continued love for the arts this year was shown through our new Arts Fund, which was well-utilised for drama pieces, the biggest of which was our in-house edition of The Addams Family Musical, led and performed by beloved members of our JCR student body. As per usual, our Arts Week ran in Trinity Term, organised by the Arts Reps. Students had the opportunity to learn making pottery, live painting and even share a collective Bob Ross tutorial (a new favourite tutorial among Oxford students)! We even had events led by our own students, such as a stitching class, as well as student musical performances.

Furthermore, many students were thrilled to hear that this year’s Catz Cameron Mackintosh Visiting Professor of Contemporary Theatre was Adjoa Andoh, most recently the star of the massive hit Netflix show, Bridgerton. Her various workshops throughout the year were incredibly well attended, especially by members of the Catz student body. Another continued key tenet of the JCR was maintaining our commitment to serving both our community and others. Looking inward, our Welfare Reps together with our peer supporters continued to serve our community through our regular Munches and Fifth Week Freddos, along with organising de-stressing events such as farm animal visits and tai chi! Our Women’s Welfare Rep also helped to push for improvements to both Catz and University-wide sexual health and safety awareness, coordinating with the specialist non-profit Terrence Higgins Trust. Given the difficulties of the Cost-of-Living Crisis, our Class Act Rep and Charities Reps organised 2 different Food Banks, one of which helped support working class students through this difficult time, while the other helped support those in the greater Oxford city community.

Finally, Catz students also showed our prowess on the court, where the Oxford Blues American Football Team, which included 5 JCR members, beat Cambridge 41-7 during the Blues Varsity Match, and also on the big screen, where our University Challenge Team appeared on the program for our first time since 1997.
As one academic year draws to a close and a new one dawns, it is only natural for us to reflect on the experiences, celebrations and hard work that defined the year 2022/23 for the Middle Common Room. In this reflection, I would like to highlight some of the academic achievements, connections and events that truly defined our year.

After a successful freshers’ week full of tours, how-to workshops and icebreaker events, the incoming cohort quickly became firmly embedded in college life. New postgraduate students enjoyed game nights, barbecues, themed parties and karaoke before turning to the usual schedule of postgraduate life.

Committee elections at the beginning of term recruited the largest number of students that the common room has seen in some years. The excitement to participate in shaping college life has been increasing steadily as we return from Covid-19 to reinvent what the post-pandemic student experience looks like.

The MCR Committee hosted welfare brunches with a new spin that included refueling with fresh smoothies and a lot of fruit, as well as organizing dog time with our lovely college dogs Catherine and her daughter Pippi. Biweekly karaoke from our Welfare representatives provided the students with a well-deserved break from the books and revealed an impressive number of talented musicians among us. Our Tea and Biscuits officer provided a seemingly never-ending supply of biscuits, which were envied across Catz (indeed, a rumour started amongst the undergraduate student body that the MCR Tea and Biscuits officer had the largest budget of the entire committee). Moreover, our MCR bar was rumoured to be the best stocked student-run bar in Oxford (we are happy to report this rumour to be true to the best of our knowledge). The year closed as always with our garden party, featuring a floral theme, live music, bubble tea and plenty of Pimm’s to celebrate a successful year.

Our academic officer liaised closely with the Career services to provide CV feedback sessions and individual headshots for students’ professional profiles. The St Catherine’s College Academic Review celebrated bringing out its very first issue in May, which is available online and in print. The journal is interdisciplinary, open-access and student-led, and provides a peer-reviewed platform for members of the college to see their work published. The president, editors and committee would like to thank the various current college members and alumni who supported the review in its first publication.

The MCR and JCR committees worked closely with the JCR representatives on various initiatives and campaigns to improve student life at Catz. We dedicated a significant portion of time to advocating for Catz to remain a college that provides affordable accommodation despite the increase in cost of living. We like to remember the special role that St Catherine’s College, formerly known as the Delegacy of Unattached Students, plays in the history of studying at Oxford University – it is something that we students are proud to be a part of.

We were truly fortunate to have the means to create a welcoming and supportive community for the postgraduate students at St Catherine’s college – it is a testament to the creativity and hard work of the MCR Committee, student volunteers and College staff and fellows. We look forward to seeing what the 2023/24 academic year will bring for St Catherine’s College Middle Common Room.
The 2022-2023 year saw a number of sporting successes for Catz.

On 1 May, the delayed Blues Football Varsity match saw the Oxford Men’s Blues win for the third year in a row, with the team led by Catz student, Captain Finlay Ryan-Phillips. Catz was also represented by returning Blue Nathaniel Downes and newcomer Aleksander Milchev. After a tense first half that equalised at 0-0, Oxford triumphantly defeated Cambridge 2-0 in the second half.

The joint St Catz-Worcester team won the Women’s Rugby Cuppers Final on 7 May, beating Corpus Christi 17-15. Catz was represented by players Joel Chesters (QB), Aari Shah, Kolani Bassi, Harun Shekoni, and Sam Ghali. Notable moments included rushing touchdowns by Joel, a 70-yard passing touchdown from Joel to Aari Shah, a receiving touchdown to Joel on the last play of the game, and Harun’s sacking of the Cambridge QB.

In rowing news, Catz’s Freddy Orpin rowed for Oxford in The Gemini Boat Race on 26 March while Jonathan Davidson rowed as half of the 2023 ‘Spare Pair’. Helen-Nielsen-Scott was in the 2023 Oxford Women’s Reserve Boat, Osiris, as well as competing in the Women’s Intermediate 4+ in May. Zac Abel rowed in the Oxford Lightweight Men’s Blue Boat for the Interactive Investor Lightweight Boat Races and the Men’s first rowing team were runners up in the Nephthys Regatta.

Catz also saw success in the Varsity American Football match, with Oxford beating Cambridge 41-7. Catz was represented by players Joel Chesters (QB), Aari Shah, Kolani Bassi, Harun Shekoni, and Sam Ghali. Notable moments included rushing touchdowns by Joel, a 70-yard passing touchdown from Joel to Aari Shah, a receiving touchdown to Joel on the last play of the game, and Harun’s sacking of the Cambridge QB.

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Additionally, Catz was represented in other sporting events, including the Varsity Blues Rugby match, with Oxford Men’s Blues win for the third year in a row, and the Women’s Rugby Cuppers Final on 7 May, beating Corpus Christi 17-15. Catz was also represented by returning Blue Nathaniel Downes and newcomer Aleksander Milchev. After a tense first half that equalised at 0-0, Oxford triumphantly defeated Cambridge 2-0 in the second half.

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In rowing news, Catz’s Freddy Orpin rowed for Oxford in The Gemini Boat Race on 26 March while Jonathan Davidson rowed as half of the 2023 ‘Spare Pair’. Helen-Nielsen-Scott was in the 2023 Oxford Women’s Reserve Boat, Osiris, as well as competing in the Women’s Intermediate 4+ in May. Zac Abel rowed in the Oxford Lightweight Men’s Blue Boat for the Interactive Investor Lightweight Boat Races and the Men’s first rowing team were runners up in the Nephthys Regatta.

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Catz Expeditions

The College offers a number of travel awards to existing undergraduates each year for travel abroad during the long vacation. The awards are primarily for enterprising and interesting travel projects rather than for study. Here are a selection of postcards from our students to the Master, telling her about their adventures.
Clare Leckie

Shifting gears: exploring the Celtiberian Range

In March 2020, Clare Leckie (2017, PPE) was awarded the Wallace Watson Award. When the pandemic and then a broken arm sent her plans awry, she found herself on an emotional pilgrimage through Spain’s remote Celtiberian Range.

In March 2020, I received the Wallace Watson Award to go bikepacking in the Tibetan Plateau. During my trip, I was hoping to gain a better understanding of the rich culture of a remote population under threat. However, some eighteen months later, with China unlikely to open its borders to tourists any time soon following the introduction of COVID-19 restrictions, I set my sights on exploring the Celtiberian Range in Spain instead.

I had tested out half a dozen ways to strap bags and gear to my bike until I found a system that would allow me to take everything I needed for an epic twenty-day bike trip covering more than 1,250 miles on gravel roads and trails. I would pick up more food a few times along the way, but otherwise be entirely self-sufficient. Months of planning and excitement fuelled my departure from Madrid. I set my sights on exploring the Celtiberian Range in Spain instead.

In the Celtiberian Range, stories are etched into the landscape, stories of a people living in a remote and largely barren region, with a few small villages dotted along the Canaries. Over decades, the Spanish Lapland has undergone a transformation, with bustling settlements fading away, leaving behind echoes of lives once lived. The very next morning I met a local named Rosa out for a walk with her husband. I’d already eaten breakfast, but she insisted on inviting me into her home and raiding her cupboards so that she could cover the table in a generous spread. Rosa had been an English teacher in Madrid until a couple of years ago when she’d moved to Guadalajara to take everything I needed for an adventure. But now, the rhythm of my journey had shifted as I set out on a slower and more unknown exploration.

When I finally left Madrid early on a Monday morning in the autumn of 2021, I recall feeling an incredible sense of freedom and excitement. As I ventured onto the quiet rural paths, the roads got muddier and I soon decided to get off my bike to pass through a patch of particularly slippery mud that threatened to send me skidding off the side of the road. Having successfully navigated my first obstacle, I continued on for another half hour more, before coming to a stop at the top of a small hill. The mud that had built up on the bottoms of my shoes had effectively cemented my shoes to the pedals of my bike and I couldn’t get my foot unclipped before I toppled over. As I fell ungracefully to the side, I instinctively stuck my left arm out to catch myself and it bore the weight of not only my body, but also my loaded bike as I fell. I knew there was a chance that my arm was more than just strained and bruised, but a combination of shock, embarrassment and overwhelming disappointment pushed me on, hoping that the pain would slowly fade over the coming days and I would be able to continue on as planned.

Setting up my camp at the edge of a field that evening turned into a frustrating hour-long ordeal and morning brought no relief; the pain in my left elbow persisted, refusing to yield to optimism. But I decided to continue on as best I could. I would barely travel more than 20 miles in those next few days: pushing my bike up hills, bearing as much weight as possible with my right arm, and tentatively rolling down the other side.

After three days of moving in this way, I finally accepted that it didn’t seem to be getting any better on its own. And as I stopped to rest in a small town—its medical centre only open for half a day each month the day prior as it turns out)—a kind couple en route to Guadalajara offered a lifeline. Gratefully accepting their generosity, I soon found myself on my way to the hospital.

An x-ray showed what I knew it would: my arm was broken at the elbow and cycling was off the table for at least the next few weeks while I kept my arm in a sling. Later, friends, family and colleagues would ask why I didn’t just come home at that point. But for some reason, I never even considered it as an option. Instead I bought a cheap backpack to pack my tent, sleeping bag and food into, left my bicycle in a hotel near the hospital and booked a train to Sigüenza, one of the towns that I had originally planned to pass through a couple of weeks later on my route to continue my adventure. But now, the rhythm of my journey had shifted as I set out on a slower and more unknown exploration.

When the pandemic and then a broken arm sent her plans awry, she found herself on an emotional pilgrimage through Spain’s remote Celtiberian Range.
out to the Celtiberian Range while schools were shut. At one point she disappeared and came back wearing a shirt that said in English “today is a good day.” She told me that it was true because she’d met me. Rosa wanted to know what happened to my arm; what I was going to do now; where I was going; why I hadn’t just gone home; what my plan was. Despite my best efforts to explain, she kept asking the same questions in as many different ways as she possibly could in an effort to understand. The language barrier was only part of the problem. How could I possibly explain to her that I wasn’t really going anywhere.

