SPORTS NEWS  Claudia Havranek writes about being the first female President of the Oxford University Amateur Boxing Club

READ ALL ABOUT IT

Terry Waite 25 years on
A quarter of a century after his release after 1763 days as a hostage in Lebanon, Terry Waite CBE (Visiting Fellow 2006) reflects on his life.

Magdalen journalists talk about their work
For generations, Magdalen alumni have had a huge impact on the media landscape of the UK and beyond; whether writing articles, producing radio and television, or casting a satirical eye over current affairs, we hear from the current crop of Magdalen journalists on everything from how the Today programme is put together to writing ‘the first rough draft of history’...
From the President

What a momentous year it has been for Magdalen! Not only have our talented students placed us top of the Norrington Table of undergraduate results for the third time in six years and set up the Oxford University Refugee Scholarship (see page 12); several Fellows won prestigious awards for their work and we have been graced with a royal visit to our wonderful new Longwall Library. Made possible by donations of nearly £8m from generous alumni and friends, it was fitting to mark the opening of this vital resource with a visit from Prince William, the Duke of Cambridge, on 11th May (see page 16).

With such newsworthy things happening in College, I am delighted to introduce this year’s issue of Floreat Magdalena, which has a strong focus on journalism. Many Magdalen alumni work in the media; whether writing, presenting, editing or broadcasting. I hope that the following pages give a flavour of the variety and scope of Magdalen’s media connections.

These are interesting times for the UK and for higher education. A pre-referendum debate in College with Dominic Grieve MP (1975) and John Redwood MP (1968) was enlightening for students and alumni alike (see page 10), and it is heartening to know that so many Magdalen politicians, civil servants and journalists will be directly involved in shaping our ongoing relationship with the EU.

I have no doubt that with the support and engagement of our fantastic community of alumni, Magdalen will continue to flourish. I look forward to seeing many of you back in College or at an alumni event near you soon.

David Clary
The President
Professor Sir David Clary FRS

Floreat Magdalena!
Magdalen journalists feature prominently in the media landscape. The following pages give a sense of just a few of the many alumni who are working in the media today.

# Magdalen and the Media

**HEATHER STEWART** (1995)
Joint Political Editor, the Guardian

**BILL EMMOTT** (1975) and **JOHN MICKLETHWAIT** (1981)
Former Editors, The Economist

**KATE FRASER** (1994)
Agony Aunt, Take a Break

**PAUL JOHNSON** (1946)
Former Editor, the New Statesman

**IAN HISLOP** (1978)
Editor, Private Eye

**MATTHEW D’ANCONA** (1986)
Former Editor, the Spectator

**MENG-YUN WANG** (2007)
Fashion Features Editor, Vogue China

From the editor of Private Eye to the joint political editor of the Guardian, from the former editors of the New Statesman and the Spectator to two former editors of the Economist, from Senior Fashion Features Editor at Vogue China to the agony aunt for Take a Break magazine, all areas of the political and cultural spectrum are covered by Magdalen journalists in the UK and across the world.
John Sergeant read PPE at Magdalen from 1963 – 1966. He is one of Britain’s foremost journalists, spending the majority of his career at the BBC, first as a reporter and later as Chief Political Correspondent before moving to ITN as Political Editor. He was one of the most popular contestants on *Strictly Come Dancing*, and has presented a number of TV series, most recently *Barging Round Britain*. 
John Sergeant

POLITICAL CORRESPONDENT

You started your career writing for the Liverpool Echo before joining the BBC, and working in broadcasting for the remainder of your journalistic career. Why did you choose to focus on broadcast journalism over print?

To be honest, I thought I would be better as a broadcaster and it would be easier for me to reach the top of the tree. I was in my early twenties and it was a time for dreams of fame and fortune. Broadcasting looked as if it might give me that opportunity. I was also attracted to the BBC because it involved public service; it was not designed to make a profit. With its worldwide newsgathering, I was also hoping that it would take me abroad on exciting assignments. And so it proved. I reported from 25 countries and five wars, including Vietnam, before settling down at Westminster as a political correspondent. The BBC gave me all the opportunities I craved for and the idea of returning to print journalism did not appeal. But since leaving the BBC and ITN I have worked freelance for a number of newspapers and very much enjoyed the experience.

While you were at Magdalen, you performed as a comedian, continuing professionally after graduating, and performing with Alan Bennett (himself a junior lecturer at Magdalen 1960 – 62) before you became a journalist. How has humour informed your work, and prepared you for working in challenging environments?

