A Glimpse of the Past: Cherwell Edge Before Linacre

Climate Change: Shelve the Rhetoric and Focus on the Action

Linacre Goes to the Nanjing Rowing Masters Regatta
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Front cover image:
Stained glass from the original house built in 1886-7. From the College archive.

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Upcoming Alumni Events

Pre-event registration is required for all College events. Sign up on the College website, or contact Lisa on lisa.smars@linacre.ox.ac.uk or +44(0) 1865 271673.

March 2020
Monday 9th
Short and Sharp in London: Current College members will be presenting bite-sized research aimed at a general audience.

Saturday 21st
Dinner in Berlin.

April 2020
Saturday 18th
Dinner in New York.

Sunday 19th
Lunch in Toronto.

May 2020
Saturday 30th
Friends of the Boat Club Launch Party in Oxford during the Summer Eights.

June 2020
Saturday 27th
Philadelphia Alumni Meet-up.

September 2020
Saturday 12th-Sunday 13th
Alumni Reunion in Oxford for alumni who matriculated between 2002-2016.
Many subsequent ages have been dogged by similar concerns that an irrepressible drive for increased wealth comes at a cost to human values. The “marketisation” of higher education, many have claimed, has resulted in the neglect of traditional areas of scholarship and an impoverishment of learning. Oxford has a delicate balancing act, needing to carefully select and nurture areas of new and rapid growth, whilst ensuring that valuable but less fashionable studies continue to flourish.

Philanthropy has been fundamental to ensuring that we are able to achieve that balance. A landmark £150 million gift to the University from philanthropist and businessman Stephen A. Schwarzman will give Oxford’s humanities a new home with state-of-the-art academic, exhibition and performance spaces. It will promote the essential role of the humanities in helping society confront and answer fundamental questions of the 21st century.

It is great news too, that the Humanities Division has made the endowment of a Chair in Old Norse one of its fund-raising priorities. In this edition of Linacre News you may read an article written by Professor Heather O’Donoghue, a Linacre Fellow, Professor of Old Norse and Vigfússon Raising Reader in Ancient Icelandic Literature and Antiquities. This field of study continues to interest and attract a large number of talented graduate students each year, all of whom greatly benefit from Heather’s supervision, guidance and expertise. We are very keen to endow this chair so that it can continue to lead a dynamic research culture in Old Norse at Oxford, providing opportunities for researchers from around the world to develop their work further, and creating a rich environment for scholars who will become the leading academics and professors of tomorrow.

Linacre is also doing its bit to alleviate hardship and support scholarship in those areas where public funding is scarce. This year the College offered 44 scholarships and instigated two new music prizes. You will read in this issue of Linacre News of our plans for a major redevelopment of key facilities in College including the Library. We will make sure that Linacre remains one of the most desirable places to study in Oxford.

Nick Brown, The Principal
Future Plans and Projects at College

Michaelmas term was a period of intense activity and nervousness in the Bursary as we explored and ultimately arranged a significant borrowing of capital as a bond known as a private placement. We plan to use this capital to expand our student accommodation, refurbish our main site, and strengthen our endowment. Our Governing Body did not take the decision to borrow in this way lightly – even though many other Oxbridge colleges have already taken the plunge. Our caution was rewarded (only a little bit fortuitously) by hitting a period of historically low interest rates, which we have locked in for the next 35 years.

Our finances were subject to intense external scrutiny from our investor before we were awarded this bond. It was only possible to take this out because of our existing endowment that has built up through support from our alumni and friends, as well as good financial management from my predecessors in the Bursary.

College’s plans for building works are now forming in more detail. We plan to build an annex in the grounds of an existing student property that we already own, with architectural drawings well advanced and consultation ongoing around planning permission with the City Council. If all goes well, we will be able to announce full details very soon. We are also exploring options to purchase new property in Oxford for accommodation, but maybe most excitingly of all is the feasibility study we are undertaking to work out what can be done on the main College site. The main building has been surveyed in detail to determine its exact structure and now we are beginning to work with architects to find out what is possible. Initial emerging priorities are to use our building footprint more efficiently to increase study space as well as developing a lecture theatre and seminar/collaboration rooms. Slotting this into the space we have will be difficult but we are confident that we can make changes through this project to set Linacre up to support student needs in our 7th decade and beyond.

The challenge now, of course, will be to deliver the planned building projects within the tight funding envelope we have – certainly it does not provide enough to do all of the work we need to do to the main College building – and that, nice as new buildings are, we cannot take our focus away from providing, for example, scholarships and hardship grants. The next five years will be transformational for Linacre but there is a lot of work to be done before the first of our new facilities opens.

David Locke is Linacre’s new Finance Bursar. He has joined College after a career in the Civil Service and with KPMG.

College Staff Retiring

Sue Jones

Sue Jones has retired after 15 years at College. She started working in the Reception, but it was soon realised that she had a good head for figures and numbers, so she moved up to the Bursary in the Accounts Assistant role. It is in this role many of you will have encountered her at your time at College. We would like to thank her for her long service and her cheerful contributions to College life.

