

Introducing...

Lisa Smars, our new Director of Alumni Relations and Development



Image: Edmund Blok

After my first two months at HMC I am already starting to feel like a part of the wonderful College community. Everyone has been most welcoming, helpful and supportive as I have been settling in and laying the foundations for an Alumni and Development Office.

It is an exciting time to be joining the College in this capacity, as we build a full Development Office for the first time. This has been made possible by a generous grant, stretching over five years, from the College Contributions Fund.

Plans are developing for a more extensive events programme, with events both in London and overseas, enriched communications, a new focus on alumni fundraising and donor stewardship. My aim is not only to keep alumni in touch with College, but also to enable alumni to connect with each other to benefit further from a life-long HMC connection.

I hope to meet with many of you soon as this will help me when planning for the future and understanding what makes the HMC community of alumni and friends special. For suggestions on what could be included as part my work, please do just drop me an email or give me a ring.

Lisa Smars

Inside this edition

- 2** Celebrating our Principal
- 4** My Story, My HMC
- 5** College News
- 7** Student news
- 8** Student spotlight
- 9** Fellows' news
- 10** Alumni news
- 11** Marking the end of the year
- 11** Oxford Next Horizons
- 11** Legacy giving
- 12** Events and contacts



Celebrating our Principal

Trinity was the final term in the seven-year tenure of Professor Jane Shaw. And, as befitting a Principalship that has transformed the College, over the next two pages we take the opportunity to celebrate her legacy by featuring a range of tributes from the HMC community.

This term also saw the completion of Professor Shaw's official portrait, commissioned by the College, which we reproduce here. The work of celebrated portrait artist Hero Johnson RP, it will hang in the Arlosh Hall.

Following her retirement as HMC Principal at the end of September, Professor Shaw will be taking up a residential fellowship at the Swedish Collegium for Advanced Study in Uppsala in Sweden, where she will be working on a new book, *Seeking Infinity: Mystics in the Modern World*, a project which will also be supported by a prestigious Leverhulme Emeritus Fellowship.

And readers of *My HMC*, as alumni of the College, will have a final chance to bid farewell to Professor Shaw on 20 September at the annual Alumni Dinner.

“

Among her many other contributions, Jane has brought a stream of distinguished academic and creative visitors to Harris Manchester. The ceramicist Edmund de Waal, the historian Linda Colley, the literary scholar Valerie Smith, the poet Michael Symmons Roberts, the playwright and actor Anna Deavere Smith: these figures have enriched and inspired our community. We all know that the Norrington Table is impossibly flawed but take quiet pride in the fact that, during Jane's tenure, we have risen from bottom place to third overall.

Professor Kate McLoughlin, Official Fellow and Tutor in English Literature

“

Harris Manchester owes Jane Shaw an enormous debt of gratitude. Jane has worked tirelessly in the College's interest, promoting our unique mission in mature student education within the University and to the wider world. She has been an inspiring leader, developing creative plans for our present and future development in a way that respects our values and traditions. Above all, she is a kind and supportive colleague, encouraging others in their academic work and professional development

Professor Jan-Emmanuel De Neve, Vice-Principal and Tutor in Management



Professor Jane Shaw's portrait by Hero Johnson RP

Celebrating our Principal (cont.)

“

Jane possesses an extraordinary talent for connecting historical events to the present, making them deeply relevant to the current community. Her profound knowledge of and pride in the College's radical history and unique Dissenting heritage have been evident throughout her time as Principal. As an outstanding advocate for the Library, Jane's ability to engage and inspire the community in appreciating its own history has significantly enhanced the role and visibility of its historic collections both within and beyond the College.

Kate Alderson-Smith, Pye Fellow and College Librarian



Image: Wesley Lam

Professor Shaw's portrait is shown hanging for the first time in the Arlosh Hall after Professor Shaw's final formal dinner in June

“

Jane has been steadfast in her encouragement of academic excellence throughout the College community. Under her leadership, Harris Manchester has advanced its reputation for excellence in learning and research, across the university and beyond. In doing so, it sustains and expands the inclusive principles of its dissenting past: coeducational, international, and ethnically diverse – just as it was when the college arrived in Oxford in the 1890s. Freedom of belief and the pursuit of truth and liberty are at the core of our purpose as a college and Jane is an inspiring embodiment of that mission.

Dr Catherine Jackson, Peck Fellow and Tutor in History



Image: Edmund Blok

Professor Shaw (centre) at the College Garden Party in June

“

Under her leadership, the College has increased its financial resilience and put in place infrastructure that will be essential in helping the College to continue to improve its financial position moving into the future.