I plotted my route each morning in part in an effort to make it to the small stores before I really had the chance to see where I was going. My route was usually a new one that I decided on the day before I set off to travel. I’d been looking forward to for so long felt sad. Sad that I’d lost something that I had hoped to take and thought I would have done on two wheels. The distances that I was able to cover were about a quarter of what I would have done on two wheels. Technical failures—a broken camera, a phone that wouldn’t charge properly—added to the frustrations of the slowed pace. And I found myself bored. In an effort to notice the beauty around me, I took photographs of what I saw and ended up with over fifty photographs that all looked the same: a dirt road or trail with trees on both sides stretching off into the distance.

As I weaved my way through the Celtiberian Range, with only a vague idea of where I wanted to get to and the number of days I had left, I felt that I was searching for something. Not a place but a story: something to show for my efforts. What I found in the vast expanse of the Spanish Lapland, where ghost towns told stories of abandonment, was the unexpected warmth of strangers. A farmer who insisted on giving me a bag full of nearly a dozen beef tomatoes and a jar filled with a kilo of honey all sourced from his farm despite my protests that there was no way I could carry it all. Elsa, who wanted to give me a new pair of shoes to replace my T eva sandals that were now wearing through. Wallace, whose family’s kindness and generosity had left such an impact on me that I feel as though I know him. And Wallace, whose family’s kindness and generosity had left such an impact on me that I feel as though I know him. And I recalled the many versions of the trip I’d been looking forward to for so long felt sad. Sad that I’d lost something that I’d been looking forward to for so long and that in its place I was now doing something that was really hard and not particularly exciting. And for this I felt guilt and shame.

I walked fifteen to twenty miles each day, setting goals and finding different ways of tricking myself into continuing on. Moving on foot is significantly slower than by bike. The distances that I was able to cover were about a quarter of what I would have done on two wheels. Technical failures—a broken camera, a phone that wouldn’t charge properly—added to the frustrations of the slowed pace. And I found myself bored. In an effort to notice the beauty around me, I took photographs of what I saw and ended up with over fifty photographs that all looked the same: a dirt road or trail with trees on both sides stretching off into the distance.

Student Perspectives

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As I packed my final belongings into my saddlebag and glanced up at the mountains of the Cordillera Blanca towering over my hostel, I couldn’t help but wonder what on earth I had gotten myself into. I was in Peru, two weeks into my medical elective, and had swapped the humidity of the Amazon for the cool mountain air of Huaraz, a city 3000 metres above sea level. The ten-hour bus journey had done little to acclimatise me to the altitude. I was about to attempt to cycle around Huascaran, Peru’s highest mountain.

The first leg of my journey took me down the main road from Huaraz to Yungay, 2500 metres above sea level. Sixty kilometres away from the city, the number of English speakers had decreased dramatically and I now had to rely on my very broken Spanish. Almost all the hotels were closed as it was outside of the usual tourist season, but I found a small family-run hostel who welcomed me with open arms and even gave me a hand-knitted hat for my journey into the mountains.

The next morning I found a market and bought as many bread rolls and avocados as would fit in my handlebar bag, then left the road and started my ascent up a steep dirt track. Mount Huascaran reaches a peak of 6768 metres above sea level and sits in a mountain range which is flanked on either side by two deep valleys. Two roads traverse the range on either side of the mountain, reaching just under 5000m in elevation at their highest point. The more popular of the two passes, the Punta Olympica, has been recently resurfaced for commercial traffic. The other pass, Portachuelo de Llanganuco, comprises a rough track that is poorly maintained. I choose to tackle this one first.

My first day of climbing took me up 1400m of elevation into a ravine in the mountain range. Slowly the number of houses and people thinned, and the landscape changed from fields of crops to deep green forests. Finally I arrived at the Llanganuco lakes in the early evening, two bright blue bodies of water sandwiched between the mountain ridges. I found a patch of grass at the edge of the lake and pitched my tent between some boulders out of sight of the road. I ate my dehydrated dinner while watching the sun set over the lakes at the end of the deep valley, feeling a profound sense of peace. I then crawled into my sleeping bag and tried to get some sleep. It didn’t last long. I awoke several hours later to the sound of snuffling and a heavy footfall outside my tent. I was consumed by fear, convinced that someone had spotted the tent and had come to steal my bike. Summoning what little courage I had, I unzipped the tent door and edged my head out. I let out a deep sigh of relief. Unbeknownst to me, a herd of mountain cows had descended on the patch of grass and I appeared to be camped in their favourite spot. I got back into bed and tried hard not to think about what would happen if a cow tripped on a guideline and fell onto the tent.

Oriane Grant

‘Bike-packing’ in the Peruvian Andes

The second of this year’s Wallace Watson Award winners was Oriane Grant (2016, Clinical Medicine) who was supported on a journey traveling through the Peruvian Andes on her bike. Meeting welcoming locals and avoiding dangerous rock falls, Oriane reflects on her adventure around Peru’s highest mountain.
The next day I decided to abandon my bike and set out on foot to reach Laguna 69, a glacial lake below the summit of Mount Chacraraju. Unknown to me the night before, I had camped near the hut of a park ranger, who promised to guard my bicycle from cows for the day. The hike was hard work, and at over 4000m elevation the addition of a small backpack felt like carrying 20 tonnes, but the view of the electric blue lake sitting just below the snow line was well worth the effort. After another night’s sleep disturbed by nosy cows, I was back on two wheels and facing my first mountain pass. The air became cool as I climbed painstakingly slowly, winding my way through thirty-two hairpin turns on an unpaved road. As I stopped for a sorely needed jelly baby break, a huge bird flew over my head, continuing to spiral upwards in large circles. It was unmistakably a condor, the largest flying bird in the world and an endangered species. Thrilled by this sight and the landscape and reached the pass, finishing at 4767 metres above sea level. The landscape on the other side of the mountain range appeared like a whole new world ahead of me, with mountains spreading far into the distance. It was lightly snowing at the top and I stopped to put on every layer of clothing I had before tackling the descent on the other side. Descending on an unpaved road was a completely new challenge to the physical work of cycling up a mountain, requiring deep concentration and a strong grip from my now icy hands. I snaked my way around countless 180 degree turns, trying my best to avoid large rocks and potholes. Stopping for a stale bread roll in the snow and rain was becoming less and less appealing with every corner. After several hours I finally came across a couple of houses by the side of the road. A man was walking along with a small boy, and I stopped and asked them if there was anywhere nearby where I could buy some hot food. The man led me to his house and introduced me to his wife, who disappeared inside and returned quickly with a steaming plate piled with rice, fried cassava, egg, tomato and avocado. It was heaven. I had a lovely, albeit broken conversation with them and was even invited to stay the night in their spare room.

Conscious of my schedule, I decided to press on to the next town, Yana, and I spent the night in Yana’s only hotel, a small family-run inn where I was the only guest for several days. I was delighted to be reunited with a shower, even if it came with several electric shocks (as with many showers in rural Peru, bare wires connected the shower head to a fuse box nearby on the wall). The valley on this side of the Cordillera Blanca was much less inhabited and my journey the next day was through challenging terrain, including a near vertical ascent covered in loose stones that I had to push my bike up. I passed through another small town around lunchtime, where the entire population appeared to be gathered around the church for a celebration. A gaggle of small children ran up to me and wanted to see my bike. One young boy tried to make off with it, although luckily for me his legs were far too short to reach the pedals. I found a small restaurant and asked if they had anything vegetarian, explicitly stating I didn’t eat chicken or meat. A smiling man brought me out a bowl of chicken broth. I asked if it contained chicken, and he said no. It appeared that he subscribed to the idiom of ‘out of sight, out of mind’. Upon reflection I’m just glad I wasn’t served the region’s delicacy – guinea pig. The Peruvians call this ‘cuy’, an onomatopoeia for the peeping noise that the animals make.

At a fork in the road, I turned to Chacas, a picturesque town nestled in the mountains and comprised of thin cobbled streets and houses with ornate wooden balconies. I was nearly out of money and horrified to find that, despite the advice of the only English guidebook I could find on this region of Peru, there were no cash machines anywhere to be found. After several hours walking around in desperation, I finally found a hotel which had a card machine and whose owner was willing to give me some cash back. As with every other town I’d visited, I was the hotel’s only guest in nearly a week. I carefully calculated how much money I’d need for the remainder of my trip, then stocked up on avocados, bread and dulce de leche cake—the vegetarian diet available to me was delicious, albeit a little limited. The final pass of my circuit was supposed to be the most exciting, with awe-inspiring views of the twin peaks of Huascarán and the valley below. Unfortunately, I woke to the ominous sound of rain on the roof of the hotel. Determined to finish my trip without delay, I packed up my bike, drenched my rain jacket and headed out to brave the
The trip had taught me a whole series of lessons about myself. The ability to turn back and not let summit fever force rash decisions. My need for partners to share the ups and downs of an expedition such as this one. And finally, just what I’m capable of.

Traversing the California 14ers

This year’s Wallace Watson Award winner Sam Whiteley (2019, Engineering Science) attempted to summit the twelve ‘14er’s of California. Forced to adjust to tropical storms and altitude sickness, Samuel reflects on the journey’s challenges and self-discoveries.

Students Perspectives

Sam Whiteley

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tood in our kitchen a week before we were due to fly out, the BBC News story greeting me and Lewis didn’t make for promising reading. Whilst we worked out which gear we would need, the worst tropical storm to hit the state of California in nearly a century was working its way through the very mountain ranges we would be traveling through in a fortnight. This marked the beginning of a week which continually increased my apprehension for the coming month. Five days later, one unexpected trip to A&E to operate on an infected cyst and an 8 hour flight delay, we landed in San Francisco still largely unaware of what we would be heading into.

The purpose of my trip was to summit the twelve fourteeners of California (mountains with elevation above 14000 feet with 300 feet of prominence), cycling between each peak in a bid to repeat Alex Honnold’s famous ‘sufferfest’. This journey would take me from Mount Shasta, an extinct volcano in the north of the state, down 800km to the famous Eastern Sierra mountain range. Arriving in Shasta, we hectically spent our one and only preparation day re-building my bike and panic buying the various bits we couldn’t get on the plane. With bags packed, I crawled into my bivy and looked up at the stars above, struggling to grasp sleep with the whirlwind of emotions on my mind.

Morning came, we drove to the trailhead and started out nice and early. It must have been the sheer excitement and pent up energy but the first kilometres flew by, and before we knew it we were above the tree line staring down the forty-five degree slopes above us. It was at this point that we had to make our first decision: build camp as planned and use the night to acclimatise or try to push to the summit in one go. The latter would create a twenty kilometre round trip with 2000m+ of elevation gain, but would also gain us around twelve to eighteen hours of travel. After assessing the situation, we both agreed we felt up to the challenge and that we should push to the top. This was the first of a list of mistakes I would make this trip. We erected camp quickly and marched on, knowing our next destination would bring either elation or crushing defeat. Everything was great until around 3800m altitude when altitude sickness hit us both like a steam train. This was my first time at altitude and I hadn’t fully appreciated the effect it would have, the feeling of your head about to explode and every upward step reducing you to a gasping mess. We kept pushing onwards, driven by the need to achieve a summit but it quickly became apparent that this wasn’t a wise choice. Summit fever causes accidents and, in the worst cases, fatalities—a factor I was acutely aware of. The process of standing a few hundred meters below your goal, arguing with oneself about one’s strength is bizarre. I had told myself I could do this and I now needed to convince myself of the stupidity of pushing on. With Lewis agreeing, we descended fast, desperate to get to camp to rest up. We sat perched on a rock eating a hateful dehydrated meal in silence, crushed by the days result… as I said, elation or crushing defeat, and the latter won.