Michael Bockett

During the time I was an active Fellow (1971-2001) there were various important changes to the College: three different Principals, the move from St Aldate’s to the present site, and perhaps more surprisingly the shift from what may be termed the Pre-Bockett era to the Bockett era. It was perhaps this last that had the most impact day-to-day. Food in College Pre-Bockett was only memorable in the sense that dry over-roasted sausages seemed to appear at lunch every day. The committee responsible for appointing a new chef had no difficulty in unanimously agreeing on Michael although there were two hesitations. One was settled almost instantaneously and the other proved unfounded. The latter was a concern about Michael’s age and experience, but there was no case for worry (in fact the worry soon became whether he would be poached by another college). Michael threw himself into the job and the food rapidly improved. Michael took himself off to highly rated cooking classes and schools and the College soon began to reap the reward. This was not only true of everyday meals but on Guest Nights and special occasions he pulled out the stops and the meals were outstanding in their imaginative creation and the quality of the delivered product. Bringing guests into dinner was no longer a potential source of embarrassment but one of pride.

Nor did Michael confine his efforts on behalf of the College to his kitchen; he also played football for it. After 30 years of feeding us so well, Michael is going and he will be a hard act to follow. I am sure we all wish him everything he deserves in his well-earned retirement.

Peter Rivière, Emeritus Fellow.
In Memoriam

Martin Rudner (1965) passed away on December 14th, 2019 after a short and unexpected battle with cancer. Martin was a prolific academic who, throughout his life, contributed to research on both social and policy development work in Asia, and Canada’s national intelligence and security policy.

Henry Twohig (1977) died on 10 February 2019. He was a keen student of Theology and a loved member of the Catholic community.

Christopher Nock (1984) passed away on 29th July 2019 after a long period of illness.

Edward Chidley (1987) has passed away after a period of illness. He studied Physics at Linacre in the 1980s.

Tiemei Chen (1987) died in October 2018. He was a physicist and archaeologist, considered a pioneer in scientific archaeology and a founder of quantitative archaeology in China.

Richard Stefanik (1992) passed away in his sleep on 2nd September. He was a writer, director, producer, and actor.

Natalie Christopher (2008) sadly passed away in August 2019. She was an activist and founded the organization “Cyprus Girls Can” in an effort to bring together Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot girls through sport.

Emeritus Fellow, Rom Harré, passed away on 17th October 2019, aged 91. He was a prolific and influential figure in the fields of the philosophy of science and the social sciences. Appointed at the age of 34 as Oxford University lecturer in Philosophy of Science, he went on to write or co-write over 70 books and 500 papers, and to pioneer the concept of agency in psychology and the social sciences.

Emeritus Fellow, Peter Savill died on 26th November 2019. Peter was a highly regarded Forestry researcher, but it was as a teacher that he made his most important impact. His students describe a kind, gentle and above all humane man who took a genuine interest in their development and who inspired their studies.

Alumni News


Keith Lloyd (1967) has been elected by The Salters’ Company to become a Freeman.

Elspeth Garman (1976) has been awarded an honorary degree by The University of Durham.

Perry Hinton (1979) is the author of Stereotypes and the Construction of the Social World (Routledge).

Robert Pullen (1979) has recently published a book called Secrets of the Human Brain (YouCaxton).

Graham Machin (1987) has been elected a Fellow of the Royal Academy of Engineering and also Honorary Scientist of the Chinese Academy of Sciences (Institute of Physics and Chemistry).

Congratulations to Veronica Strang (1989) who has been elected a Fellow of the Academy of Social Sciences.

David Rogers (2001) was awarded an MBE in the Queen’s Birthday Honours list for his services to cyber security. He is a mobile phone and IoT security expert who runs Copper Horse Ltd, a software and security company based in Windsor, UK. His company is currently focusing on security and privacy research for the Internet of Things.

Venetia Johannes (2010) and her husband Ben welcomed their second son, Manfred Bernard Lionel Johannes, on 9th September 2019, at 4:24am, weighing 2.89 kg. She has also recently had a new book published called Nourishing the Nation: Food as National Identity in Catalonia.

Congratulations to Viresh Patel (2011) and his wife Jalpa. They got married in Romford, Essex, on 9th June 2019.

Julianne Viola (2014) is the proud author of Young People’s Civic Identity in the Digital Age which will be published at the end of March 2020.

New Staff

We are pleased to let you all know that we have recently hired Jaye Newbrook as our Steward and Hospitality Manager. This is a new role for College and one that has been created to manage the growing number of external events bookings, as well as looking after front of house duties for College’s own events. Jaye’s contact details can be found on page 2 if you are interested in hosting an event at Linacre.
Charting a Growth Trajectory for a Future South Africa

In 2017, a group of esteemed South Africans led by former President Kgalema Motlanthe issued a sizeable report reflecting on the first two decades of post-apartheid governance. The terms of reference for the High Level Panel on the Assessment of Legislation and the Acceleration of Fundamental Change, commissioned by Parliament, called for an assessment of legislation passed since the dawn of democracy in 1994.

The most sobering outcome from that exercise, and many other policy analyses that emerged as the ‘new’ South Africa made it past the 25 year mark in 2019, is perhaps not surprising. Fundamental change is the work of generations. South African statute books are now filled with progressive legislation. This has flowed into new policies that seek to bring the vision of the Constitution to life, with its commitment to improve ‘the quality of life of all citizens and free the potential of each person’.