The truth is that there were more jokes off the screen in news than on screen when I have worked in comedy. I still get a buzz thinking up a good funny line in a speech or when broadcasting, but professional comedy is not always a barrel of laughs. It often has to be meticulously rehearsed and disciplined. When I performed with friends at the Oxford Playhouse we could let rip and amuse the audience at the same time. Spontaneity was the name of the game. In the more grown-up world of Television Centre, larking around, particularly in my series with Alan Bennett, was not encouraged. I was quite relieved when I finished and took to the screen in news than on screen when I performed as a comedian, continuing my career, and why?

The old journalistic adage is that you are only as good as your contacts. A famous political editor of the Press Association, Chris Moncrief, was asked how he got his scoops and he said: “Mainly by hanging around.” I would only add that for me the answer lay in keeping up, not only with what was being said, but also with the main arguments behind the issues of the day. This enabled one to react quickly, even given the smallest clues as to what was going on behind closed doors. In other words you have got to be fairly obsessive about your news area.

You have had a very international career, often reporting from war zones. What role do journalists play in international conflicts, and how did the danger you were placing yourself in affect your decision to report?

I was sometimes in conflict with my editors on the issue of my personal safety. One of my editors once said that he expected his reporters to ‘put their lives on the line.’ No story, in my view, is worth that. But there have been times when, accidentally, I have found myself in extreme danger. I was thankful when my ten years as a news reporter was over and I never again had to take those life and death decisions. Feeling you are immortal was never something I suffered from. But reporters have to try to get information even in the most hazardous circumstances. They must make every reasonable attempt to find out what is going on. And, of course, it is their duty to stand witness to the horrors of the world.

Since retiring from your role as Political Editor at ITN, you have presented a number of documentaries. How does presenting differ from reporting?

There is not fundamentally a great deal of difference. You have to make a lot of choices about what to leave out. It is often said that a news reporter can turn themselves into a feature writer, but a feature writer cannot turn themselves into a news reporter. What this is really saying is that the trade of news reporter has to be mastered before you move on to features or documentaries. Often this does not happen in television productions, and in my view this always shows in the final cut.

What do you consider to be the most important moment of your journalistic career, and why?

I was having a private lunch with John Major after he had recently been appointed Foreign Secretary. Amazingly he asked me for advice to which I simply replied, “Be brave.” Later the same afternoon I was appearing live on the Six O’Clock News commenting on the sudden resignation of Nigel Lawson as Chancellor. And who replaced him? John Major. It would have been easy to have rambled on, or to get over excited. I held my nerve, put down the phone and read out Lawson’s resignation statement. It was not so much what I did, but what I avoided doing. It was then that the audience could assess whether I was up to the job.

Which part of your varied career did you enjoy most or find most memorable?

Reporting on Mrs Thatcher’s career, from the moment she was appointed leader of the Conservative Party in 1975 to her dramatic demise in 1990. She was often unpredictable, and almost always newsworthy. She liked to flirt with younger news reporters who didn’t owe her a living, and were ready to ask her difficult questions.

Is there a historical event that you wish you could have covered?

I would have liked to report on the fall of the Berlin Wall. I could only watch it from afar. But I have spent most of my life thinking about the Second World War and its consequences. And maybe that was when the war ended.
Jamie Angus read Modern Languages (French and German) from 1992 – 1995. He was a researcher and press officer for the Liberal Democrats, before joining the BBC, working for Newsnight, Radio 4’s World at One and the World Service before becoming Editor of the Today programme in September 2013.

“No, you can’t say ‘reportedly put his willy in a pig’s head’ before 0900 on Radio 4”. The early morning editorial judgements are always the most fun, and you know it’s going to be a busy day when there is a pressing matter of national import to rule on before leaving home, usually just after 5am.

Of course, despite the very early starts, I am lucky to have had at least some sleep. As a younger producer on Today, I often did the 13-hour overnight shift, which is exhausting but at least promises the often dubious pleasure of interacting with the Today presenters, who generally arrive just before 4am.