Chris Mannning, Bursar



My Story, My HMC

Christie George

(2008, MBA)

Christie is a writer, investor and producer who has been working at the intersection of media, technology and social change for more than 20 years. Following a BA from Yale University, she went on to study for an MBA at HMC, where she gained a distinction.



What are you doing now?

After leaving Oxford, I ran a progressive investment fund called New Media Ventures for a decade. I am now a philanthropic advisor to foundations and family offices in the US. More recently, I've been working on a personal creative practice and recently produced *The Emergency Was Curiosity*, a somewhat genre-bending illustrated "book report" and pandemic archive inspired by Jenny Odell's *How to Do Nothing* and focused on cultivating individual and collective creative attention.

Best memories of HMC

I studied for my MBA at Said Business School and was a Skoll Scholar in Social Entrepreneurship. All of the Skoll Scholars were in HMC, and I loved the chance to get to know a handful of fellow business school students so intimately. It was also an absolute gift to be part of the broader HMC community alongside scholars from different disciplines and different countries.

Favourite activities at HMC

The dinners, of course! The ritual, the camaraderie and the wide-ranging conversations.

Why HMC?

Being part of HMC gave me a singular and cozier experience in the context of the larger-than-lifeness of Oxford. I fondly remember HMC as a diverse and welcoming haven.

Why is giving to HMC so important?

I appreciate how the College creates diverse ways for alumni to stay engaged and give back, fostering connections that extend far beyond graduation. Supporting HMC means investing in a network that continues to enrich our lives and is about being part of something larger than ourselves.

“

I fondly remember HMC as a diverse and welcoming haven

Advice to current students

As you get farther along in your life and career, as you specialise, it may be rare to have this breadth of experience all around you. Take advantage of it. Move outside of your comfort zone; talk to everybody. Your work will always be there; it's the people that you won't want to miss.



College news

This year's Manchester Lecture was delivered by **Professor Santanu Das**, Senior Research Fellow in English and Professor of Modern Literature and Culture at All Souls College. His subject was the Indian Nobel Prize winning poet, songwriter, philosopher and educationalist **Rabindranath Tagore**, who visited HMC twice, in 1913 and 1930. In his lecture – entitled “Cosmopoetics in a world of borders: Tagore, Oxford and the world” – Professor Das examined Tagore's work and relevance in the modern era.

[Read news article](#)



Professor Das delivers this year's Manchester Lecture in the Chapel

HMC marked VE Day with a commemorative service led by our Chaplain, the **Rev Dr Claire MacDonald**. To accompany the service, there was a special exhibition of archive photos telling the story of the College's role in the D-Day landings.

As per custom, we celebrated **Ascension Day** on 29 May with a performance by the College Choir from the Arlosh Tower followed by breakfast in the Hall.



Sanders Director of Music Stephen Taylor alongside members of the Choir on Ascension Day

New appointments

In addition to **Lisa Smars**, our new Director of Alumni Relations and Development, the College has made two other recent appointments



Dr Beth Sollereder will be joining in September as the new Wills Fellow and Tutor in Theology and Religion, a post endowed by the Wills Trust. Dr Sollereder, who will also take up the post of Associate Professor in Science and Religion at the University's Faculty of Theology and Religion, is currently Lecturer in Science and Religion at the University of Edinburgh.

[Read news article](#)



Robert Wilson has joined the College as its new Dining Hall Manager, having previously held the same position at Pembroke College.



College news (cont.)

Our **Student Summer Event**, which this year took as its theme “A Day at the Races” was a great success. Featuring a silent disco, a rodeo ride and a helter skelter, a number of HMC alumni joined in the celebrations with current students.



The Tate Quad with the Summer Event in full swing

The **Oxford Literary Festival**, held in March and April, saw HMC feature for the first time as a significant venue, hosting a total of six events in our newly renovated Chapel, including a packed talk by author of the *Slow Horses* series **Mick Herron**. We also enjoyed a visit from actress **Joanna Lumley** whom the Principal hosted for dinner in the Arlosh Hall after an event in the Sheldonian Theatre.

[Read news article](#)



Joanna Lumley with Dining Hall Supervisor Paula Dancer

This term's programme of **chapel services** has been a particularly rich one, featuring guests such as author, poet and HMC Fellow **Michael Symmons Roberts** and musician **Helen Chadwick**. A particular highlight was the collaborative service in May between HMC and our neighbours Mansfield College, with the two colleges' choirs joining forces and the service conducted by the Rev Nathan Eddy.