Statistics show how people’s material conditions have improved. On matters such as the roll out of basic infrastructure; the provision of social grants for infants, the aged and disabled in poor families; and access to services such as water, electricity and basic education, the metrics show a positive trend.

Yet there is evidence of what the Panel describes as ‘path dependency’:

Path dependency is bad enough. The particular malaise that confronts South Africa might be better described as path extinction. The path that produced the South African economy and society of today, has come to a dead end. With exports dominated by commodities (produced by a mining sector historically dependent on unskilled labour), a small emissions-intensive manufacturing sector and a service sector under pressure, simply tweaking the status quo will not drive future growth.

Not long ago, developing countries were counselled to follow the path of the East Asian tigers, or of China, in building export-oriented manufacturing industries based on relatively low wages (at first) and technological convergence with the most competitive economies. That ladder is no longer available. As Joseph Stiglitz and others have shown, productivity in manufacturing exceeds growth in demand, with the consequence that the share of manufacturing in production is falling globally. The global trade system is under strain, automation and digitisation pose a threat to the jobs-intensity of manufacturing and necessary climate commitments curtail carbon-intensive forms of industrialisation.

Yet there are promising new paths out of stagnation. For South Africa and the African continent, that path begins at home. African integration – through the recently ratified African Continental

“The main challenge facing South African society is the path dependency of socioeconomic outcomes, which are predictable along the cleavages of race, class, spatial location and gender. The current state of affairs at national level can also be characterised, from an economic viewpoint, as a middle-income growth trap. The country has been classified as being middle-income since the 1970s, proving unable, thus far, to transition from middle-income to high-income status.”
Free Trade Area agreement – is likely to generate significant welfare gains. A simulation in an IMF working paper (Lisandro et al, 2019) supports this view, with emphasis on the removal of non-tariff barriers.

The resource endowment that South Africa holds remains relevant for green growth – with a healthy reserve base of commodities such as vanadium, platinum, rhodium, manganese and other inputs needed for cleaner technologies. This time – there is a greater appreciation for the need to build deeper local capabilities and more diverse value chains.

The deep institutional renewal underway following over a decade of rent-seeking, positions South Africa to remain a driver of continental growth and to support future-proof growth and development. As Stiglitz reminds us, the real source of comparative advantage lies in the “… embedded knowledge of society, its institutions and norms”. Investment, a perennial weak spot, has risen in recent months due to investment promotion efforts. As a demographically young country, the digital economy is easily embraced and reforms in the telecommunications sector will enhance digital inclusion. Work is underway to develop context-specific strategies to embed green principles in the economy, building on the early successes of the renewable energy sector. As the country enters the last decade towards its Vision 2030, the key test is whether it can break out of its variant of the middle income trap.

Gertrude Makhaya (2005) is a writer and economist. She is currently the economic advisor to His Excellency President Cyril Ramaphosa. She studied for an MBA whilst at Linacre.
Viking Influences in the British Isles: A Lifelong Journey

I grew up in the North East of England, in Middlesbrough, an industrial town once dominated by docks, steelworks and the largest chemical complexes in Europe. But I have spent most of my life in Oxford, studying and teaching Old Norse – the literature and language of medieval Iceland – working on sagas, Vikings, Nordic mythology and its reception in post-medieval times. When I am asked how I became interested in this subject, people expect my answer to be that I wanted to find out more about the Viking heritage of the North East. But it was not like that at all.

When I did my undergraduate degree in English Literature at the University of London, and saw that there was a final year option on Old Norse, I am afraid I didn’t have any idea that there was any connection between Iceland and where I grew up. It just seemed like an interesting option to take, something a bit different, and the course was run by a particularly kind and learned man. My tutorial partners were a Polish count, who brought his dog to tutorials in a hold-all, and a mature student who wore silver painted clogs and had her first baby – named after the Norse goddess Freya – within a week of taking her final exams. The literature itself was – is – wonderful. I was hooked.

After decades of teaching Old Norse here in Oxford, I became involved in a research project which aimed to raise public awareness of the Viking heritage in areas of the British Isles with little sense of their Scandinavian pasts. You cannot get away from Vikings in places such as Orkney, York or Dublin. But not around Middlesbrough. In spite of the evidence of the local dialect, crammed with Norse loanwords, and the many place names of Old Norse derivation – including a pointed hill called Roseberry (originally “Odin’s Berg”) Topping, the dominant topographical feature of the district, and arguably the only placename in England referencing a Scandinavian god – we found that there was virtually no appreciation of a Scandinavian past. The project was a great success, and was crowned by a discovery which proved to be the highlight of my whole academic career: a stone fragment with a Viking age runic inscription, which had been dug up in a remote churchyard and forgotten.

Runes are the letters of an ancient Germanic alphabet, designed to be inscribed on stone or wood. There are thousands of inscriptions in Scandinavia, but only 16 have ever been discovered in England. And the inscription on “our” stone could hardly be more significant. The stone seemed to be a fragment of a memorial cross, and the runes, so far as they could be made out, declared that the cross had been raised in memory of someone called Mael Muire. This is a Celtic name, and the word for “cross” on the stone was in a form known not at all in Scandinavia, but familiar from runic inscriptions on the Isle of Man. In short, the stone suggested that the unexamined assumption that the North East of England was raided and settled by Vikings coming west over the North Sea, and penetrating deep into Yorkshire and the Tees Valley, was wrong. Instead, we should imagine Scandinavians previously settled around the Irish Sea – in Man, or Dublin – emigrating eastwards.