The next week was a highly unexciting cycle down the spine of California and became a week which made me truly hate cycling. I must say, the mixture of desert sun, heinous head winds, oversized American trucks and punctures did get to me. I was traveling alone as Lewis was driving the support car, and I believe it was the solitude which spoiled the experience. When you do an activity with a partner you get to share the emotions, both good and
bad, which makes the process more enjoyable. In the slumps, I really needed a partner for this bit and, as a result, learned another valuable lesson. However, at the end of the week—and several swearing tirades later—we arrived in Bishop. Seeing the Eastern Sierra rise from the valley floor, we both were rejuvenated with excitement for our trip.

That was until ten minutes later when we arrived at the ranger station to get our permits. Sat outside the entrance a sign informed us just how much our plans were about to change: four of the peaks we had hoped to climb lie on trails heads which had completely inaccessible due to the tropical storm that had hit the state two weeks prior. Further information hinted that completing the palisade traverse, a stunning ridge line high in the Sierra, would also be unlikely, but at least accessible for us to give it our best shot. A little crushed we sat in Bishop Park contemplating our next steps. We knew for sure we could still do four peaks, with a further three unlikely but still a possibility. Our first peak would be White Mountain, and with news that another weather system would be hitting in two days, we decided to go for it the very next day.

Leaving for White Mountain, we shared a sense of fear given that the last time we went to altitude it hadn’t ended well. This time would be different, though, we knew to take our time and embrace the journey. A few hours in, it became apparent the reported weather system had decided to come sooner than expected and we were greeted with thick fog, freezing temperatures and torrential rain. Undeterred with comments of ‘no worse than Wales’, we pushed on and reached the summit. Granted, the view was terrible, but the feeling of completing our first 14er reinvigorated us to hit the rest of this trip head on.

The next stop would be entering the wilderness around the Palisade Glacier. We had been informed river crossings and route finding would make it interesting. Our progress was great until the thick bushwhacking slowed us to a crawl. Cairn spotting in a valley with sheer cliffs either side was intimidating, made worse by the fact we could see the thick fog, freezing temperatures and torrential rain. Undeterred with comments of ‘no worse than Wales’, we pushed on and reached the summit. Granted, the view was terrible, but the feeling of completing our first 14er reinvigorated us to hit the rest of this trip head on.

This newfound appreciation carried into our final week. We began with using the days scheduled to tackle the peaks we couldn’t access by attempting smaller peaks (still a dignified thirteen-thousand feet), which allowed us to engage in some proper scrambling and climbing. We summited Mount Gould and Dragon Peak, which both featuring great scrambles to their summit. These two days set up our last tasks: first Mount Langley, then Mount Whitney the tallest peak in California. Mount Langley was a brilliant three-day adventure, featuring some of the most remote walking of the whole expedition—including a rare sighting of Big Horn sheep. We later learned the three we saw were part of a larger herd once featuring up to ten-thousand sheep but that the numbers had declined to less than five hundred. This rare sighting reminded us again of the opportunity we had been given. Mount Langley was a perfect summit day, with clear blue skies allowing you to see for miles into the Sierra and beyond to the Pacific. There was only one thing taken: our final destination Mount Whitney.

Setting off at two am, I knew backing Whitney would be a long day, with 2300m of elevation and 36km of round trip travel, including the added bonus of hopefully taking Mount Muir as an additional 14er en route. The feeling of moving in the dark under the stars with no one around is one of the greatest sensations I’ve experienced. You hear things but have no ability to see them, be it a waterfall or more worryingly falling rocks. In the hours up to sunrise we moved fast, with our frequent time/distance goals in mind. We reached the famous outpost camp just as the sun rose over the mountains on the other side of the valley, greeting us with the best sunrise of the whole trip. It also gave a crisp aspenglow on the ridgeline, with the prominent peaks of Muir and Whitney rising above us. The ninety-nine switchbacks I had read about for weeks didn’t last long and seven and a half hours after leaving camp we reached the summit of Whitney. After taking in an incredible view and making a quick phone call back home, we raced back along the ridgeline, dropped our bags and scrambled up the intricate face climb to the summit of Muir. After signing both registry books and enjoying a bit of victory fruit, we began to make the long walk back to the car. Fifteen hours after leaving we were back, slightly more broken than expected.

15 hours apart but the start and end of one of the greatest days I’ve had in all honesty. Excuse the faces in the first picture, 3 hours sleep had not agreed with me.

Driving back down to Bishop, bittersweet Goodbye filing the car radio, we reflected on the trip we been on. Three weeks sharing a one-man tent (not planned, but necessary in order to share the warmth) while not showering in that time had taken its toll. Lewis had began popping ibuprofen like sweets. But more than anything, the trip had taught me a whole series of lessons about myself. The ability to turn back and not let summit fever force rash decisions. My need for partners to share the ups and downs of an expedition such as this one. And finally, just what I’m capable of. I set out to find my breaking point and I did… I believe honestly that before my body, my mind broke first.

In my interview for this award, I was asked what I would learn and gain, and the simple answer is a lot. I cannot thank Eddie and Ruthie enough for the opportunity they gave me, I hope my story gives someone else the nudge to dream up their own crazy adventure, because you’ll only be better for it.
Interview with Paul Brooks (1985, Physics)

From solar-power aircrafts to Catz tutorials

In 2022, Paul Brooks (1985, Physics) established the Paul Brooks Prize, which is awarded annually to a Physics student to recognise and support aptitude and achievement in practical applications of science and technology. In this conversation with Catz, he explains his motivation for establishing the award, his own experience as a student at the College and advice for current students looking to start their own career in science.

After graduating from Catz, Paul completed a PGCE and entered teaching. Wishing to undertake scientific research before getting too old, Paul joined the Defence Research Agency (later QinetiQ) Space Department in 1991. He delivered the UK’s first space-based surveillance camera (MWR) before designing and managing “TopSat”, the World’s first high resolution small satellite.

Noting the difficulty in achieving timeliness with satellites, Paul formed the “Zephyr” incubator business to develop a solar powered, unmanned aircraft flying in the stratosphere at 20km altitude to enable persistent presence. When the incubator was taken back into the parent company, Paul returned to the university as Sales Director at Surrey Satellites (SSTL), helping to win the prestigious European “Galileo” satellite navigation programme and sell the company to Airbus.

In 2011, QinetiQ closed the Zephyr programme so Paul left SSTL to save Zephyr, rebuilding the team within his own company, Prismatic, and transferring the programme into Airbus — where it remains to this day as the World’s leading solar powered, unmanned aircraft. Paul completed his career by growing Prismatic to develop a new solar aircraft, PHASA-35, selling PHASA and Prismatic to BAES in 2021.

What inspired you to establish a prize focusing on the practical applications of science and technology at St Catz?

I am fortunate to have achieved a position where, looking back on some thirty years of working in science, technology and business across the World, I can now hopefully encourage others to build interesting and valuable careers that will address some of the critical issues facing the world. There are innumerable causes and endeavours that address this goal, but my experience is that there is a severe lack of high-quality graduates that can develop the essential technologies so critical to protecting everyone’s future, as well as too many excellent scientists and engineers immediately taking up careers outside of science and engineering. The Paul Brooks prize is one attempt to address that problem.

The aim is hopefully achieved in three ways. First, that the prize attracts good candidates to Physics. Second, that the undergraduates are then incentivized and rewarded to pursue the application of their studies and lastly, and most importantly, that the prize might encourage students to look at the excellent careers, financial rewards and valuable achievements that can be won by pursuing a career in science. You don’t have to be a banker, lawyer or consultant to make a good living. You can have this and make a useful contribution by directly using these — rare — scientific skills.

So why at Catz specifically? Well this was partly due to my own experience at Catz and partly from the outstanding success I have seen from other Oxford science graduates. On a personal front, I came from a comprehensive school (Calthorpe Park in Fleet) and was the first student from there to get to Oxford and the first person in my family to get to university — so Oxford was not exactly an obvious home from home.

Catz always struck me as the most relaxed and friendly of the colleges and even the architecture made an easier transition from my flat roofed comprehensive! Whilst this friendly introduction was helpful, it was the rigour, constructive development and constant challenging from the tutors that was to have the most significant impact on my degree and career. I was fortunate to have three outstanding tutors who were World experts in their field and had a determination to develop their students (Mike Leask, Neville Robinson and Harry Rosenberg). The development went well beyond the factual content and standard approaches of the Physics course with the greatest benefit being from their insistence that we always looked to solve a problem and understand the limitations and applications of what we were doing. I was never going to be a pure Physicist and in my career after Oxford the majority of my technical work called upon maths and physics that were largely from A level, but the approach to problems — the confidence to derive a result or hypothesis and then test it without fear of appearing
My experience is that it is smaller companies that are more innovative and give the greater freedom to rapidly build the experience and the confidence that will enable you to make a difference that is both valuable to others and rewarding to yourself.

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TopSat

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- “BAE Systems partners with drone specialist for solar-powered UAV”, Defence News, May 3rd 2018

Breaking Barriers:
How a Women’s Studies Graduate Took the Lead in Abolishing the ‘Period Tax’

Laura Coryton, MBE (2018, Mst Women’s Studies), recipient of an MBE in the 2024 New Year’s Honours, winner of the UKRI Young Innovator Award 2023 and the UKRI Women in Innovation Award 2024 and author of Speak Up! Use Your Voice to Change the World (HarperCollins, 2019), on her successful campaign to abolish the ‘tampon tax’ and what comes next.

H aving graduated from Oxford with a Masters in Women’s Studies, I’ve often been faced with the same question from friends, family, and even strangers: how can you carve a career in ‘women’s studies’? I like to take this opportunity to blow away their expectations by showing them how many incredible opportunities there are in the gender equality field. Here’s my story and just one example of the change we can make. In 2014, while an undergraduate, I came across something that shocked me. On a rainy day in May, I found myself deep in a procrastination rabbit hole and exploring the prejudices in our tax system. I realised certain items weren’t taxed at all because they were considered to be essential items, while others were taxed for being luxuries. Items on the ‘essential’ list included maintaining our private helicopters, playing bingo and eating alcoholic sugar jellies and horse meat, while all basic period sanitary products were featured on the ‘luxury’ list, including pads and tampons.

I thought this was incredibly unfair, so I started a petition to end this sexist ‘luxury’ tax rate applied to basic hygiene...
Eventually, we managed to get 300,000 people to sign the petition and successfully lobbied the Government into establishing the Tampon Tax Fund, through which almost £100m was donated to female-focused charities.

Laura Coryton, MBE
The South Bank Show Sky Arts Awards is the triple-threat of events: award ceremony, soiree for the icons of the arts world, and a broadcast TV show. As part of the Nick Young placement, I had the privilege of supporting the insanely talented team at Directors Cut Productions who make this ambition a reality.

The first part of my placement was working within the editorial team. Editorial is the heart of the show: inviting nominees, finding presenters and writing their speeches. I will admit it took me awhile to get over the casual bandying around of names like Stormzy or Claudia Winkelman in emails and Zoom calls. However, soon my favourite task became writing the presenter’s speeches, particularly that of our Film winner, Aftersun. This was genuinely my favourite film of the year, so to write up all my praise and love for it was a total dream – the hardest part was not gushing too much!

After spending my degree writing 2000-word essays destined to be read only by me and my tutor before vanishing into the depths of a dusty hard-drive, it was an absolute thrill to hear my words read out on TV. It necessarily prompted a lot of less eloquently-written groupchat messages, stating: ‘OMG, I WROTE THIS!’

A key element of editorial was the creation of the awards themselves. The SBSAA is unique in having a different artist design the award each year. This year was Grayson Perry, who had taken inspiration from Britain’s pottery tradition in order to create large ceramic cat-shaped figurines – all with Melvyn Bragg’s face instead of a feline muzzle. Absurd yet aesthetic, they rather put the ‘mental’ into ornamental, or to steal Salman Rushdie’s joke, T.S.Eliot should have meant these very impractical cats when he wrote his poems. If you still have nightmares from the 2019 film, I suggest looking away.