By the time I actually get into Studio S33 in Broadcasting House, the programme has already been on air for a few minutes. My role in the morning often appears to observers primarily to involve sitting at the back of the Today gallery looking grumpy and reading the papers, and in many ways that’s true. One of things that struck me when I re-joined Today as Editor a few years ago was that nobody on the team actually had the time to listen to the programme output carefully, so I think one of my main jobs is to know exactly what’s gone out on air, and of course over time to make sure we get the right balance of stories across the three hours. I also value the few short minutes I get to shape presenters’ thinking for the lead interviews of the morning – often these negotiations are conducted in the moments at the top of the hour when the news bulletin is on air, and so you have to be prepared to have a well thought-out view early in the morning, and be able quickly to persuade a recalcitrant colleague to put it into action.

Sometimes the most exciting times to be on are when there is big breaking news overnight – the parliamentary Syria vote would be one example, or a good obit story – ‘and Archbishop how will you remember David Bowie?’ was one of my favourite lines from this year.

The dedicated team of journalists who make Today is much smaller than people imagine – typically around four or five will set the programme up in the day, and only two on all through the night. But of course we can draw on the wider resources and expertise of the BBC, and our colleagues working around the world. I think our recent presenter hires have hopefully offered a lot to the listener – having Nick Robinson on hand for the Referendum or being able to send Mishal Husain to cover the tragic death of Jo Cox brings a lot of value to Today’s audiences.

I try to read a lot of listener feedback – it’s interesting how often the views of the audiences who use email and those on Twitter completely diverge – and act on what I hear. Today’s faithful listeners are very sensitive to coverage that just doesn’t sound quite right – either a story where we’ve done too much, too often, or the balance between the serious news and the lighter conversational moments, or a sense that coverage of a terrible tragedy is too intrusive, too voyeuristic. It’s the joy of serving Radio 4 audiences that they know what they think, and aren’t afraid to let you know.

It’s been a testing time for the BBC – when isn’t it? – but the editorial challenge of covering a great national debate like our Referendum is as fraught as making the case for the continued existence of a public broadcaster that isn’t really like any other in the world, for better and for worse. I suspect after another BBC Charter renewal in 11 years’ time our services will look very different to the way they do now, but will millions still tune in to get what they need from Today, in a world where digital platforms are swiftly the first port of call for the next generation of licence fee payers? Despite everything, I’m strangely optimistic...
Emma Chandra

SENIOR PRODUCER & NEWS PRESENTER AT BLOOMBERG

Emma Chandra read Modern History & Politics at Magdalen from 2003–2006. On leaving Oxford she studied Television Current Affairs Journalism at London’s City University. Since then Emma has worked as a reporter in Moscow for Russia Today and as a senior broadcast journalist at the BBC’s Six and Ten O’Clock News in London. Emma is now based in New York where she is a news presenter and senior producer for Bloomberg Television’s flagship show.

“Hairspray and teeth whitening strips”. That’s my glib reply when questioned about the differences between British and American television news. After moving to New York from London (and from the BBC to Bloomberg) a couple of years ago, it is something I get asked a lot. Focusing on our American cousins’ obsession with big hair and perfect dental work always raises a smile, and there is truth here: all that fake tan and brightly hued clothing is more Strictly Come Dancing than News at Ten.

But I’m beginning to think that perhaps I’m selling my US colleagues a little short by dismissing what is a manifestation of a much more competitive news landscape as merely camouflage for ‘news-lite’. Surveying ABC, NBC, CBS, CNN, MSNBC, CNBC, Fox News, Fox Business, my own employer Bloomberg and Spanish language Univision can make the UK’s triumvirate of the BBC, Sky and ITV look very small indeed. Throw in a dense patchwork of state and city news acronyms, and the growing number of alternative video news providers, and it’s a wonder anyone gets any significant viewing figures at all, let alone makes any money (remember, there’s no handy licence fee funding).

What happens then, in the battle for American eyeballs is that the ‘anchors’ get brighter and their personalities louder. They develop a brand and a following, which can have huge value and competitive advantage for a network. However, preparedness and journalistic skill are very much the same – you quite simply have to know your stuff to capably interview a President or Prime Minister, central bank governor or CEO – whatever side of the Atlantic your accent falls.

And so I find the ‘news-making’ is very much the same as back home; robust editorial meetings on what should be the big focus for the day and how we creatively, engagingly and visually tell that story; or discussions on which high profile guest we’re chasing and how we should approach the interview once he or she is caught. Good journalism is the same all over the world, and I – and the many British broadcast journalists working in the US – are testament to the portability of our trade.