In north Yorkshire, as the place names make clear, these Hiberno-Norse newcomers and their Anglo-Saxon neighbours lived cheek by jowl, and there are no records of the violent events we associate with Vikings. And Vikings in Scandinavia did not raise stone crosses to their dead; the cross is an Anglo-Saxon monument. The fact that many wonderful examples of Viking age art in the north of England – pagan mythological scenes, often – are carved on Christian crosses demonstrates an extraordinary degree of multiculturalism.
This is nearly the end of my story. But there is one final act. I was recently asked to give a talk on some aspect of the relationship between Britain and Ireland. I thought at once of the runestone. But these early Irish Sea emigrants to the North East reminded me of the more recent local history we were all taught at school: how Middlesbrough, a tiny village at the beginning of the nineteenth century, grew in a few decades to be one of the largest industrial towns in Britain - Gladstone dubbed it “an infant Hercules” in 1862. This population explosion was very largely down to Irish and Scottish immigration. But unlike in Liverpool, or Glasgow, or even York, the diverse inhabitants of this new and ever-growing town lived peacefully together, and intermarried. There are no reports of Irish ghettoes, or sectarian violence.

So a year or two from retirement, I find myself looking back to where I started, researching the early history of Middlesbrough, and seeing parallels I never suspected between Viking age settlers and my own forebears, industrial migrants of the Victorian age.

Heather O’Donoghue is a Governing Body Fellow at Linacre, Professor of Old Norse at Oxford University, and Vigfusson Rausing Reader in Ancient Icelandic Literature and Antiquities.
What brought you to Linacre, and what are your most treasured memories?
When I got accepted to the department of Social Anthropology for a MPhil I decided it was best to apply to a graduate college, and Linacre seemed a good option. It turned out to be a very good decision – the College had a nice vibe, people were friendly, also the food was not too bad either!

I have many memories, of the first dorm I stayed in at College, cooking with other people who stayed there, working at the bar and as a porter over weekends, walks at the nearby University Parks, and the friends I made there and have kept in touch with since.

When did you first become interested in Anthropology?
I began studying Anthropology as an undergraduate in Bombay (now Mumbai). We had this amazing teacher, a Jesuit Spanish priest, who made the subject so exciting and interesting. He also took us on field trips to various parts of India, especially rural areas. So, I became fascinated with learning about different cultures, how people live, etc... and I loved travelling. When I graduated, I took a year off and went to Ladakh (North India) and spent six months teaching at a school, studying Buddhist philosophy and Thangka painting. It was after this that I decided I wanted to continue studying Anthropology and go back to Ladakh to do fieldwork.

Any key career moment that took you to where you are today?
Ladakh was a turning point in my life. I have been working and visiting/living there for over 30 years now. After the MPhil I went on to do a DPhil about weaving and textiles among the nomadic communities in Ladakh. This was published as Living fabric – Weaving among the Nomads of Ladakh Himalaya, and received the Textile Society of America’s R L Shep award for best book in the field of ethnic textile studies.

I wanted to stay on in Ladakh and so continued with my research interests, as well as taking on work that took me back there. I then started an NGO called LAMO (Ladakh
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New Law Scholarship

We are pleased to announce the creation of a new scholarship in Law: the Lestrade-Heselton Law Scholarship, aimed at supporting a postgraduate student in the Law Faculty. The first student is pursuing her BCL with the aim of embarking on a career in legal academia; her interests are equality law, socioeconomic rights, and legal and political theory. A very big thank you to Sandy Lestrade-Heselton (1986) and her family for their generous support.

Wanakaset Environmental Research Scholarships

Two new research scholarships have been created for Linacre students on the Environmental Research Doctoral Training Programme, thanks to an alumnus who founded Wanakaset.org. Part of the research supported will look at “critical metals” for renewable energy, demand for which will increase significantly as the shift from fossil fuels takes place.

Are you currently working on any exciting projects?

It has been an interesting and exciting journey so far, but challenging as well. Setting up the LAMO centre in the Old Town of Leh also led to transformations in the neighbourhood and conversations around heritage and urban planning for the town that have raised people’s awareness. Over the years we have worked with many amazing contemporary artists, held exhibitions around several themes from water and the environment to birds of Ladakh, worked on videos and films, conducted outreach programs with several schools in the area, and music performances, amongst many other things. At end of the last year we helped organise Ladakh’s first literature festival. This work of LAMO's will continue, adding to it each year.

Monisha Ahmed (1988) is an independent researcher, writer and curator, with a focus on the histories, practises and material culture of Ladakh. She is the founder of the NGO Ladakh Arts and Media Organisation (LAMO). LAMO received the ‘Award of Distinction’ from the UNESCO Asia-Pacific Awards for Cultural Heritage Conservation in 2018, and in 2019 they received the award of ‘Project of Influence’ at the Best in Heritage conference in Dubrovnik. She did a DPhil in Anthropology at Linacre.