I had the absolute pleasure of meeting Grayson and collecting these awards from his studio, a memory I will not forget, partially because of the disconcerting packages they became once wrapped in bubble wrap, Melvyn Bragg’s face staring eerily out. My next stop with the team was production, where I created the show’s ‘heads on sticks’. These are exactly what they sound like, think A4 headshot + bamboo cane + masking tape. Once zip-tied to the appropriate seat, these allowed the camera team to rehearse their shots before the live show.

“We need more gaffer tape, Oti Mobuse’s head’s just fallen off” and “someone hide Tom Crewe in the upstairs closet, he can’t know he’s a winner”, are among the strangest sentences I have ever delivered in the most blasé tones. This task rather unlocked my inner Private Investigator, scrolling through Instagrams, LinkedIn profiles, and photos from previous award shows, all in order to find photos of our most allusive guests. Search for Sarah Lancashire or Arthur Darvill and the difficulty is choosing which photo.

Looking for the producer of Happy Valley or choreographer of the Royal
“We need more gaffer tape, Oti Mobuse’s head’s just fallen off” and “someone hide Tom Crewe in the upstairs closet, he can’t know he’s a winner”, are among the strangest sentences I have ever delivered in the most blasé tones.

Bamboo sticks with A4 headshots and names of each nominee taped to the top, lying on the carpet of the Savoy Hotel.

Parked by the loading bay of the Savoy, it received all the output of the cameras and audio in the event room which were then skillfully cut together by the show’s director and crew. It was incredible to see the team craft the show live: cueing VTs, moving between cameras, directing operators and almost with arachnid foresight cutting away from a guest about to yawn or sneeze. My part of the operation was directing my personal Tom Cruise, Mike the Cameraman. Through an earpiece, I navigated him around the ballroom, capturing reactions from notable guests. Not to name any names, but this sometimes meant waiting for them to look up from a cheeky phone glance. These reactions were used in post-production to cover up the necessary edits to bring down the show runtime. A night at the Savoy, overlooking the Southbank and National Theatre decked in rainbow lights for Pride, felt like the perfect way to close to experience.

Writing this up, has made me realise once again how much I got to be part of. And I haven’t even mentioned my morning at a Gentleman’s Club in Pall Mall, or my trip in the award-winning Mercedes-Benz, and even my experience almost taking off an actor’s nose with a clapper board. Throughout the process, I sometimes felt like a very good impersonator who had somehow been escorted to the stage believed to be the real deal. However, the warmth and welcome I received from everyone at DCP and beyond meant this impostor syndrome was only sometimes felt like a very good impersonator who had somehow been escorted to the stage believed to be the real deal. However, the warmth and welcome I received from everyone at DCP and beyond meant this impostor syndrome was only sometimes felt like a very good impersonator who had somehow been escorted to the stage believed to be the real deal. However, the warmth and welcome I received from everyone at DCP and beyond meant this impostor syndrome was only sometimes felt like a very good impersonator who had somehow been escorted to the stage believed to be the real deal. However, the warmth and welcome I received from everyone at DCP and beyond meant this impostor syndrome was only.

The Earthquake Engineering Field Investigation Team (EEFIT) is a joint venture between industry and universities, conducting field investigations following major earthquakes, and disseminating its observations though publicly available reports. EEFIT is managed by a committee elected by its membership and, after volunteering, this committee selected me to lead the geotechnical field team. This decision was thanks to my expertise in earthquake-induced liquefaction, which was widely observed in the aftermath of the 2023 Kahramanmaraş earthquakes.

Could you provide an overview of the mission’s objectives and the role of the geotechnical field team? The objectives of the EEFIT missions are to advance our understanding of the impact of earthquakes through different objectives (seismology, geotechnics, structures, infrastructure, relief-response-recovery). The EEFIT mission consisted of multiple teams capturing reactions from notable guests. Not to name any names, but this sometimes meant waiting for them to look up from a cheeky phone glance. These reactions were used in post-production to cover up the necessary edits to bring down the show runtime. A night at the Savoy, overlooking the Southbank and National Theatre decked in rainbow lights for Pride, felt like the perfect way to close to experience.

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During our mission, we encountered several unexpected challenges that have to do with operating in a crisis-affected area that is in a state of emergency. During our mission we identified areas that could offer lessons to the geotechnical earthquake engineering community using satellite data, local connections, and social media. During the mission, we took detailed measurements, especially of perishable data, and liaised with the local technical community to acquire further information such as detailed stratigraphy and ground investigation data using boreholes. Upon our return, we classified our key observations within four broad sections: landslides and rockfalls, surface feature interaction with structures, liquefaction and subsidence, bridges and approach structures, which were published in a report that is publicly accessible and which will be translated to Turkish for the benefit of the local community.

Can you share a specific experience or challenge you encountered during the geotechnical fieldwork?

During our mission we encountered several expected challenges that have to do with operating in a crisis-affected area that is in a state of emergency and whose infrastructure has been significantly compromised, as well as some unexpected ones, that had to do with our visit coinciding with a particularly wet week which led to catastrophic flooding in the area. For many of us though, the greatest challenge was maintaining focus on efficient data collection in areas that were completely devastated by the earthquake, as for instance when documenting the response of retaining walls and bridges along the Orontes river within a post-apocalyptic setting in the city of Antakya, where more than 3,000 buildings had collapsed and more than 20,000 people had died.

In what ways do you believe the findings from your team’s observations can inform future strategies for earthquake preparedness and response, both in Turkey and globally?

Our observations identified systems for which current global design guidance is either non-existent or in need of significant improvement. We also observed how rockfalls can critically damage water, electricity, and communication lines, cutting off communities at a time when the capacity of the state to help is limited. Additionally, we observed how narrow valley landslides triggered during an earthquake can lead to the formation of natural dams and water reservoirs that produce the cascading hazard of sudden flooding should a breach occur. In the case we observed, the local authorities were unaware of the reservoir’s existence even though it was upstream of a town. A comprehensive preparedness plan would include pre-earthquake critical location identification, as well as post-earthquake inspection and response strategies.

The full report Observations from the 2023 Kahramanmaraş Earthquakes EEFIT mission can be found on the Catz website.
A conversation with St Catherine’s College Research Associate in Medical Sciences, Dr Gurman Kaur

In the 2022-23 academic year, Dr Kaur was appointed as the Head of Cell Therapies, Cellular and Molecular Therapies (CMT) at NHS Blood and Transplant and named as Honorary Research Fellow in the Department of Women’s and Reproductive Health. In this conversation, she tells us what attracted her to the medical sciences and her advice for young people interested in pursuing a career in the sciences.

What attracted you to a career in the medical sciences and research?

It was the desire to tease out the understanding of how diseases work, why certain people in the population are at a higher risk of developing a disease, and more importantly how can we find new ways of treating them. Any medical treatment that we have today is because someone invested their time and effort into researching those diseases and come up with the treatments currently on offer. However, there are still many diseases where we do not understand how they work, and consequently, despite all medical advances, we are unable to offer a cure – this is one of the biggest drivers that has attracted me to research. In addition, the idea that you could potentially be looking at biological data that no one else has yet been able to, makes it even more exciting!

How would you explain your research to non-scientists?

I have spent a large proportion of my research career trying to understand how interactions between specific genes lead to development of diseases, and which pathways can potentially be targeted to alleviate disease burden. For example, in my last research project we looked at how combinations of different immune genes inherited from parents influenced the risk of developing of pregnancy complications such as fetal growth restriction in the baby. In my current role, I am leading the laboratory that provides stem cell transplants and new cellular therapies to patients, and here I am interested in establishing a program about the cellular biology of stem cell transplantation and correlating it with clinical outcomes.

Do you have a favourite topic to teach and if so, why?

I have come to realise that within the field of research ‘favourite topics’ are transient. The field constantly moves at a rapid pace, and one must be willing to adapt and move forward with it. So, in that sense, talking about how applications of recent technological advances have made it possible for us to achieve research outputs that we would have not even dreamt of a few years ago is fascinating.

Do you have any advice for young people who want to succeed in academia?

One thing I would say is do not wait for the right opportunity to come to you at a supposed right time, instead just go for it, it always is the right time! Always keep in mind the requirements you need to fulfill for your next job or your next grant application and start working on those now! If you start thinking about these when you need to be making these applications, it might already be too late. Put in your effort but do not be hesitant to ask for support from your colleagues and mentors.

What is your advice for support from your colleagues and mentors?

I have found that the hallmarks of good research are: having a clear understanding of the research problem, a solid working hypothesis, and the ability to think big thinking which can increase or slow the speed of grammatical change in the Romance languages.

Professor Byron Byrne, Fellow in Engineering Science, and former Catz colleagues Dr Brian Shell (former Junior Research Fellow) and Dr Ronan Royston (former DPhil student) were recently honoured at the Institution of Civil Engineers, winning the Crompton Prize, for the best paper published by the Institution in 2022 on practical geotechnical engineering.

Catz alumnus and Domus Fellow Katherine Rundell (2005, English Language & Literature) has won the 2022 Baillie Gifford Prize for Non-Fiction for her book Super-Infinite: The Transformations of John Donne.

Professor Sam Wolfe, Catz Fellow and Professor of French and Romance Linguistics, has been awarded a prestigious Philip Leverhulme Prize from the Leverhulme Trust. The prize, worth £100,000, will support Sam’s research for three years. During this time, he will embark upon an ambitious project to understand the factors which can increase or slow the speed of grammatical change in the Romance languages.

Professor Graeme Segal FRS (1967, Mathematics)—Fellow and Tutor in Mathematics 1966–88; Professorial Fellow 1988–90; and current Honorary Fellow of St Catz—has been granted the Frontiers of Science Award at the inaugural International Congress of Basic Science Conference. The award was given for his paper ‘Wick rotation and the positivity of energy in quantum field theory’ (The Quarterly Journal of Mathematics, 2021).

Dr Denis Martin (1965 Physics) was awarded the 2023 New Year Honours: Officer of the Order of the British Empire (OBE) for services to British Numismatics. Dr Denis Martin (1965 Physics) was awarded the 2023 New Year Honours: Officer of the Order of the British Empire (OBE) for services to British Numismatics. Dr Denis Martin (1965 Physics) was awarded the 2023 New Year Honours: Officer of the Order of the British Empire (OBE) for services to British Numismatics.

Professor Leslie Lokko (1984, Oriental Studies) was appointed Officer of the Order of the British Empire (OBE) for services to architecture and to education. Professor Lokko is a novelist, academic, and architect, as well as the Founder of the African Futures Institute in Accra, Ghana. She curated 2023’s Venice Biennale of Architecture.

Two alumni were also recognised in the 2023 King’s Birthday Honours:

Dr Razvan U. Constantinescu (2001, Sociology) was appointed Member of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire for voluntary services to the people of Ukraine. He is the director of the charity ‘From Bristol With Love’, which has organised the shipping of over 4000 boxes of aid to Odessa and surrounding areas.

Clive Andrew Maxwell (1989, Geography) was appointed Commander of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire for services to Rail Transport. After serving as Director General of the High Speed Rail Group from 2019 – 2022, he is now the Second Permanent Secretary for the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero.

Two alumni were also recognised in the 2023 New Year Honours:

Sonu Shivdasani (1985, English) was appointed Officer of the Order of the British Empire (OBE) for services to tourism, sustainability and charity. Mr. Shivdasani is a hotelier and founder of the Sotheby Foundation, which champions greater environmental responsibility in the hospitality sector.

Professor Lokko is a novelist, academic, and architect, as well as the Founder of the African Futures Institute in Accra, Ghana. She curated 2023’s Venice Biennale of Architecture.

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Dame Angela McLean DBE FRS, Professor of Mathematical Biology at the University of Oxford and former fellow of St Catherine’s College (2000 – 2007), has been appointed the new Government Chief Scientific Adviser. She is the first woman to ever hold the post.