For me, the biggest change has been content rather than quality: after almost a decade of general news experience, most recently with the BBC’s Six O’Clock News and Ten O’Clock News, working for a business and financial news network means that the stories and interview subjects are now very different. Where once I’d be working on a package with our Middle East editor on the Syrian conflict, or producing a live show from a flooded British town, I’m now parsing the carefully scripted words of Janet Yellen and Mark Carney for clues about rate rises, or prepping an anchor in Detroit ahead of an interview with the CEO of General Motors. It’s been a steep learning curve, but a tremendously rewarding and fun one.

Of course there are times when these two spheres of news come together, and none more spectacularly than with the recent referendum on British membership of the European Union. I was sent back to London to help with coverage ahead of the vote and I found my dual background of both ‘traditional’ and business news journalism to be invaluable. It helped in conveying the British political and cultural implications of Brexit to our core American, finance-focused audience, and to explain the immediate market reaction story to a viewership (perhaps temporarily) swelled by the less financially literate. It was also one of those once-in-five-year news events that called for an ‘all hands on deck’ approach to the newsroom, and resulted in a live reporting stint for the network on Westminster’s College Green, along with a run of newsreading. Perhaps a ‘mini’ rather than a ‘big’ break – but I got a good blow-dry all the same.
Neil Fisher
ARTS JOURNALIST

Neil Fisher read Modern History from 1999 – 2002 and followed his degree with a postgraduate diploma in Newspaper Journalism at London’s City University. He has worked at The Times since 2004 and became Deputy Arts Editor in 2010. He is also a regular contributor to Gramophone magazine.

In the evenings I might be at Covent Garden or English National Opera, on duty as a music critic. In the daytime I work at a daily newspaper. As you might imagine, I regularly get asked how I cope with the hysterical prima donnas, the brutal assassinations and the ludicrous denouements. The answer is that at least I have the opera to look forward to.

I fell into arts journalism through a combination of factors: I grew up with a passion for classical music – call it a misspent adolescence. Magdalen added, if not a huge amount of opera to my life, then certainly a sense of the operatic (the shadow of Dorian Gray is long and velvet-trimmed). And through the College choir it opened a window onto Byrd, Tallis or Howells, music that is now in my DNA too.

Jamie Glazebrook
TV PRODUCER

Jamie Glazebrook read English at Magdalen from 1990 – 1993, where he was also an Academical Clerk singing in the College choir. On leaving Magdalen he went into TV, working for many leading production companies including Talkback, Tiger Aspect and Hat Trick, producing programmes including The 11 O’Clock Show and The IT Crowd. He is Executive Producer on award-winning BBC drama Peaky Blinders which has now been commissioned for a fourth and fifth series.

Peaky Blinders is a drama that airs on BBC2 and, in the US, on Netflix. Set in the 1920s, I suppose it’s best described as a crime series, or a family saga, but at heart it’s about a man on his way from lawless poverty towards the heart of the British establishment. Is that journey possible, what will it take, what will it cost, and how will he feel about his destination – if he makes it?

Steven Knight, who writes the series, as Steve, my boss Caryn Mandabach and I have, you’re used to telling stories where the outward stakes are small but the personal stakes are big. ‘My kids won’t do their homework’ is really ‘How good a parent do I need to be?’ In Peaky Blinders, the outward stakes are high – shell-shocked veterans of the Great War, organised crime, international conspiracies – but the personal stakes for Tommy and his family are what really count. I think that’s the secret of its wide appeal – our fans include Stephen King, Pink, Michael Mann and Snoop Dogg.

Thus, if there’s any ‘trick’ to what I do as one of the executive producers, it’s in honouring Steve’s fluency and delight in portraying his characters. (As he once laughingly said, ‘they are so like themselves’.) So, for example, we use music to express what is in our core characters’ heads, rather than to create suspense or elicit emotion. Equally, the locations, sets and costumes could almost have sprung from our characters’ subconscious. The one piece of advice we give to an incoming director is if in doubt, start and end the scene with Cillian (Murphy, who plays lead Tommy Shelby) – because it’ll give the viewer time to consider what’s going on in Tommy’s mind.

After three series, Tommy and his family have experienced a meteoric rise followed by a devastating fall. The story could almost end here, but the joy of returning series is that you get to explore what happens next. Having heard Steve’s intentions for Series 4, I can’t wait to see it myself.
Robert Fox
WAR CORRESPONDENT

Robert Fox read Modern History at Magdalen from 1964 – 1967. Since then he has been working as a journalist and broadcaster, reporting on Northern Ireland, the Red Brigades and the Falklands for the BBC, and Afghanistan, Bosnia and the Middle East as Chief Foreign Correspondent for the Daily Telegraph. He was awarded an MBE for his coverage of the Falklands conflict of 1982, and is currently Defence and Security Editor of the Evening Standard.