An Update from Your Alumni Office

During the last few months we have gone through a period of transition in the Alumni and Development Office. After Anne Keene retired as Director of Development, my colleagues and I have stepped up to keep the office running. I must say it has been a bit bumpy at times, but with the help of the Principal and our new Finance Bursar, I now feel like we are firmly going in the right direction.

The team consists of me, your Alumni Relations & Communications Officer, Antonella, your Development Officer, and, supporting us both, our lovely Administrator, Liz. Together we are starting to look ahead and plan for the next few years – taking us up to Linacre’s 60th anniversary in 2022. I know I speak for the whole team when I say that we are looking forward to engaging with you, as we move the College into a new decade.

Lisa Smårs, Alumni Relations & Communications Officer.

Unveiling the UNESCO plaque.

From left: Lisa, Antonella, and Liz.

Monisha Ahmed (1988) is an independent researcher, writer and curator, with a focus on the histories, practises and material culture of Ladakh. She is the founder of the NGO Ladakh Arts and Media Organisation (LAMO). LAMO received the ‘Award of Distinction’ from the UNESCO Asia-Pacific Awards for Cultural Heritage Conservation in 2018, and in 2019 they received the award of ‘Project of Influence’ at the Best in Heritage conference in Dubrovnik. She did a DPhil in Anthropology at Linacre.
Individuals perceive change differently. Some change might be rather obvious and mundane, such as where to store a new device in the home, whilst other change might be subtler and even go unnoticed. Researchers have highlighted how we – as individuals and households – have learned to deal with different kinds of change. This process is called domestication of new technologies: a spectrum ranging from shoehorning them into our lifestyles, to completely changing the way we live our lives.

Complex social relationships and hierarchies influence the ways we deal with such situations of change. Individuals navigate these situations in inherently different ways, following the established communal order of the home, combined with personal knowledge, preferences, and attitudes. These situations can lead to social conflicts between cohabitants or with guests, relating to usage, but also to security or privacy issues.

Because cohabitants share a plethora of resources and responsibilities, not everyone will concern themselves with or be interested in using and maintaining devices in the same way. Researchers often refer to aforementioned tensions as power imbalances. My research on empowering communal and digital privacy practices in smart homes aims to understand the mundane ways households deal with digital technology, and the challenges it causes specifically in ways related to issues of privacy and security. How can smart home devices be designed with complex social relationships and hierarchies in mind to balance needs of usability and privacy within the household and beyond?

Much of my work to date has been concerned with unpacking these situations. Power imbalances in households are nothing uncommon or particularly worrying; they are inevitable as responsibilities are distributed in the messiness of everyday life, and people trust their cohabitants (e.g. housemates, partners, parents) to be responsible. Many of you will be familiar with situations in which people help relatives or friends with the use of some internet-connected technology. Offering and providing help means to be accountable for one’s own advice, or vice-versa, the advice seekers will perceive a level of expertise in those they choose to ask. Other situations are similarly guided by social considerations and obligations.

On a more abstract level, we find that social expectations – which sometimes manifest themselves in social norms – guide the way we introduce new devices to a household, or we welcome guests to our homes.

Being a good and responsible cohabitant or homeowner then extends to considering implications of these expectations. When interviewing members of the general public about their use of internet-connected devices at home, we found a lens of group (or collective) efficacy can help structure the problem space and inform future work. The psychologist Bandura describes self-efficacy as a concept describing individual judgements of "how well one can execute courses of action required to deal with prospective situations". Bandura explains how self-efficacy is influenced by one’s own experience (enactive attainment) and by observing others (vicarious experience) in success and failure. Collective efficacy can then be understood as the perceived ability of a group to deal with prospective situations. Members of that group will consider their own, each other’s, and the collective’s skills and competencies, when assessing prospective situations. Our research has shown examples of individuals specifically configuring devices for others, use of devices on behalf of others, and accommodating for preferences not to use particular devices by enabling alternative control options.

How can smart home devices be designed with complex social relationships and hierarchies in mind to balance needs of usability and privacy within the household and beyond?
We can leverage such insights to improve the experience of using future smart home products by designing for communal use. Informing design through a perspective of social expectations can help to unearth complexities of social relationships and hierarchies which might contradict the intentions and assumptions underpinning the design of technology. This perspective can guide use of internet-connected devices in terms of access, use and responsibilities at home. Better understanding responsibility and action of the collective can help to empower individuals to serve as role models for their cohabitants. We can take structure and inspiration from self-efficacy by expanding the concept to the collective.

Martin Kraemer (2016) is currently working on his DPhil in Cyber Security. He is currently finishing a six month ethnographic study of communal use of smart home devices. The study further explores households’ mundane ways of navigating complex and unfamiliar situations to inform the design of future smart home products. He is based at the Department of Computer Science where his research falls within the wider theme of Human-Centred-Computing.
A Glimpse of the Past:
Cherwell Edge Before Linacre

Cherwell Edge, the building that now houses Linacre College, was originally built as a private house in 1886-7 by the Oxford firm of Price and Messenger. A distinguished early inhabitant was James Anthony Froude, the Regius Professor of Modern History, who was a tenant from 1892 to 1894, and who held tutorials and small lectures in his parlour here. After his death, his daughter Margaret continued to live at Cherwell Edge until 1905, when the house was taken over by the Society of the Holy Child Jesus (SHJC) to use as a convent.