Adjoa Andoh, actor, director and producer, delivered her inaugural lecture as the Cameron Mackintosh Visiting Professor of Contemporary Theatre on 15 October. The lecture, Swinging the Lens – All Our Stories, saw Adjoa reflecting on the importance of telling the stories of a wide range of individuals. Adjoa spoke of her own attempts to broaden the stories that are told, including staging ‘traditional’ scripts such as Shakespeare in a modern setting, and how she has used casting to ask questions and challenge the status quo.

Adjoa summed up her aims for the year-long position: ‘I want to swing the lens on stories told. Let’s reshape some canons and familiarise ourselves with different universes. Throughout the year, she led a series of workshops for students, culminating in a final performance in Trinity term.

A team from St Catherine’s appeared on the long-running television quiz show University Challenge on 1 November.

Catz hosted a reception for Albeniz Clayton’s A St Catz photographic exhibition, which depicts the grounds of St Catherine’s College through the eye of the Porter.

On Tuesday 9 May, St Catherine’s College hosted the final concert of the annual Henfrey Prize for Composition, which supports the creation of outstanding new chamber and acoustic music. This year’s final featured world-class performers from the Tangram Collective, including Catz alumnae Daniel Shao (flutes) and BeiBei Wang (Chinese percussion), who performed four new works by Oxford composers. The finalists for the Henfrey Prize for Composition were Manuel M. Burgos, Sirui Huang, Ynyr Pritchard and Electra Perivolaris, who was selected by guest composer Tonia Ko as the winner. Many congratulations to all participants and performers.

Dr Cayenna Ponchione-Bailey, Director of Performance at St Catherine’s College, winner of the 2023 Henfrey Composition Prize Electra Perivolaris, finalist Ynyr Pritchard, Tonia Ko (compositor and adjudicator of this year’s prize), finalist Sirui Huang, finalist Manuel M. Burgos, Catz alumnus and musician Daniel Shao and musician BeiBei Wang.

St Catherine’s College grounds were transformed into an elite private school for Jessica Hausner’s film, Club Zéro, which had its premiere at the 76th annual Cannes Film Festival on 22 May, 2023.

In my first year of undergrad, I read James Baldwin’s Go Tell it on a Mountain; it was electric – a breathtaking piece of work – and that term I stayed up late at nights to read all his fiction. And, it was at Catz that I studied the poetry of John Donne, with Bart van Es. I ended by writing a doctoral thesis and then a book about Donne; about the wild strangeness and beauty of his love poetry, his bold invention, his insistence on using the full sweep of his formidable intellect in his work, whether people wanted it or not.’

Far left: The 1953 edition of James Baldwin’s Go Tell it on a Mountain
Left: John Donne

World Book Day
with Catz Domus Fellow Dr Katherine Rundell (2005, English Language & Literature)

T

o celebrate World Book Day 2023, we asked Dr Katherine Rundell (2005, English Language & Literature)—bestselling and award-winning author of children’s books including Impossible Creatures, Rooftoppers and The Wolf Wilder, as well as the Sunday Times bestseller Super-Infinite: The Transformations of John Donne—to share what books she read as an undergraduate at Catz that she would recommend to others in the Catz community.

‘In my first year of undergrad, I read James Baldwin’s Go Tell it on a Mountain; it was electric – a breathtaking piece of work – and that term I stayed up late at nights to read all his fiction. And, it was at Catz that I studied the poetry of John Donne, with Bart van Es. I ended by writing a doctoral thesis and then a book about Donne; about the wild strangeness and beauty of his love poetry, his bold invention, his insistence on using the full sweep of his formidable intellect in his work, whether people wanted it or not.’

We’d love to hear it! Our contact details are available on the back cover.
College Events

We hope to see you at our upcoming events in 2024. All listed events will be held in College (unless stated in brackets).

Saturday 2 March 2024
Varsity Rugby (Stone X Stadium – NW4)

Thursday 7 March 2024
Wallace Watson Awards

Saturday 9 March 2024
Freshers’ and Families’ Lunch

Thursday 25 April 2024
Foundation Scholars’ Dinner

Sunday 12 May 2024
Oxford Town & Gown (around Oxford)

Saturday 1 June 2024
Dean Kitchin Circle Event

Thursday 6 June 2024
London Party (The Athenaeum Club, Pall Mall)

Saturday 15 June 2024
Parents & Second Years’ Garden Party

Postponed (date TBC)
Gaudy for 1993–2002 Matriculands

Postponed (date TBC)
Society Gaudy for pre-1962 Matriculands

Please be aware that events may be postponed, amended or added to. For the latest information and to book your place, visit www.stcatz.ox.ac.uk/events or contact the Development Office using the details on the back cover.

St Catherine’s College Legators photographed enjoying a garden party in The Oxford Botanic Gardens on 18 June 2023. Photographs by Charles Henderson.

Matriculands from 1972–1973 were invited to celebrate 50 Years of Matriculation in the Master’s Garden on 9 September 2023. Photographs by Charles Henderson.

Alumni photographed in College on 24 June 2023 at the Gaudy for 1993–2002 Matriculands. Drinks were enjoyed in the SCR Garden, followed by dinner in our Jacobson Hall. Photographs by Jules & Bean Photography.

Alumni joined us at the Stationers Hall on 6 June 2023 for our annual London Party. Photographs by Charles Henderson.

The Master photographed with Alumni at The China Club at the Hong Kong Drinks on 2 June 2023. Photograph by Laura Stoker.
Prize Crossword

As ever, our prize crossword is compiled by College Enigmatist Chris Maslanka (1973, Engineering). Complete it for your chance to win a prize.

To enter the draw, please send in your completed crossword grid along with your name, matriculation year and contact details for the attention of the editor of The Year. Entries may be submitted by post or by email (contact details can be found on the back cover and must be received no later than 31 July, 2024. Good luck!

Clues Across

1. & 57. Catz alumna and prolific contributor to modern literary culture (8, 9)
6. Ones in India ending up in another country (9)
13. Place with the porters (5)
14. The same atoms differently arranged (9)
15. Fool a bird (5)
16. Sum to make sense (5, 2)
18. What Knut failed to do (4, 3, 4)
19. Craggy hill to the right (5)
20. Time to make amends? Totally agreed! (2, 3)
22. Russian money for rock band from Dublin (5)
24. A father to Byron’s daughter (3)
26. & 34. Man of the forest sadly endangered in 2 across (5, 4)
28. & 39 across. Catz alumna and winner of Baillie Gifford Prize for Non-Fiction (9, 7)
30. The island, not the lettuce (3)
31. Re-educate in the matter of rare tin (7)
32. Lake where parts of Godfather II were filmed (5)
33. Material cause of concrete harm (4)
34. See 26.
36. Ant on holiday? (5)
37. & 57. Catz alumna and prolific contributor to modern literary culture (8, 9)
38. What Knut failed to do (4, 3, 4)
39. See 28.
40. Oddly assess beast of burden (3)
41. Behold and see
What [5, 4] of grief lay hid in me,
And how the red wild sparkles dimly burn
Through the ashen greyness
—Elizabeth Barrett Browning
43. In musical directions a sigh is heard. Rather! (5)
44. Performance form incorporating rhyme, rhythm and street vernacular (3)
45. Species of allium found in—or on—ions (5)
47. Fools birds— making a [15] of someone (5)
48. Friend in Kampala (3)
49. Get the measure of an autocrat (5)
50. Instruments to shake, rattle and roll (11)
51. Flightless bird? No— a grass-cutter (5)
52. German river (5)
53. Convocation of bishops to discuss 56? (5)
55. Doll about right—and provocative of dry amusement (5)
58. The answer to this clue is as easy as this (3)

Clues Down

2. & 57. Catz alumna and prolific contributor to modern literary culture (8, 9)
3. Born in France—and the name she was born with (3)
4. Is it a stan? In brief it is not (5)
5. Ideal journey for self-seeker? (3, 4)
6. Still chemically inactive (5)
7. Get the measure of an autocrat (5)
8. Haloes, rainclouds— or a game invented by Piet Hein (5)
9. Extinct field of the subfamily Machairodontinae (5-7, 5)
10. What the game is, according to Holmes (5)
11. Second-hand market— where you can acquire jumpers? (4, 6)
12. One of the gases Professor Bill David FRS researches the storage of (8)
17. Centerpieces aside— the chief thing presented at dinner (it starts with pie!) (5, 2, 10)
21. “The Heavenly City (9) Rome beyond comparison” — St Augustine
22. Shy-sounding fish (3)
23. The gifted gorilla with sign language— not the bedtime drink! (4)
25. Q: How do you know Moses wore a wig?
A: Because sometimes he was seen with (5) and sometimes without— old joke
27. Shake ringer as a warning to others (5, 4)
29. Goddess of ruin turns up at scheduled time (3)
33. Get the measure of an autocrat (5)
35. Got up a unit of thermal resistance (3)
37. Tom Phillips’s hangings lending colour and warmth to the hall (10)
38. Capital of old Czechoslovakia (4)
39. Turn up again to harvest fruit (8)
40. Big bird, subject of Island by H. G. Wells
42. 3. down brought up in Aegean even poetically (1’2)
46. Charge stripper— it will clear the air! (7)
49. Get lowdown on this type of dancing (5)
51. Flightless bird? No— a grass-cutter (5)
54. Friend in Kampala (3)
56. Bureaucratic work that harms a mind (5)
57. See 1 across
58. To a poet a poem; to a chemist a terminal (5)

E.g. Canada Balsam, from trees—or extracted from Cristolas (9)
60. In PPE they only advocate change at root; in mathematics they are roots…. (8)

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Obituaries

Professor Sir Brian Smith
10th October 1933 – 17th May 2023

Professor Sir Brian Smith, who died at the age of 89 on 17th May 2023, was the College’s third Master from 1987 to 1993, having joined the College as a founding Fellow in Chemistry in 1960. With his death, the world has lost a multi-talented scientist, university leader and mountaineer for whom, ahead of all his success in many fields, family was pivotal to his life. So, in September 1993 he moved back to Wales, from whence he came.

He was born in 1933 in Mold, North Wales. His father, Eric, was a chemistry teacher at grammar schools in Ruthin and Wrexham. His interest in chemistry passed on to Brian, as did his fascination with carrying out science experiments in the kitchen which Brian tried to emulate, even at primary school. When he moved to Mold Alun Grammar School, he discovered another passion – mountaineering. With his friend David Harper, he roamed the local countryside and developed a deep fascination with mountains that was to stay with him for the rest of his life.

His enthusiasm for science continued to develop with a move to Wirral Grammar School and in 1951 he went to Liverpool University to study chemistry, though initially his main interest was in the University mountaineering club. In the summer of 1954 Brian graduated with a First-Class Honours degree, and stayed on to do a PhD under the supervision of Dr J. E. Spice, studying low temperature heat capacities of solids.

Brian was awarded his PhD in the summer of 1957 and accepted a postdoctoral position with Professor Joel Hildebrand at the University of California, Berkeley. He and his first wife Peggy were married that summer and soon afterwards set off from Liverpool on board the Scythia, a very old Cunard liner making its last eleven-day journey to New York. Working in Hildebrand’s laboratory was a transforming experience for Brian. Hildebrand was a remarkable man in his late 70s, a renowned physical chemist, who went on to live to 101. He sparked Brian’s interest in intermolecular forces, a subject that was to remain at the centre of his research for the rest of his career. He also teamed up with Berni Alder, who introduced him to the power of computers to simulate assemblies of molecules and so predict the properties of liquids.