Reporting from the field always was and always will be a game of high risk and adventure. But over the fifty years I have done it, the rules of the game, and the game of rules have changed dramatically – in fact some say that the days of the professional correspondent are over.

Reporting from trouble spots, revolutions, earthquakes, assassinations, small wars and coups in the sixties and seventies, gave a kick a lot of latitude. You could choose when, where and how you would cover a story. Working for the BBC in Belfast, there were few health and safety or editorial restrictions – the main worry was if the newsroom Ford Escort could get you out of a riot or gunbattle once you put pedal to the metal.

In 1982 I found myself going back to the future as a fully accredited WC, or War Correspondent, with the expeditionary force for the Falklands under full military discipline. The rules were those of the Second World War – though we didn’t have to wear WC shoulder flashes. It meant censorship, which became less arduous the closer to the fighting front. We were supposed to wear helmets, but no body armour – unthinkable today for civvies and fighters alike. The most useful bits of military kit were the thermal underwear, and the arctic sleeping bags of the Royal Marines. The helmet I wore at the ragged battle at Goose Green was next to useless – it was a Paras’ helmet made of cork. I had to gouge an extra big chunk out of the top to carry morphine phials for at least two of us – “one for you, if you’re lucky, and one or two for mates – you’re more use to us that way,” the sergeant medic explained.

Communications were a nightmare – as only a few merchant ships had the Inmarsat equipment to transmit broadcast or print despatches, and they often weren’t around for days.

The big change coincided with the fall of the Berlin Wall and the end of the Cold War in 1989. Satellite transmission offered instant broadcasting from the scene as the drama unfolded. This was the dawn of the 24 hour 7 days a week news cycle. This puts the reporter in the battlespace as agent and no longer detached observer. By this time I’d switched from broadcast to print – because it offered more freedom – but I still recall typing a dispatch from Gornji Vakuf in Bosnia watching a tank pounding away through the mist as I wrote. Fortunately it missed a lot more than it hit.

Today’s reporters are caught in the spiral of two or three revolutions. Technically the power of connectivity from some of the remotest areas allows anyone to report by tablet and mobile phone, and to be seen and heard – as the Taliban and ISIS have understood brilliantly. Second, new simple weapons are the most deadly for all, including media – such as the $10 buried bomb known as the IED or improvised explosive device, or the fuel bombs in petrol drums now used in Syria. Third, there is the social revolution in conflict. And in the new wars among the people, reporters are fair game as never before – for kidnap, assassination, political trade and ransom.

Though the stakes are high, the urge to witness the drama and tell the tale is still there. Something about the true hack is born, not made. We celebrate the unusual number of us who have taken this path from Magdalen in our forthcoming Hacks’ Dinner on 3rd February 2017. In doing so we recognise like Damon Runyon’s Hot Horse Herbie that in journalism as in life, “a story goes with it.”
George Will read PPE at Magdalen from 1962 – 1965. From Magdalen, he went to Princeton to study for a PhD in politics. He went into journalism in the US working for National Review, the Washington Post and Newsweek. He won a Pulitzer Prize for Commentary in 1977. He has written two bestselling books on baseball, and is currently a contributor to Fox News.

American journalists relish thinking that they write “the first rough draft of history.” Actually, history requires what journalism denies – time for sifting accumulated evidence about events, and for hearing the long reverberations of today’s words and deeds. So journalists must allow the excitement of immediacy to compensate for the inherent limits of their craft.

To be a journalist in America in 2016 is to enjoy an unusual spectacle. There really is never any such thing as a dull presidential election in this continental nation, but this year’s presidential contest has no historical analogue.

The Democratic Party, the world’s oldest political party, experienced a strong, if ultimately unsuccessful, challenge mounted by a man who advertises himself as a “socialist”. Bernie Sanders’ fervid supporters got a frisson of naughty delight from thinking that he is a socialist. But to him, socialism means no more than active government regulation of economic activity, plus lots of redistribution of wealth. Which is essentially what has existed in the United States since the New Deal. After all, two-thirds of the federal budget consists of the redistribution of wealth through transfer payments.