In the early years of the twentieth century women were coming to study at Oxford in increasing numbers, and of course they needed accommodation. Many of these students, living or lodging in private homes, were members of the Oxford Society of Home Students. The SHJC, whose mission was educational, intended Cherwell Edge as a hostel for Catholic Home Students, attended by the nuns of the convent. To this end, a large accommodation block was added to the original house, together with a chapel, both designed by Basil Champneys. I have a particular interest in the chapel, since the library I look after is situated there. Sadly, little remains – only a few pieces of stained glass in the tracery lights of the side windows. I do have some pictures of the original chapel, that show it to have been highly ornamented, with an ornate screen and reredos. The windows were filled with stained glass, which seems to have been removed before the College moved in in 1977, without the College’s knowledge or consent (there is some correspondence about this in the College archives). The timber ceiling is probably still there under the current plaster. The 14 Stations of the Cross, designed by Champneys, which lined the chapel walls, were moved to the Oxford Oratory, where they can be seen in the nave.

Life at Cherwell Edge

Cherwell Edge housed Catholic women undergraduates, both religious and secular, studying for the B.A. During the 1930s there seem to have been quite a few American nuns accommodated here and studying at the University. Each student had her own room, which from the postcard I found looked to be rather attractive. There were also common rooms, a dining hall and a library (I think that some of the older books I have in the library now probably came from that collection), as well as the chapel. The convent in its early days was in quite a rural setting, close to the University Parks and with few of today’s buildings near. The Girl-Student at Oxford (1920) praises its ‘charming outlook’.

I found a couple of accounts of life at Cherwell Edge in published books. Madeleva: a biography, by Gail Porter Mandell, gives an account of this American nun’s time at Oxford in 1933, during which she stayed at Cherwell Edge. Madeleva Wolff, who later became a distinguished Catholic educator in America, seems to have found her time at Oxford idyllic: the convent and its surroundings conducive to spirituality and meditation and her studies stimulating. As a student of Old English and mediaeval literature, she attended lectures by Tolkien and began a lifetime’s correspondence with C.S. Lewis.
A less idyllic picture of life at Cherwell Edge is painted in the Christian writer Karen Armstrong’s *Through the Narrow Gate*. She came as a young nun in the 1960s to study at St. Anne’s College and live at the Cherwell Edge convent. She found the conflict between the open mind fostered by her studies and the closed one insisted on by the convent (which seems by then to have become old-fashioned and rigid) irreconcilable, so much so that she renounced her vows and re-entered secular life. Her account makes sad reading.

**Literary connections**

Evelyn Waugh alludes to Cherwell Edge in *Brideshead Revisited* in the person of Anthony Blanche ‘the aesthete par excellence, a byword of iniquity from Cherwell Edge to Somerville.’¹

Also, given Tolkien’s devout Catholicism, it would not be unusual to find a connection. He lent the original manuscript of *The Hobbit* to a colleague of his in the English Department, a Miss Griffiths, who was resident at Cherwell Edge. She in turn lent it to Susan Dagnall, one of her old pupils. It was also apparently lent to the Mother Superior of the convent, to amuse her while recovering from ‘flu, though ‘Whether it amused her or not, I never heard, so she is a side-track in the history of the MS.’² Susan Dagnall is the key here, as she worked for Allen & Unwin. The rest is history.

This is just a very brief account of what I’ve been able to discover so far. I would be delighted to hear from anyone with knowledge of the history of Cherwell Edge pre-Linacre or anyone who can point me in further directions.

Fiona Richardson is the Linacre College Librarian.

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References:

Further Reading:
Nevertheless, solving the problem of science denial is not a simple matter of shunning, shaming, or blaming individuals who hold denialist beliefs. Because denialists typically understand legitimate scientific theories as threats to their worldview, put forth by ideological or cynical adversaries, the best way to minimise science denial is not to frame it as a “war on science”—which is to play into denialist exploitation of fake controversies—but to treat science denial dispassionately, to understand what it is and where it comes from.

In Understanding Science Denial, a forthcoming book with Johns Hopkins University Press, Aaron R. Hanlon (2008) presents the results of his cross-disciplinary investigation of the history, logic, and psychology of science denial. Aaron, an assistant professor of English at Colby College, is working to devise strategies for solving the problem of science denial.

Entrepreneurial and Innovation Ecosystems in the UK and Japan: Place-based Scenarios and Options

Entrepreneurial ecosystems have emerged as one of the most popular economic development policies in the last decade, and has become a major focus for entrepreneurship research.

A recent project between researchers, government officials, and those engaged in building entrepreneurial ecosystems in Japan and the UK has highlighted the challenges of researching diverse and dynamic configurations of ‘place-based’ entrepreneurial ecosystems, and the different roles played by the variety of actors involved.

We identified diverse contexts and challenges facing the two different nations, which have led to distinctive approaches to ecosystem policy. We also discussed new techniques for using social media and digital platform data to quantify ecosystem attributes like entrepreneurial culture or movement of people and ideas between firms, and new ways to use data to systematically identify dynamic entrepreneurial processes.