After two years in Berkeley, the Smiths returned to England, this time upgraded to the Queen Elizabeth, for Brian to take up an ICi research fellowship in the (then) Physical Chemistry Laboratory (PCL) in Oxford. Joel Hildebrand is reported to have said to Sir Cyril Hinshelwood, head of the PCL, that “England can’t afford to lose young men like Smith”. The university had just installed a large valve–operated Ferranti Mercury computer, so Brian decided to use this to continue his simulation studies of liquids. When in 1960 a College Fellowship was advertised for the new, soon to be built, St Catherine’s College, Brian applied. His exciting state–of–the–art research using ‘modern computers’ clearly impressed the interview panel, and at the age of 26, he was duly appointed as a Founding Fellow in Chemistry.

One of the challenges for Brian, and for his organic chemistry colleague Brian Fender appointed to a Fellowship in 1963, was to markedly improve the degree results of chemistry students in the new College compared to where they had been for the old Society. An early student, John Walker, who graduated in 1965, decided to do research in molecular biology and went on to be awarded the Nobel Prize for Chemistry in 1997 – not a bad start! The two Brians duly recruited excellent cohorts of undergraduates, whose degree results rapidly put St Catherine’s amongst the best performing Chemistry Colleges in the University. Brian was a superb teacher, meticulous in his planning of study areas and clear in explaining complex topics with deep physical insight. Tributes from countless former students testify to the profound impact he had on their lives with his clarity of teaching and personal kindness and mentoring.

Meanwhile the Smith family expanded with the arrival of Caroline (1960), Mark (1961) and Nicholas (1965). Brian continued to build up his research and between 1960 and 1990, he and his group made seminal contributions in two fields: measuring accurate values of the properties of gases and other molecules in our blood, body tissue and nerve cells. In 1988, Brian was awarded the higher doctorate, DSc, by Oxford University in recognition of his outstanding research.

However, as important as what Brian achieved in his research was the way in which he did it. He had a great physical insight and scientific intuition for the underlying cause of the phenomena he observed. He was a great problem solver and innovative scientist whose creativity spilled over into everything he did. His work with students and collaborators was characterised by a profound interest in people, a deep humanity and kindness and a keen sense of humour.

His time as Master was characterised by his philosophy that a College is a family, with all the complexities that brings with it, and he led St Catherine’s in a way that tried to make everyone feel a valued member of that community.

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Lexi, their eleven grandchildren and one great-grandson.

He had a zest for life and boundless energy and enthusiasm which left many breathless but was infectious and motivating. His time as Master was characterised by his philosophy that a College is a family, with all the complexities that brings with it, and he led St Catherine’s in a way that tried to make everyone feel a valued member of that community. He, with Regina, alongside engaged fully in the life of entertaining college guests, fellows and students, as well as working with the Fellowship to steer the life and advancement of the College.

Key to this were the regular evenings in the Lodgings where Fellows (one arts, one science) would talk about their research to colleagues, research students and undergraduates. A highlight of Brian’s time as Master came in 1990, when he facilitated the establishment of the Cameron Mackintosh Chair of Contemporary Theatre, which has brought a series of distinguished actors, writers and producers to the College, from the first holder Stephen Sondheim to the current 29th Professor, Gregory Doran, and solidified St Catherine’s central role in the arts for the whole university.

His time as Master was a richly rewarding period in Brian’s life as, under his leadership, the College’s reputation for academic excellence and innovation continued to grow, its
coupled to deep integrity and honesty. Life with Brian was always fun, with research intermingled with 5-a-side football games against the inorganic chemists and the weekly Smith mile at the Iffley Road track. He was a very good tennis player from a young age and delighted in taking his students out onto the fast grass courts in the Parks, letting them win the odd set for encouragement but almost always coming out the clear victor. Whilst preparing a lecture course on chemical thermodynamics, Oxford University Press approached him to see if he was prepared to write a compact textbook on the subject in a new series they were publishing, aimed at undergraduates. He agreed and after his book Basic Chemical Thermodynamics was published in 1973 it went on, to his amazement, to be the best seller in the series. It eventually ran to six editions, being translated into six languages and remaining in print for over 40 years. He went on to write five more books on intermolecular forces and physical chemistry.

The mid-1970s were a difficult period for Brian and his children as sadly his marriage to Peggy ended in 1977. However, during a house exchange vacation in California in the summer of 1979, serendipity was to play a life-changing part in his life when Brian met Regina Bell, a widowed friend of the owner who had been asked to keep an eye on the house while she was away. There was an instant attraction between them which quickly developed into a close, loving relationship. In 1985, after four years of transatlantic commuting, they married in the house where they had first met. Regina, with considerable sacrifice, moved to Oxford and was by Brian’s side for the next forty years. They made a formidable, generous and loving team together. Having shown little inclination to take on much administration at either College or University level, in 1980 Brian was persuaded to sit on the University General Board, the body that controlled the University’s academic programme. Somewhat to his surprise, he enjoyed the role and found that he was in fact quite good at it. Others clearly thought the same and in 1985 he was elected to serve as chair. The way in which he dealt with how stringent financial cuts, imposed by the government of the day, should be applied met with overwhelming approval by the Colleges and gained him enormous respect with the Board and across the University. His growing reputation as a skilful administrator led to approaches to become head of a College. Exactly the right offer came along when, in 1987, Sir Patrick Nairne retired as Master of St Catherine’s, and he was invited to become the third Master. He was delighted to be able to lead the College of which he had been a Fellow for 27 years and he and Regina moved into the Master’s Lodgings that September for what was to prove a very successful and fulfilling six years.

On moving to Cardiff in 1993, they promoted the same sense of the University being an institutional family as they had at St Catherine’s. Creating a sense of togetherness was very important in addressing the huge challenge Brian had been given, to bring Cardiff right up to the top of the UK university rankings. Some departments closed, others were merged and he set in place a very active programme to recruit top research leaders. Brian’s restless energy and enthusiasm conveyed itself to colleagues at all levels and he instilled a ‘can-do’ attitude to whatever challenges arose. In the 1996 Research Assessment Exercise (RAE), Cardiff rose from 45th to 17th place in the ranking table. This outstanding performance led Cardiff to be invited to join the Russell Group of elite research-led universities which delighted the staff and Council. With this target being achieved in only three years, Brian received almost universal support for his strategy and actions for the remainder of his time as Vice-Chancellor.

Research income quadrupled, enabling many new projects and buildings. He established the hugely successful Cardiff University Innovation Centre which helps support and encourage innovation in local SME businesses and in 1999 he was knighted in recognition of his work in building university links with industry and commerce. The enhancement of Cardiff’s research excellence continued unabated and the next RAE ranking in the year he retired, 2001, was an amazing 7th, the crowning glory on his extremely successful seven years at the helm.

Outstanding though Brian’s achievements in research and university leadership were, the great passion of his life (apart from Regina) was mountaineering. Fortunately, she also loved mountains. Having developed a strong interest in climbing and exploring mountains in his youth, as a student and during his time in the US, he became more serious in the early 1970s with a series of endurance mountaineering challenges, visiting all 14 peaks in Wales over 3000 ft in one day and the more ambitious traverse of the Cullin Ridge in Skye.

In August 1975, huddled in a tent on Skye, and cowering from the unceasing torrential rain, Brian and his growing group of climbing friends decided to form the ‘Gorcheysfa’ mountaineering club. Initially the club’s activities focused on North Wales but they soon expanded their horizons. Many trips to the Alps were organised, including in 1980 climbing a number of 4000 metre peaks, culminating in an ascent of the Matterhorn. There followed several visits to the Himalayas, including the Everest region. Brian continued serious climbing challenges nearer to home with his club colleagues in the eighties and nineties, and despite various illnesses and setbacks continued to walk, climb and orienteer well into his ninth decade. He had a truly indomitable spirit, relishing adventure, its risks and its rewards.

Brian’s love of new challenges extended to other areas. With each decade he tried to learn a new skill; for his 60th he learned to ski, which gave him over 25 years of pleasure on the slopes; for his 70th he decided to learn to surf standing up; and for his 80th he learned to execute magic tricks and passed the exam to gain entry to the prestigious Magic Circle. He had a great sense of adventure and the steely determination to succeed. Over the past few years, he supported Regina through her recovery from life-threatening medical problems and surgery. Although Brian himself had a series of major back problems since 2017, his mobility was seemingly restored after an operation early in 2023 and his fitness levels were amazing for someone approaching his 90th birthday. He died suddenly on 17 May 2023 on a shotover Hill overlooking Oxford, which he and Regina loved so much, to where he had driven for an afternoon walk. Sadly it was to be his last.

As Brian’s former research students gathered together in September 2023 to celebrate his life near what would have been his 90th birthday, a recurring sentiment of the day was that so many generations of students and colleagues owe him so much – thank you Brian… what a life!

Geoff Maitland (1965, Chemistry)
Simon Aspinall (1987, Engineering & Computer Science)

Simon died on the 22nd June 2023 in a road traffic accident in Switzerland. Simon was born in Maldon, Essex. He attended the British School, transferring to the Royal Grammar School, High Wycombe, as a teenager. He won a place at Malvern, but did a year’s work experience with IBM before starting at the college.

Simon’s time at Oxford was ‘busy’:

• He captained the University Fencing team.
• He was awarded a full Blue in Chemistry.
• He received first class honours in his degree.

He later returned to the British School and was a teacher for 25 years, working in the United States, Canada and Peru. He was later appointed as Head of Physics and Head of Sixth Form at the British School.

On going down, he worked for a major Management Consultancy around Europe, before taking an MBA at INSEAD.

Simon’s career was always in “high-tech” companies, some large, some “start-ups”, some in the UK, some in the USA. His roles were always in marketing or corporate management.

His final job was as CEO of Ecorobotix: a Swiss company which is a world pioneer in the use of Artificial Intelligence for corporate management.

He became close friends with other members of the College and the fencing community. Many of these friendships were sustained for the rest of his life.

He had a very good relationship with his tutor, Roger David Bailey (1953, History), and continued with GP Appraisals.

Roger was interested and curious about many things. In the late 1980s he became a member of the ‘Eclectic Group’.

The members belong to at least a dozen nationalities, and by four great-grandchildren.

Simon Aspinall (1987, Engineering & Computer Science)

Roger David Bailey (2015, Continuing Education)

Roger was born in Malta in December 1917. The family moved every year for the next 14 years around the UK and the World. This gave Roger a taste for travel for the rest of his life. Eventually settling back in Yorkshire, Roger attended Lawwood School in Leeds and went on to Durham University. On an expedition to Nepal in 1979 for fieldwork towards his Biology degree, he decided he wanted to become a doctor and applied to a place at Charing Cross Hospital Medical School. He arranged a short service commission in the RAMC and returned to Nepal to the Gungha hospital for his Elective.

Roger met his wife, Doreen at Durham University and they married in 1982. She was able to join him on all his pursuits along his career.

Following his House Jobs, Roger spent the next 5 years training as a GP in Germany, Cattick and Cyprus with the British Army. He had inherited a thirst to achieve from his Mother and studied for diplomas in Child Health, Community Child Health, Obstetrics and Gynaecology and was a Member of the Royal College of General Practitioners.

From his Father, Roger had inherited a strong competitive drive and was a keen sportsman. He enjoyed rugby, football, swimming, gymnastics and played rugby for Durham University, Charing Cross Medical School and Bletchley Rugby Club. He skied in Bavaria, and in Cyprus went water skiing and windsurfing as well as learning to fly a light aircraft.

On leaving the RAMC in 1983, he became a GP in Buckinghamshire, Northampton and Bedfordshire. He was a much loved and respected Doctor.

After retiring in 2013, he did locums, joined the Judicary as a medical member and continued with GP Appraisals. Roger was interested and curious about many things. In particular wildlife, languages, philosophy, religion, History, world affairs and travel. He and Doreen skied almost every year for their forty years of marriage and enjoyed skiing off piste. They played Bridge and travelled extensively. In 2015 Roger completed a Masters of Laws Degree in Health Care and Ethics at Manchester University.