Sanders would never have dared to suggest anything like the Labour Party’s old (interred by Tony Blair in 1995) Clause Four calling for “common ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange”. That was serious socialism. Bernie Sanders offered only a watery version of social democracy. Hillary Clinton will campaign promising a bit more of everything that exists – and four years without having to worry about Donald Trump.

Trump has executed a hostile takeover of the Republican Party. It first ran a presidential candidate in 1856, and never since then has it nominated a candidate so little attached to the party, and so uninterested in its traditions of limited government. Trump, who has changed his party registration five times since the 1980s, has often donated large sums to Democratic candidates, including Hillary Clinton. She, who a majority of Americans consider neither honest nor trustworthy, might be the only plausible Democratic candidate who Trump might defeat.

And he, who has even worse poll numbers regarding his honesty and trustworthiness, might be the only one of this year’s 17 Republican presidential aspirants who she might defeat.

Still, what is bad for the Republic is good, or at least stimulating, for journalists. Given America’s presidential circus, and Britain’s referendum on membership of the European Union, 2016 is a grand year to be doing journalism, even if it is not really “the first rough draft of history.”
Nick Kristof
POLITICAL CORRESPONDENT

Nick Kristof was a Rhodes Scholar, reading Jurisprudence at Magdalen from 1981 – 1984. On graduating he studied Arabic in Egypt before joining the New York Times, writing pieces on global health, poverty and gender issues in the developing world. He has travelled to more than 150 countries, and won a Pulitzer Prize for International Reporting for his coverage of the Tiananmen Square protests of 1989 and a Pulitzer Prize for Commentary on the genocide in Darfur.

The other day on CNN, I was paired to discuss the mess in Syria with Niall Ferguson, the economic historian and commentator – which made it an intra-Magdalen discussion, since Niall and I were up at the same time. If the panel had been broadened to include former Foreign Secretary William Hague, writer Andrew Sullivan and Bloomberg editor in chief John Micklethwait, we could have had an entire panel made up just of Magdalen contemporaries.

I go on CNN and other shows because I don’t just want to report the news for my New York Times readers, I also want to influence events. That’s tricky, though. Like a lot of journalists, I entered the profession partly because I wanted to do some good – but you can’t cover every press conference as if you’re out to save the world.

I’ve also found that even as an opinion columnist, I rarely change people’s views on issues that they have thought about. If I write about President Obama or the Middle East, people usually agree with my take only if they started out agreeing with it. But where we in journalism can truly have an impact, I believe, is when we highlight neglected issues and thereby project them onto the agenda. That’s the first step in getting an injustice righted. So increasingly that’s my aim: to make people aware of a problem they were previously oblivious to, and make them spill their coffee in the process.

The work I’m proudest of as a columnist falls into that category. It’s writing about genocide and poverty, sex trafficking and obstetric fistula, women’s rights and early childhood interventions. Sometimes people come up to me and say they admire my crusading, and I always flinch at that, for a crusader means relinquishing journalistic scepticism and neutrality. I’m always a journalist foremost.

That said I’ve covered events that outraged me to my core – the Chinese government’s massacre of Tiananmen Square student democracy protesters, Sudan’s genocide of people in Darfur, and so on. And in those situations, I’m not just trying to document the killings but also to fight back the only way I can, with the uncertain tools of my laptop and my camera.
Matthew d’Ancona read Modern History at Magdalen from 1986 – 1989, and was elected a Fellow of All Souls College in 1989. He started his national newspaper career at The Times, where he was rapidly promoted to Assistant Editor at the age of 26. He has since worked at the Sunday Telegraph, was Editor of the Spectator and currently writes a weekly column for the Guardian. He chaired the Magdalen Brexit Debate on 13th May 2016.

Early on the morning of Friday 24th June, as the BBC announced victory for Leave in the EU referendum, I dwelt just before dawn on the preceding campaign – many weeks of confrontation between the two camps, often ugly, always pugnacious. It had been hard pounding, all the way.

Yet there had been one oasis of civility in the national punch-up: a debate between two distinguished Magdalen alumni, Dominic Grieve (1975) and John Redwood (1968), held in the College auditorium – an event that I was honoured to chair.

After the President had introduced us all to the sell-out audience of 160, the blades were drawn. Grieve, the chair of the Intelligence and Security Committee and former Attorney General, made a typically lucid case for Britain’s continued membership. 