We came to a view that more methodological innovation is needed to better capture the subtle ways in which ecosystems work including a variety of different localised economic, social, policy and cultural factors.

Fumi Kitagawa (1995) is Lecturer in Entrepreneurship & Innovation at the University of Edinburgh Business School.

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Understanding Science Denial throughout its Long History

Whether in the form of climate change denial or unfounded fears that vaccines cause autism, science denial remains a problem. Refusal to accept scientific consensus on such issues threatens our collective ability to eradicate life-threatening disease, to protect those most vulnerable to the effects of climate change today, and to create pathways to a more sustainable future.

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Exceptional Chinese Fossils Come to Oxford in New Partnership

Researchers at the Oxford University Museum of Natural History have joined forces with other institutions to form the International Joint Laboratory for Palaeobiology and Palaeoenvironment; to continue studying fossils from the internationally renowned Chengjiang biota in China.

The unique conditions in which the fossils of the Chengjiang biota were formed preserves both soft and hard parts providing an unrivalled view of a huge range of early animals. The fossils recorded here have captured the rapid diversification of life about 520 million years ago – in an event referred to as the Cambrian explosion. A significant first outcome of this new partnership has been the loan of iconic Chengjiang fossil specimens from Kunming to Oxford for the First Animals exhibition which runs until September 2020. Most of these fossils have never been outside of China before, and some have never been seen by the public.

Duncan Murdock is a Junior Research Fellow at Linacre and a Leverhulme Early Career Fellow at the Oxford Museum of Natural History.
In international collaboration with the Centre for Chronobiology in Basel, we investigated which cells in our eyes are responsible for the effects of evening and night light on our physiology. Combining lights of different wavelengths in a precise way — using what is known as a “light organ” — allowed us to stimulate one specific type of cells in the retina: the short-wavelength sensitive cones, or S cones, responsible for our perception of blue and yellow. Throughout an evening, we exposed healthy young participants to one light, which had low activation of S cones, and a week later, they were exposed to another one, which had high activation of S cones (or vice versa). This let us examine the effect of these lights on melatonin secretion.

Surprisingly, we found no difference in the production of melatonin in response to these two lights. This is a key piece of evidence in our understanding of which types of lights can be detrimental to our sleep: not all light sources are equally disruptive.

Manuel Spitschan is the Biomedical Sciences Junior Research Fellow at Linacre.
Climate Change: Shelve the Rhetoric and Focus on the Action

We all remember unusual or out of the ordinary weather. When I first arrived in the UK in 1990, for my graduate studies at Oxford, I realised that commenting on the weather was almost a kind of formal greeting. In Zimbabwe, where I come from, we too are obsessed with the weather. From the time I was little, I was taught to look at the skies to see what lay in store. This was particularly important as my parents were farmers, so variations in weather or seasons could bring fortune or distress. Weather watching has now become the norm; I suspect because it continues to rule our very existence.

After finishing at Oxford – where my dissertation focused on the genetic behaviour of pine trees when placed in different environments – I joined the World Bank. There I met colleagues who were studying weather patterns, modelling what the future could hold. The term ‘climate change’ was gaining prominence at that time, and the blame game on its causes was on in full swing. Possible impacts were hitting the headlines, along with the disagreements on how to address them.

The World Bank has stayed committed to addressing climate change risks and impacts. To achieve change it engages at both global and national levels, as well as in local communities. In my current role as the World Bank’s Country Director in Sri Lanka I am aware of the vagaries of changing weather patterns. Realising that some of it may be climate change related, really brings home what happens when we fail to adapt and increase resilience.

Sri Lanka ranked second among countries most affected by extreme weather events in 2017, and it is expected to see a 1.2 percent annual GDP loss by 2050 due to climate change impacts. Floods impacted around 14 million people between 2010 and 2018, and droughts affected about 12 million people. Evidence suggests flood frequency will increase and that nearly 87 percent of Sri Lankans are living in areas likely to experience extreme temperatures and rainfall that will impact their lives.

In response the government of Sri Lanka and the Bank prepared a 15-year programme that targets sustainable solutions for the acute flooding problem that menaces Colombo and its environs. The programme emphasized data driven, evidence-based solutions focused on understanding the impacts and where they would be most severe using detailed hydrological models. A combination of solutions was proposed – including natural and artificial multi-purpose embankments. And what was best of all was that the communities had a say in their design.

The Sri Lanka Climate Resilience Programme builds on lessons and results achieved through cutting-edge risk-modelling combined with community participation. The flood risk management project follows a consultative approach that began during project concept and will continue throughout implementation. For a few families, this will mean relocating as their homes are too close to the river and at high risk of collapse or flooding. An additional small number will lose some of their river front land improvements as they are also too
“Sri Lanka ranked second among countries most affected by extreme weather events in 2017, and it is expected to see a 1.2 percent annual GDP loss by 2050 due to climate change impacts.”
close to the river. For those that remain, the large majority, the improvements will significantly improve their living conditions. Consultations and campaigns will continue throughout the project’s life to raise awareness as well as ownership of the community groups. Abundant evidence shows that the elderly, women, and the disabled are particularly at risk during flooding. In response to this evidence, members of the project carried out a separate assessment to ensure that their needs were considered.