Oxford University's recently elected Chancellor, **Lord Hague**, visited HMC in May alongside his wife, **Dame Ffion Hague**, an Honorary Fellow of the College, for a drinks reception and dinner. They are pictured below with the Principal **Professor Jane Shaw**.



In April we were delighted to host a talk – with an introduction from HMC Professorial Fellow **Professor Sir Aziz Sheikh** – by the distinguished scientist **Professor Dame Sarah Gilbert** on Covid-19 and our preparedness for another pandemic, part of the Global Healthcare Leadership Alumni Retreat organised by Nuffield Department of Primary Care Health Sciences.



Student news

In March the Ellison Institute announced the first cohort of students to be awarded a prestigious **Ellison Scholarship**; and we were delighted to learn that **Kinsey Hin Yiu**, an HMC offer-holder, was among the 20 students selected.

[Read news article](#)

Also in March, first-year English undergraduate **Elizabeth Histed** was awarded the Keith Fletcher Outstanding Academic Achievement Award, a prestigious national prize for students who have overcome significant challenges to achieve academic excellence.

[Read news article](#)



Elizabeth Histed (centre) at the Keith Fletcher Awards ceremony

34 students were awarded an **Ashtiany-Davies prize** for gaining distinctions in Collection exams, further proof of the College's academic excellence. We are grateful to Senior Research Fellow Professor **Paul Davies** and Honorary Fellow **Saphieh Ashtiany** for their funding of the award.

HMC student **Spencer Drake** (right), a DPhil candidate in History, took centre stage in a *Financial Times* article in May in which he was interviewed about discovering the clothing of a historical menswear company.

[Read FT article](#)



Spencer Drake modelling historical menswear

Sporting success!

HMC's recent academic success was mirrored during Trinity term by some outstanding sporting performances.

A total of 13 HMC rowers took part in Summer Eights as part of the Wadham crews this year, with JCR President **Gabriel Kauffman**, **Akshay Amesur** and **Muenda Drenkard** securing the College's seventh set of blades in its history, while **Lisa Lynn**, rowing in the Women's 1st Boat, narrowly missed out on securing the Head of the River title.



The latest set of hard-fought 'blades' were painted onto the walls of the College by Wadham alumna Isabelle Legge (right)

Meanwhile, the tennis team got through to the second round of Cuppers, while **Vivek Narayan** made the Men's Blues in cricket.



The HMC tennis team following Cuppers victory

This followed last year's individual successes, including **Kieren Tan** (awarded a Blue in squash), **Kervin Tsai** (Blue in water polo) and **Muhammad Awan** (Blue in cricket).

Student news (cont.)

This year's **Sawyer Prize**, made possible by a bequest from the late David Sawyer, was won by **Saad Ismail**, who is studying for an MPhil in Philosophical Theology. The annual competition, which took place in May, saw four students give a three-minute presentation to a panel of HMC Fellows led by Professor Mark Harris, with the winner selected on the basis of how successfully they communicated the originality of their research. Also presenting were History DPhil candidate **Spencer Drake**; graduate-entry medic **Zoe Stamoulis**; and Religion and Theology DPhil candidate **Andrej Zeman**.

[Read news article](#)



Zoe Stamoulis presenting her research

Student spotlight



I am Siddhartha Sensharma, and I'm in my second year reading for a BA in Experimental Psychology. I'm originally from Singapore and spent many of my school years with my startup, a machine learning based device for personalised automatic fall and crash detection and bio-signal based theft-proof access control, as my main focus. This led to insightful experiences, such as exhibiting at CES, the largest technology conference in the world. The startup world is, at its core, centred around the question of "how can I help?", making it easy to connect with people who have highly varied life experiences or roles.



Image: Muenda Drenkard

For example, 'green', 'red', and 'blue' aren't innate qualities of objects, but rather labels that we categorise the world by due to our ability to easily distinguish between them. This ignited a curiosity on my part to understand the human mind and brain, since this was the lens by which we processed the information fed to us, and effectively created our own reality. I decided then to apply to Oxford, since I wished to explore these ideas through the tutorial system. To achieve this goal, I self-studied on weekends, taking double of Oxford's entry requirements.

At 18, I was conscripted into the Singapore Army, where I served as a sergeant in the Combat Engineers, commanding a section. The pace of life in the military was bimodal, marked by alternate rushing and idleness. In this idleness, I came across the work of John Locke, and was particularly intrigued by the idea that all knowledge we possessed was at least driven by, if not wholly dependent on, subjective experiences.

Coming here has been fundamentally transformative, whether it's interrogating an idea during tutorials, serendipitous conversations across subjects over meals, or supporting startups through running the OX1 Incubator. HMC, with its natural intimacy and friendliness, amplifies the best qualities of Oxford.