In response, Redwood, a former Tory leadership contender and Cabinet minister, made what I described in my Guardian column as “perhaps the most compelling pro-Brexit speech I have yet heard” – a judgment which still stands.

The divide between the two politicians was immense – fundamental, even. Grieve argued that the nation was stronger and more prosperous for its membership, a heavy-hitter on the world stage. On the contrary, said Redwood: Britain yearned to be liberated from the dead hand of Brussels, to stretch its entrepreneurial sinews and to rediscover true accountability and control. The national argument, he said, was not a parlour game; rather, it was “the English civil war without muskets”.

Yet, as passionate as the debate was, the two politicians were courteous to a fault, good-humoured and magnanimous in spirit. On his popular blog, Redwood remarked that the BBC would have done well to cover this debate rather than Sir John Major’s unopposed speech in Oxford on the same day. Well, I couldn’t possibly comment…

Certainly those of us who were there count ourselves lucky to have heard these two senior Tories, both seasoned political warriors, debate the most important issue of the age with rigour, candour and decency. These are among the qualities that the political class in this country will need in abundance if it is to prove equal to the challenge of Brexit.
Fighting Global Poverty

Sabina Alkire

Sabina Alkire came to Magdalen as a Rhodes Scholar in 1991 where she read for a DPhil in Economics for Development after an MPhil in Christian Political Ethics. She is the Director of the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative.

In June 2013, Magdalen was filled with an unlikely assembly. Those enjoying tea in the President’s Garden included Juan Manuel Santos, President of Colombia, Nobel Laureate Amartya Sen and ministers from around the world. What was unusual was not the calibre, seniority or diversity of participants, but rather their focus: acute poverty, in all its dimensions.

The meetings launched the Multidimensional Poverty Peer Network (MPPN) of senior leaders who seek to fight poverty in their respective countries. Based in a research centre in Oxford’s Department of International Development, the Oxford Poverty & Human Development Initiative, affectionately called OPHI (‘O-fee’), has developed a new and rigorous way to measure the interlocking aspects of poverty that many governments now use.

Since 2010 OPHI with the United Nations Development Programme has implemented and published a ‘global’ Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI). The global MPI, which covers over 100 developing countries, uses a comparable definition of poverty that includes malnutrition, child mortality, poor education, and lack of clean water, adequate sanitation, electricity, housing, assets, and clean energy. Each household is scored according to the deprivations that they experience. The MPI complements the $1.90/day measure of the World Bank, bringing into view other deprivations that deeply scar people’s lives.

A growing number of countries, including Mexico, Bhutan, Colombia, and most recently Pakistan, have developed national MPIs, which are used to develop national policy – to offer support to poor families, to allocate resources so they fit the shape of poverty, to monitor changes over time, and to evaluate success.

From its launch in Magdalen in 2013, the MPPN has grown to over 40 countries. It has had side events at the UN General Assembly, most recently with four heads of state and a message from the UN Secretary General. Its governments span left and right. Yet they come together to share insights and so encourage one another to advance strategic, energetic and precise policies to end the worst forms of poverty.
I learned from an early age that personal and professional integrity must go hand-in-hand with academic excellence. Both my high school education in Brazil and my undergraduate studies in Germany were sponsored by scholarships awarded on the dual basis of academic merit and ethical standing. Because my DPhil in Biomedical Engineering has only been made possible by the generous donation of alumni and Oxford University, I feel very strongly about giving back to its diverse, wide-reaching community.

Through my engineering degree I have developed innovative ways to solve and tackle problems. As a result, I was able to design and set up the Oxford Students Refugee Campaign: an initiative that seeks to coordinate the efforts of student, academic and administrative members of the University of Oxford to establish comprehensive financial and welfare support for students whose studies have been disrupted because of war and persecution.

The main idea of the campaign is to get every student at Oxford University to pledge a monthly £1 contribution for two years. This is a small payment individually, but if every student in Oxford chose to participate, the funds could provide as many as 20 fully funded scholarships for asylum-seeking and refugee students.

We’ve grown from a tiny campaign to a successful scholarship fund entirely through the support and generosity of Oxford students. We have the backing of 11,000 students, totalling a financial commitment of £240,000 over two years.

The University authorities have been very receptive to the ideas so far, and are willing to back the campaign administratively. They have brought our initiative into the Oxford Thinking Campaign as well as into the existing Give as You Earn schemes for faculty and staff.