I have spoken to many among those affected, and it is clear that for them, the debate on whether this is climate change or not is less relevant. They are conscious that what is happening is not normal and they want to know how to cope.

With the advancement of technology and know-how, one does not have to watch the sky anymore to gauge the weather. In fact, technology is allowing us to cater to those with special needs.

In Sri Lanka, the #ResilienceforAll initiative improves early warning systems to people who are visually impaired, or can’t read by sending text to voice alerts and messages that would flicker a light to reach the hearing impaired. The youth, the private sector, and civil society groups are working together to innovate and come up with solutions for adaptation. The government has recognised the need to revisit their own systems to become resilient to climate change.

While the discussion on the definition of what climate change is, who is causing it, and who should pay compensation continues to rage, we are seeing a newer and more action-oriented generation who want action now. It is hard to not agree with them. Lack of action may threaten the very existence of humanity.

Idah Pswarayi-Riddihough (1990) is the Country Director (Nepal, Sri Lanka, and the Maldives) at the World Bank. She did a DPhil in Genetics at Linacre.
Linacre Goes to the Nanjing Rowing Masters Regatta

Invited by a Linacre alumnus, a team of nine students made their way to Nanjing, China, on an all-expenses paid trip to participate in “Rock and Row”, the Nanjing Rowing Masters Regatta.

Armed with a few scratch practice outings on the Isis, various health and safety forms and not knowing what to expect, the crew packed coxboxes and lifejackets and headed to Nanjing late on the 18th of September, 2019. At Heathrow, we met our opposition: a crew from Jesus College Cambridge, ironically coxed by Oxford alumna Victoria Rees (LMH) as their original cox had dropped out due to tricky visa issues.

For some of the crew, this was a first visit to China. Luckily, we were warmly received and the jetlag was not an issue after a comfortable night’s rest. With three Mandarin Chinese speakers in the crew, the team was able to navigate the city’s sights and sounds, and most importantly, the array of local cuisines. All of us were greatly impressed with Chinese hospitality!

At the first (and only) practice outing on Lake Xuanwu, the crew were surprised to find that Chinese racing shells were...
not wired for coxboxes, and that rowing conditions would be choppier and windier than conditions on the Isis. Together with several other equipment issues regarding the footplates, topnuts and rudder settings, the practice outings revealed challenging race conditions ahead. Fortunately, some of these were addressed with coxes obtaining megaphones, and Marcos (OUBC alumnus) and Luke having come prepared with some spare kit of spacers, nuts, and rigger-jiggers.

At the first race, the crew were surprised to realise that the usual commands of “Attention, GO!” would naturally be given in Chinese, giving other crews a one-stroke advantage right off the line. Far windier conditions and a lack of lane-racing practice opportunities proved challenging for the coxswains of both the Linacre and Jesus College (Cambridge) crews. Nevertheless, Linacre kept pace with all the other crews for most of the 1K race, although losing in the end to Jiaotong University, Fudan University and Jesus College (Cambridge).

Despite our technical proficiency (no crabs caught!), our boat lacked the raw power needed to beat the others – but we lost with our heads held high knowing that it was a likely outcome with two women in the boat and a scratch crew racing against the first mens VIII’s of other universities.

Because we didn’t come in last, we were given a repecharge on the next day. Although we were better prepared with the Chinese phrasing in the starts, a gate-failure at 7’s seat just...
two strokes in proved devastating. Nevertheless, Linacre reeled in Fudan for most of the race, almost catching them about 700m in after they caught a massive crab. It was a well-deserved finish with an exciting canvas toward the end, although they pulled ahead in the last 100m.

The crew were surprised to find that crews in Chinese Regattas are often rewarded with a small cash bounty. After many congratulatory photos were taken, plus exchanges of small tokens and stash with other crews, the Linacre team gleefully spent our cash bounty (roughly £ 25 pp) on celebratory dinners (including the Nanjing classic of duck noodles) and drinks on the last night together with the Jesus College (Cambridge) crew. Our last day was spent on a historical tour of Nanjing where both crews formed fast friendships in ancient and captivating streets.

All in all, the crew had an excellent experience and hope to both have Linacre represented again in Nanjing and to also have the opportunity to row with our friends in Jesus College on the Cam one day. Now that we know what to expect with Chinese racing conditions, the crew hope to impart these lessons to future Linacre crews to give them sound preparation for a better race result – especially so now that we know that there is a cash bounty on the line!


Crew
Luke Svasti
Marcos Medina
Lauren Wilburn
Dragana Savic
Eoin O’Sullivan (Oriel)
Pierre Romain
Ask Neves (Nuffield)
Jack Ren (Keble)
Matthias Haslberger (Nuffield)
Joel, a DPhil Biochemistry student, works 20 hours per week as a contract cleaner in order to pay his rent. He also spends 50 hours per week studying factors controlling the development of HIV.

Together we can help students in hardship, so that they can focus on their research and not on cleaning floors.

A monthly gift of just £10 can make a big difference.

www.linacre.ox.ac.uk/alumni-friends/giving