In the same year he was accepted at St Catz to do a Masters of Science Degree at OxIn in evidence based Health Care. This gave him the drive to pursue a PhD at the age of 62 when he was accepted at New College, Oxford University. He completed this PhD when he died on 8th June 2023 after bravely battling with Pancreatic Cancer for 2 years.

After retirement, golf became a major focus, and accompanied by his golden retriever Sheba, he made many friends at Huntercombe Golf Club. He also ran a bridge club for the University. He was an important and key figure on the University and College scene. The service was held on Monday October 3 at 10.30, in the Eglise Saint-Anne, Place Sainte Alliance 10, Uccle 1080, Brussels.

Mounir El Khoury passed away the night of September 26, after a long struggle with an undiagnosed condition, for nearly six months. He bore his pain and suffering, stoically, retaining his good humor until the end.

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Mounir was born to Cheikh Samy El Khoury and Eyvette Kattini, in Beirut, Lebanon, on February 19, 1942., and died at the age of 80. He was married to Diana Agard Evans and their son Alexander is married to Peggy Van Den Walle, and has two daughters Helen and Lucy. They live in Luxembourg.

Mounir has two brothers, Samir and Rafik, living in Beirut.

Mounir was a gentle man and a loving family person. He will leave a big void in Danu’s life, Alexander’s family and his brothers’ families in Lebanon who will miss him dearly.

Mounir was a ‘bon vivant’ who enjoyed travelling and good food. With Diana they had a wide circle of friends in Belgium, The Netherlands, the UK and Lebanon.

Golf was another of Mounir’s passions which he shared with Diana.

Mounir was one of the founders of the Eclectic Group – a “Dining Club” in which he played a key role organizing speakers who were treated to a gastronomic dinner menu served to the over twenty members of the ‘Eclectic Group’.

The members belong to at least a dozen nationalities, from all walks of life.

Born into a diplomatic family, Mounir left Lebanon as a child, but always remained very close to his mother and father in Lebanon who will miss him dearly.

He completed his secondary education at Prior Park College (1953 to 1960), in Bath, Somerset England, and graduated from Oxford University, (St. Catherine’s College) in Engineering Sciences, in 1966.

His Career was predominantly in Business IT, initially with Corporate IT in Philips International between 1968-1991, developing Real Time applications for EDI (Electronic Data Interchange) infrastructure for the supply chain, very much as innovators.

On the invitation of the European Commission, he ascended to the post of an external advisor to the EC in Enterprise and Industry, as well as being a key player in promoting EDI in Europe, creating and distributing the Interchange (EDIFACT) standard.

From 1985-2002, Mounir was Chair of the UN EDIFACT ESG (United Nations Rules for Electronic Data Interchange for Administration Commerce and Transport) and Trade and Supply Chain Group for the development of UN Recommendations for trade and supply chain messages. On leaving ATOS Origin International in 2001, Mounir obtained several assignments from industry, as well as others for the European Commission through CEN as freelance Technical Expert.

He enjoyed his well-earned retirement by travelling with
Diana to visit friends and relatives and by entertaining friends during World War II. After obtaining a PhD in Physics from the University of Chicago and conducting research at MIT's Lincoln Laboratory, Professor Goodenough joined the University of Oxford as Head of the Inorganic Chemistry Laboratory in 1971 and became a Professorial Fellow at St. Catherine's. During his time at Oxford, Professor Goodenough, along with Koichi Mizushima, Philip C. Jones and Philip J. Wiseman, identified the cathode material that enabled development of rechargeable lithium-ion batteries. This breakthrough ushered in the age of portable electronic devices.

Professor Goodenough was awarded the Royal Society's Copley Medal in recognition of his outstanding contributions to materials science, and later that same year was awarded the Nobel Prize in Chemistry jointly with M. Stanley Whittingham and Akira Yoshino for their work. Following graduation he joined the staff of Liverpool College of Commerce to teach a one-year intensive Russian course to qualified teachers of other languages in order that more schools could offer Russian as one of their foreign languages.

Keith was born in Grays, Essex on 20th Sept 1942. The family moved to Liverpool College of Commerce to teach a one-year intensive Russian course to qualified teachers of other languages in order that more schools could offer Russian as one of their foreign languages.

Keith left Oxford in 1965 having completed a 3-year course and a research year. Having started his teaching career in Exeter, Keith wanted to make learning more interesting to children and to strive for both innovative and enthusiastic in his lessons. He is actually credited with introducing some material into the Nuffield text books that children studied for many years.

Within 3 years he was Head of Chemistry at Frimley and Camberley Grammar School. He later moved to Buxton, Derbyshire where he became an Area Education Officer for Derbyshire County Council. He then worked in local government supporting education for over 20 years retiring in 1997.

He met his wife, Val, whilst at university and they married at St Alades Church in Oxford within 12 months of their first meeting. They were married for over 50 years, with Val sadly passing away in late 2019 following a long battle with Alzheimer’s. Together they devised and then produced the Memory calendar which was launched in 2015 to help those suffering with dementia to focus on one day at a time with useful prompts. Keith promoted it tirelessly after Val passed away with articles about the calendar appearing in many newspapers, even in the Belfast Telegraph.

Keith was a keen spectator of cricket, rugby and football throughout his life, it was possibly the playing of sports in his younger days that contributed to difficulties with his spine. This, combined with arthritis and later health problems, meant that Keith had to cope with chronic pain for many years. Two spinal operations only made matters worse and his health gradually deteriorated until his death in January 2023. Keith is survived by his wife of 63 years, 2 children and a grandson. He is greatly missed.

Keith Charles Horncastle (1961, Chemistry)

Keith was born in Grays, Essex on 22nd Sept 1961. He moved to Littlemore in Oxford in 1945. When he was nine Keith contracted scarlet fever which, considered to be highly contagious in the 1950’s, meant he was housebound, essentially creating his, and his brother’s, bedroom. He heard the radio and read books on Russian and some basic wireless technology. This ended when, the now basic wireless technology. This ended when, the now

Professor John B. Goodenough (1922-2023)

Professor Goodenough was a pioneer of inorganic chemistry and made significant contributions to the field of materials science, particularly in the development of rechargeable lithium-ion batteries. His work laid the groundwork for the age of portable electronic devices.

Keith was a keen sportsman, playing football, hockey and cricket for the college. He also served for two sessions on both the Parish Council and the Borough Council as well as being treasurer of the local Labour Party and national Association of Teachers of Russian.

To relax, Brian and his family enjoyed walking in Derbyshire, the Lake District and the Isle of Arran. They went sailing in Cornwall and the Continent and latterly river trips to Russia and Ukraine when Brian became the key for communication between passengers and crew staff. Holidays in Kenya and California when his daughter worked there, and weekend adventures to European cities, and even a day trip to Iceland, all gave Brian great pleasure.

Keith was a keen gardener, a tireless campaigner for the local community in Buxton, an avid reader, crossword solver, and walker. Sadly, Keith was diagnosed with terminal cancer in May 2016, shortly after Val passed away but he managed to live for almost 7 years after this diagnosis making sure that he got everything out of his life.

Keith is survived by his younger sister Ali, a younger brother Dave, two sons, Mark and James, and five grandchildren.

Kindly provided by Mark and James Horncastle, Keith’s sons.

llingworth, Jennifer (née Charles) (1958, Biochemistry)

Jennifer’s passing was noted last year, after a battle with cancer that had lasted several years. She was delighted to have attended the 83-92 Gaudy in September 2023 and to have met with many old friends, but her condition worsened in the days following and she died just twelve days later on October 6th.

Jennifer grew up in East Africa, where her family had been based for generations. She loved the outdoors, especially sailing and horse-riding, and represented Kenya at horse-riding as a teenager. She followed the family tradition of coming to Cheltenham for her A-levels, and then went to St. Catherine’s college in Oxford, where she graduated with a degree in Chemistry.

Jennifer was a keen spectator of cricket, rugby and football throughout her life, including through many difficult circumstances.

Following graduation, Jennifer went into teaching, initially at primary level, where with a Biochemistry degree she inevitably became the Science specialist, and then moved into Secondary as a Special Needs teacher, spending the later part of her career as a SENCO in schools in the Cheltenham area. She also met and married David, a Geography teacher in the local area, who were both Jenny’s faith and love of the outdoors. They settled initially in Somerset, where their eldest two boys were born, then Derbyshire, then returned to the Cotswolds later . Jennifer also enjoyed singing in her local church, the eye-catchingly named West Country Dragons, and enjoyed family time spent skiing and walking with expeditions in recent years to the Alps and to Norway, as well as back home to see family in Kenya. Jenny also enjoyed visiting her parents in Kenya, and spent a lot of time skiing and walking.

Jennifer’s faith would be a foundation through the rest of her life, including through many difficult circumstances.

Following graduation she joined the staff of Liverpool College of Commerce to teach a one-year intensive Russian course to qualified teachers of other languages in order that more schools could offer Russian as one of their foreign languages.

Keith left Oxford in 1965 having completed a 3-year course and a research year. Having started his teaching career in Exeter, Keith wanted to make learning more interesting to children and to strive for both innovative and enthusiastic lessons. He is actually credited with introducing some material into the Nuffield text books that children studied for many years.

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Keith is survived by his younger sister Ali, a younger brother Dave, two sons, Mark and James, and five grandchildren.

Kindly provided by Jennifer’s friends Ian Garrett (1985, History), Claire Hollis (1984, Chemistry) and Helen Iglar (Burns), (1984, Human Sciences)
Barrie Juniper (1952, Botany)

St Catherine’s College is saddened to share the news that Dr Barrie Juniper, Emeritus Fellow, has died aged 97. Born in Oxford in 1925, he was a clever boy and, despite coming from a modest background, won a place at Magdalen College School. In 1944 he went to St Catherine’s College (then St Catherine’s Society) at Oxford University where he read chemistry. On graduating, he worked in the aluminium industry and then the motor industry specializing in metallurgy, which was to be his forte during the rest of his working life. In the early 1960s he took up an academic post at Cranfield University (then Cranfield College of Aeronautics) in Bedfordshire, by then the father of three young children with his first wife, Green. Tragically, she died in an accident. In 1966 he married his second wife, Eileen, and they went on to have a long and happy relationship until her death in 2003. Greg’s expertise took him to many countries to lecture, set up laboratories and run conferences. He was, for many years, Secretary-General of the International Deep Drawing Research Group and published a book, Sheet Metal Forming, in 1991. In retirement, he started a successful consultancy business.

After many years of spending holidays on the Lizard in Cornwall, he and Eileen moved there in 1992 and he became a much-loved member of the community in the village of St Keeverne, chairing the Gardeners’ Society for many years and raising funds for the restoration of the village hall. Greg was a lover of the arts, particularly classical music, opera and the theatre and a keen gardener. He was gregarious, entertaining company and enjoyed good food and wine. He is survived by his three children, Sam, Kate and Lucy and two grandchildren, Rona and Reuben.

Kindly provided by Kate, John’s daughter.

Gregory Morris (1974, Law)


Greg is survived by his wife Tara and children Andrew and Marianne.

Kindly provided by Tara Miller, Keith’s widow.

Roger Pearce (1944, Chemistry)

Roger Pearce has died at the venerable age of 97. Born in London in 1923, he was a clever boy and, from a modest background, won a place at Magdalen College School. In 1944 he went to St Catherine’s College (then St Catherine’s Society) at Oxford University where he read chemistry. On graduating, he worked in the aluminium industry and then the motor industry specializing in metallurgy, which was to be his forte during the rest of his working life. In the early 1960s he took up an academic post at Cranfield University (then Cranfield College of Aeronautics) in Bedfordshire, by then the father of three young children with his first wife, Green. Tragically, she died in an accident. In 1966 he married his second wife, Eileen, and they went on to have a long and happy relationship until her death in 2003. Greg’s expertise took him to many countries to lecture, set up laboratories and run conferences. He was, for many years, Secretary-General of the International Deep Drawing Research Group and published a book, Sheet Metal Forming, in 1991. In retirement, he started a successful consultancy business.