Siddhartha Sensharma



Fellows' news

In March the Wellbeing Research Centre, based at HMC and directed by **Professor Jan-Emmanuel De Neve**, the College's Vice-Principal and Fellow and Tutor in Management, published the World Happiness Report 2025 to coincide with the UN's International Day of Happiness. This year's report received widespread media interest, including coverage in *The New York Times*, the BBC, and other major outlets.

[Read the news article](#)

Governing Body Fellow **Professor Matthew Weait** has been announced as the new Chair of the Board of Trustees for the National AIDS Trust, the UK's HIV rights charity. He will take up the post this month.

Poet, writer and broadcaster **Michael Symmons Roberts**, Senior Research Fellow at HMC, published a new book in April. *Quartet for the End of Time* is a reflection on grief, doubt, faith and poetry set to one of the most celebrated musical works of the twentieth century – Olivier Messiaen's *Quatuor pour la fin du Temps*.

Professor Sir Aziz Sheikh, a Professorial Fellow at HMC, gave his inaugural lecture as Nuffield Professor of Primary Care Health Sciences and Head of Department. Entitled "Catalysing the data-enabled transformation of health – globally", the lecture outlined his vision for transforming global health care through data, innovation and equity.

[Watch the lecture](#)

Author and ceramicist **Edmund de Waal**, Visiting Fellow at HMC, headlined an event at the Ashmolean Museum in May as part of the University of Oxford's Cultural Programme. His talk addressed the theme of "Create and transform" by reflecting on fragments and brokenness.

Dr Hana Navratilova, a Supernumerary Fellow at HMC, whose teaching and research focuses on Egyptian history and archaeology, delivered a lecture at Harvard University on the subject of Egyptian artists. While she was there, she met up with HMC alumna **Freya Lu** (2024, BA Asian and Middle Eastern Studies), who is now studying for her PhD at Harvard.

[Read the news article](#)

HMC Supernumerary Fellow **Dr Julia Badger** lead-authored a paper that presented a more inclusive definition of bullying whilst also coining a new term, 'counter-connecting', to describe children trying to connect but being uncertain of how to do so. Dr Badger, HMC's Psychology Tutor and a Lecturer at the University's Department of Education, hopes the new term and definition will help support staff and pupils.

[Read the news article](#)

Read all the latest news from HMC on our [website](#)

HMC Fellows scoop awards

HMC Fellows were among the winners of the 2025 Vice-Chancellor's Awards. John Henry Felix Fellow and Associated Tutor in Medicine **Dr Gina Hadley**, Official Fellow **Professor Joshua Hordern**, and Official Fellow and Tutor in Clinical Medicine **Professor Bee Wee** were recognised for their roles in an interdisciplinary training session for medical students that draws on expertise from the University's Ashmolean Museum and the Humanities Division.



HMC Fellows at the Vice-Chancellor's Awards Ceremony in May

Dr Hadley and Professor Hordern are also part of MedHum, an interdisciplinary research hub based at The Oxford Research Centre in the Humanities, which received the Award for Research Culture.

Supernumerary Fellow **Dr Debbie Aitken** was a finalist in the Support for Students Award, rounding off the strong showing from HMC in this year's awards.

[Read the news article](#)



Alumni news

Johan Floderus

(2011, BA PPE, pictured on the right) married his partner in Sweden, with a number of HMC staff and alumni among the guests. Johan has also recently published a book about his detention in Iran.

And there were more wedding bells in May, this time at HMC itself, as **Aron D'Souza** (2009, BA Jurisprudence) married his partner in a ceremony at the College Chapel conducted by our Chaplain, the Rev Dr Claire MacDonald.



Deborah Frances White (1997, BA English), stand-up comedian, screenwriter and host of *The Guilty Feminist* podcast released her new book, *Six Conversations We're Scared to Have* in April; Deborah also appeared at Oxford's Story Museum in June to discuss the role of ethical values in artistic enterprises.

In April, **Adam Cragg** (2020, MBA) the co-founder of Osney Capital, announced the launch of the UK's first specialist cyber security seed fund backed by major investors such as the British Business Bank.

Caroline Butler (2016, MSc Economics for Development) was a guest on the *Intertwined* podcast discussing non-linear career paths and the key role that HMC played in her own personal journey.

[Listen to the podcast](#)

Congratulations to **Dr Jordan Miller** (2017, BA Asian and Middle Eastern Studies) who has been appointed Assistant Professor at Cornell University.