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Kindly provided by Kate, John’s daughter.

Professor Donald Perkins

St Catherine’s College is saddened to share the news that Professor Donald Perkins CBE FRGS Emeritus Fellow, has died aged 97. Professor Perkins was a physicist and follower of the ancient Greek philosopher Leucipus who said everything is made up of atoms. Perkins began his career at Oxford, then took up a post in 1965 in the University of California, Berkeley, where he remained until his death in 2016. He made significant contributions to physics, including being the first to observe the nuclear capture of a negative pion meson.

Perkins undertook his undergraduate and postgraduate studies at Imperial College, London, receiving his PhD in 1948. He then took up a position at the Lawrence Radiation Laboratory (now the Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory) in the US, and in the early 1960s at CERN (the European Organization of Nuclear Research). In 1965 he became Professor of Elementary Particle Physics at the University of Oxford and a Fellow of St Catherine’s.

He retained these posts until his retirement in 1993, at which point he was elected as an Emeritus Fellow at St Catherine’s.

Throughout his career he wrote a number of books on his subject and in recognition of his contribution to physics, Professor Perkins received numerous accolades. He was elected as a Fellow of the Royal Society in 1966 and awarded a CBE in the 1991 New Year Honours. He also received the Guthrie Medal and Prize of the Institute of Physics in 1979, the Holweck Prize of the Société Française de Physique in 1992, the Royal Medal of the Royal Society in 1997, and the High Energy and Particle Physics Prize of the European Physical Society in 2001.

Tom Phillips (1957, English)

Tom was born in Clapham, south-west London, to Margaret (nee Arnold) and David Phillips. Margaret ran a boarding house and David speculated on cotton futures, two very different careers to the path that Tom would take.

During his time at Bonnville primary school Tom first ‘learned the word artist’, and discovered that it was someone who did not have to ‘put his paint away.’ Inspired by this revelation, Tom soon moved on to other forms of art-making, embracing music and composition alongside the visual arts throughout his life.

After attending his local grammar school, Tom went on to study English and Anglo-Saxon at St. Catherine’s College in 1957. He most likely did not expect that one day his tapestries would grace the Hall at Catz, a daily reminder of his striking sense of colour and design. During his time as an undergraduate, Tom was given the daunting task of putting his paints away. “Inspired by this revelation, Tom soon moved on to other forms of art-making, embracing music and composition alongside the visual arts throughout his life.”

Throughout his career Tom has been awarded the Guthrie Medal and Prize of the Institute of Physics in 1979, the Holweck Prize of the Société Française de Physique in 1992, the Royal Medal of the Royal Society in 1997, and the High Energy and Particle Physics Prize of the European Physical Society in 2001.

Tom’s presence was woven into the lives of many friends, colleagues and family. He is survived by Fiona, his children, Ruth and Leo, and by Fiona’s two daughters.

Emeritus Professor G. A. (John) Rogers (1960, Philosophy)

John died very peacefully in Norfolk on 22nd August, aged 84, after a period of declining health. He was Emeritus Professor of Philosophy (Keele) and an internationally renowned scholar of seventeenth century philosophy. He was one of the founding members of the British Society for the History of Philosophy, and, in 1993, was instrumental in setting up the society’s journal, The British Journal for the History of Philosophy, of which he held a number of roles in the history of the journal. He was elected a Royal Academician in 1989, an Honorary Fellow of St. Catz in 1992, and appointed CBE in 2002. In 2005-2006 he was made Sodea professor of fine art at Oxford. His first marriage ended in 1988, and in 1995 he married Fiona Maddocks, now the music critic for the Observer.

His second wife, Eileen, is a long-time friend of the College, and the portraits he painted of past Masters, Alan Bullock and Patrick Nairne.

He was a brilliant, original and erudite scholar, with a particular interest in the work of Thomas Hobbes.

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Emeritus Professor G. A. (John) Rogers (1960, Philosophy)
and a gentleman" and as one said: "It is easy to be clever, it is much harder to be nice." He successfully steered the Department through the times when philosophy departments nationwide were under threat, securing its future. He responded to the demands that universities be more engaged externally, by setting up the Keele Centre for Professional Ethics (PKE). The innovative MA course which he designed in the emerging field of medical ethics is the longest running course of its kind.

He made early modern philosophy his own – the work of John Locke and Thomas Hobbes his abiding interest. His scholarship was extensive, not only in a formidable output of essays and editorship of many collections of essays, scholarship was extensive, not only in a formidable output of published essays and editorship of many collections of essays, but also with the completion of two large-scale editions of John Locke’s Essay and Thomas Hobbes’s Leviathan. In the days before the internet and digitization of texts brought about easy access to sources, John understood the need to make available source texts in the history of philosophy, devoting much of his time to textual editing.

Andy Rushton (1992, Engineering Science)

Andy Rushton graduated from Catz in 1992 with a double First in Engineering Science. He went straight from Catz to working for the Engineering Consultancy WS Atkins. He was a wholehearted and dedicated engineer, specialising in the design and manufacture of civil structures. Over his career he was promoted to Chief Engineer and was appointed a Fellow of both the Institution of Civil Engineers and the Institution of Mechanical Engineers. His roles included being Head of Civil and Structural Engineering for Atkins Nuclear and leading teams in over 30 projects – mainly assessing the safety of nuclear infrastructure. What differentiated him from other seasoned professionals was his ability to come up with the right answers across the entire lifecycle of any project. He was the right person when there was a diagnosis of a problem and no clear solution, with a clear mind to consider all the facts, constraints, and options and come up with and elegant, and pragmatic solution. He was equally the person to take a sound initial concept to a perfectly executed and fully documented implementation, throughout this process he always calmly and professionally directed teams, never losing the opportunity to train others and pass on his love for engineering.

He contributed to several publications, ranging from ‘Non-Linear Analysis of a Reinforced Concrete Structure’, to ‘Securing the Long-Term Integrity of the Boiler Closure Unit Wire Windings’, co-authored with and Haydn J. Power stations. Andy’s engineering brilliance has helped keep the lights on in the UK and contributed significantly to a lower carbon society. He worked on many nuclear projects where he demonstrated how the lives of the majority of the UK’s nuclear power stations could be safely extended. For instance, when a project where four of the nuclear reactors had to be shut down as a critical component was deemed to be defective by the regulator. Andy came up with a brilliant solution to return the four affected reactors back to service. He also worked in offshore wind where he devised a solution to prevent a critical joint on the wind turbines foundations from failing. This was implemented in nearly 1000 structures around the UK and across many offshore wind farms abroad. Andy prioritised work-life balance, working four days a week for the majority of the last 17 years. His oldest child was born. He cycled to work and kept fit, even recovering fairly quickly from a slipped disc. He was dedicated to making his work perfectly executed and fully documented implementation, and pass on his love for engineering.

Frank Sinanon (1964, PPE)

Frank Sinanon graduated from McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario. After receiving this degree he took a job working as a Vice-President for the new Toronto Stock Exchange. He then worked for a short while for Imperial Oil before taking up a job as Senior Policy Advisor to the Ontario Ministry of Transportation. He took early retirement in the late 1990s when the Ministry decided to move its headquarters from Toronto to St. Catharines, Ontario. For a while, in the 1970s, he also taught Economics part-time at the Toronto French School. For a short time after retirement, Frank tried his hand at a number of small businesses, but he became somewhat less active after the first of several heart attacks. In 2009 and 2010 he served in a voluntary role as a Director of the Toronto Parking Authority. For the last decade of his life Frank lived at the Chartwell Avondale Retirement Home in Lesleyville, Toronto.

Kindly provided by Andrew Lyons (1962, Law).

Richard Max Wilson (1963, Physics)

Richard Max Wilson sadly passed away on 19 December 2022. Born 15 January 1945, Richard attended Loughborough Grammar School before reading Physics at St Catherine’s from 1963. He was a member of the Oxford University of Change Bingers 17 years where he was the Oldest student. He was also a member of the Oxford University of Change Bingers 17 years where he was the Oldest student. He was also a member of the Oxford University of Change Bingers 17 years where he was the Oldest student.

Richard worked as chief design engineer at Brush Traction in Loughborough from 1984 through to the early 90’s. Building Class 321 control gear amongst other things. He then worked for London Underground until his retirement and continued to volunteer at the Acton Museum Depot restoring old Victoria Line cab. He was an active member of the ISET and was organiser of the Friday Lecture and Lunch events for many years. Richard is survived by his wife, Ann and daughters, Sarah and Harriet. He will be sadly missed.

Kindly provided by Sarah Wilson, Richard’s daughter.

Johnnie Winther (1958, Modern Languages)

John Denis Winther (‘Johnnie’) was born on 24th September 1937 at Oxsted in Surrey, the eldest son of the Winthers from their family farm ‘Spetchley’. Johnnie attended prep school at Frisham, where some of his reports left a little to be desired (‘I hope you will try to improve your writing, especially your grammar’). They had three children: Alexander, Paul and Elizabeth.

After leaving school, Johnnie joined B&G Company (later Grants of St James’s) in London, which supplied wines to Buckingham Palace, and less celebratory establishments in London’s West End. Johnnie then met his true love, Auriel, marrying her in 1965.

Their first child was born in 1967 and they moved to Wiltshire. Johnnie joined Showerings (makers of Babycham), leading their sales team. After the arrival of two more sons, Johnnie travelled to America in 1977 to launch Babycham into the US market, living near Cincinnati, Ohio for two and a half years.

Johnnie then became Continental Director of Allied’s Overseas Beer Division in London, selling Skol lager and Double Diamond beer (Prince Philip’s favourite tipple) into Europe. They moved north with work, settling in Derbyshire. Johnnie joined the BDC’s Midlands Region, editing “Lighter Moments With Our Heavy Metal”, a lovely book of Bentley humour, demonstrating his way with words and countless hours spent in the Bentley archives!

The era of glasnost and perestroika saw Johnnie heading to Moscow to develop the first ‘European style’ luxury hotel, and then led the opening of the BDC’s Manchester City Centre. He launched the John Bull pub franchise, with pubs spreading across Eastern and Western Europe. After 35 years of service in the Allied Group, Johnnie retired in 1995.

Johnnie and Auriel returned to Wiltshire, where the Bentley and other cars played a major part in their retirement. He was on the BDC Mid-West Region committee until his passing, and Chairman for several years. He restored an Austin Seven and then a 1933 Riley Nine from scratch. Apart from their vintage car adventures, Johnnie and Auriel’s life was enlivened by frequent holidays, spreading across Eastern and Western Europe. After 35 years of service in the Allied Group, Johnnie retired in 1995.

Johnnie and Auriel enjoyed 57 years of married bliss before Auriel sadly passed away in June 2022 after a short illness. Johnnie carried on, despite heartbreak, but sadly passed away peacefully at home on 24 February 2023. He is survived by his sister, three sons, daughters-in-law, nine grandchildren and Boodicea.

Kindly provided by Tim Winther, Johnnie’s son.
Throughout our history, philanthropy has played a vital role in allowing us to remain true to our founding ethos and to ensure that a first-class education is open to all talented individuals, regardless of their background. This mission is just as important today, and we thank all donors for their continued support.

Donor List 2023

This list records gifts to St Catherine’s College that were received during the financial year 1 August 2022 – 31 July 2023. Any donations received after this date will be recorded on next year’s Donor List. Every effort has been made to ensure accuracy; but any errors brought to our attention will be corrected in the next edition.

* Deceased

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