[Read the news article](#)

Yizhou (Yijo) Liu (2022, MSt Oriental Studies) now works as a high school counsellor in China, providing students with career guidance. In May he returned to HMC to show some of his students around and also gave an interview to the Faculty of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies on his experience studying Sanskrit at Oxford.

[Read the interview](#)

Hannah Healy (2020, BA History of Art) was one of the adjudicators for the National Gallery's Articulation Prize, an artistic competition for 16 to 19-year-olds.

Well done also to **Emily Smith** (2019, MSt English), now a Research and Teaching Assistant at the University of Geneva, on winning the 2025 Martin Lehnert Prize from the German Shakespeare Society.

Deaths

We were very sorry to learn of the death of Foundation Fellow **Maevadi Navapan** on 4 April. Mrs Navapan was, along with other members of her family, a significant benefactor and member of the Chancellor's Court of Benefactors, funding the construction of some of our most beautiful buildings and providing financial support to our students.

[Read the news article](#)

On 5 May we were equally saddened to hear of the death of another great supporter of the College. Honorary Fellow **Dr John Henry Felix** made gifts towards the renovation of student housing and Tseu Medical Institute and, more recently, funded the John Henry Felix Tutorial Fellowship in Medicine. His generosity to the College was marked by his admission to the Chancellor's Court of Benefactors.

[Read the news article](#)



Marking the end of the academic year

As ever, the end of Trinity term was marked by a number of events, some of which you may remember from your time at HMC!



The annual Finalists' Dinner in the Arlosh Hall



An aerial view of this year's Summer Garden Party



Head Porter John Carter's end-of-year speech to students in the JCR

...and farewell to the 2025 Next Horizons cohort

The end of term also saw us bid goodbye to this year's participants in the **Oxford Next Horizons** programme. Co-designed by HMC and the Rhodes Trust, its aim is to give those at a mid-to-late stage of their careers time to think, explore and reinvent themselves through tailored academic and social activities. As part of the HMC community, this year's cohort was given space to explore new ideas, connect with one another, and collaborate in meaningful ways. We wish them all the best as they head home with fresh perspective, enriched by their time in Oxford.



This year's Next Horizons cohort with our Principal

Spotlight on legacy gifts

Over the course of its history, legacy gifts have played a key role in Harris Manchester's development. Every aspect of college life has benefited from the generosity of those who have remembered the College in their wills. It is no overstatement to say that without these gifts the College would not exist in its present form – or perhaps exist at all.

And while our past has been profoundly shaped by those who have left a legacy, these are gifts that also endure into the future. Among other things, they allow the College to fund vital scholarships, provide hardship bursaries and continue to maintain and improve our estate and facilities.

We place enormous value on all legacy gifts, whatever their size, and respect the deeply personal nature of such contributions. A bequest can either be channelled to areas where there is greatest need or go towards supporting a donor's particular interest.

If you would like to discuss options for remembering HMC in your will, please contact our Director of Alumni Relations and Development, Lisa Smars.

Lisa.smars@hmc.ox.ac.uk



Dates for your diary

Alumni Dinner

Saturday 20 September

Our annual Alumni Dinner is a terrific opportunity to catch up with your fellow alumni and their guests. This year's event promises to be a particularly special occasion as we will be bidding farewell to our current Principal, **Professor Jane Shaw**, and welcoming her successor, **Professor Beth Breeze**. Tickets have already proved extremely popular this year, with the dinner now fully booked. If you'd like to attend, send us an email and we will add you to the waiting list.

[Join the waiting list](#)

Oxford Open Doors

Saturday 13 September

The College will once again be taking part in this year's Oxford Open Doors programme, run by the Oxford Preservation Trust.

Meeting Minds

Friday 19 – Saturday 21 Sep

Meeting Minds is a stimulating weekend of academic talks, tours, panels and activities organised by the University across various venues for alumni of all Colleges.

[Read more](#)

Alumni Carol Service

Saturday 6 December

Join us for our annual Carol Service, which this year will be held in our recently renovated Chapel. Booking details will be available shortly.



Join the HMC
[LinkedIn](#)
alumni group



Image: John Cains Photography

Keep in touch

Harris Manchester College
Mansfield Road
Oxford OX1 3TD

Alumni & Development Office
alumni@hmc.ox.ac.uk

Website
hmc.ox.ac.uk

Update your details
hmc.ox.ac.uk/stay-in-touch

Social media
Bluesky: @hmcoxford
Instagram: @hmcoxford
LinkedIn: harris-manchester-college

Make a gift
hmc.ox.ac.uk/making-a-gift