The campaign has already identified eight eligible students holding offers for the coming academic year, who would immensely benefit from the scholarships. We have yet to receive much of our funding (due to the monthly contribution), so we are now reaching out to friends, alumni, the general public (through the media) and potential donors to raise enough funds to support all eight of them.

As a student myself, I believe that such a scheme will create a tremendous positive impact on these students’ lives. And with the added benefit of raising the morale of the Oxford student community at large: the Oxford Refugee Campaign stands as a flagship example of how much the student body can achieve when they are concerned about and committed to improving fellow students’ lives.

When the Dalai Lama, the world’s most famous refugee, visited the College last year to discuss the global response to the refugee crisis, he stated that only education, dialogue and personal contact could resolve conflicts in the long-term. We believe that a world-class institution such as the University of Oxford can and should abide by these criteria. I really hope that, through sustainable scholarship and welfare schemes, we can turn Oxford and other academic communities around the world into safe knowledge havens for students and academics fleeing conflict-torn societies.

More info: www.oxfordrefugeecampaign.org/
For donations: https://www.campaign.ox.ac.uk/student-support
I consider myself extremely fortunate to have been offered a visiting fellowship at Magdalen College. The experience gave me an opportunity to read, think, and associate with Fellows and students who helped sharpen my thinking. It was of great value to me to be able to share in community life after having spent so long in isolation.

During the long years of solitary confinement I felt as though I was learning nothing. This was far from the case. First, I learned to appreciate the value of silence and how to be still in the midst of disturbing circumstances. Second, I developed an ability to write; even though I had no pen or paper I wrote in my head. I also learned that suffering is always painful but very often something creative may be taken from the experience.

My experience in Beirut enabled me to convert sympathy for the vulnerable into empathy. It is good to be sympathetic but empathy enables one to actually feel what it is like to be on the margins of society. I jointly founded Hostage UK which gives support to hostage families and friends, and is now developing into an international organisation. Y Care which I helped to found before I was captured has gone from strength to strength, developing more programmes for young people across the world who otherwise would never have any opportunity to lead a fulfilling life. Shortly after I was released, I opened the first Emmaus Community for the homeless which has helped hundreds of formerly homeless people return to mainstream life.

As a very young man I had a desire to work for those who were poor and vulnerable. I was brought up within the Anglican Church but never felt that I had a vocation to the ordained ministry. I considered joining a religious community but decided against, and eventually joined an Anglican organisation, the Church Army. I worked as an advisor to the first African Archbishop of Uganda. My eyes were opened to some of the brutal political realities of this world when I experienced the Amin takeover of the country. Gradually I was drawn into a much larger world where I gained a great deal of experience by working in almost every major conflict situation around the globe.

At one time those engaged in humanitarian work were largely exempt from being captured or killed. Now, that exemption has virtually vanished. There are so many others in this world who have done far more than I ever have or shall. I don’t think that I have achieved all that much – perhaps my greatest achievement is having survived as long as I have. I hope that as I have travelled across life that I have become a little more understanding of the troubles of others and above all a little more compassionate, but I still have a long way to travel.

Terry Waite will be speaking at the Alumni Dinner on 17th September 2016.
How did you get interested in boxing and what qualities do you have that suit the sport?
I come from a background of women's lacrosse, and wanted to start boxing to improve my fitness and footwork for lacrosse. When I started boxing, I was still playing lacrosse with the England development squad, but gradually became hooked on boxing.

How unusual is it for women to box?
In Oxford, we have had women competing for over ten years, which is relatively long considering women's boxing has only been approved and regulated by a national governing body in the UK since 1999. Oxford can also boast to be the club with the most female fighters (aside from the armed services). Despite this, when I turned up three years ago we only had a handful of female boxers. Since then thanks to the tremendous effort of our coach Dave Mace, and a core group of girls, we have grown significantly, to over 30 women training regularly alongside the boys.

How important is the relationship between you and your coach?
It's a strange relationship. The film Million Dollar Baby hits the nail on the head. The bond between boxers who spar (fight train) together is strong, but the bond with your coach is stronger. When you get into the ring, the only person who can help you is your coach. For me, the magical moment was getting into the ring for my first fight, and despite a rowdy crowd of 400, all I could hear was my coach. Your coach feels like family, and with that comes the unique opportunity to get into monstrous rows, but also the knowledge that you will make up, whatever was said before.

Tell us about a typical training schedule in the run up to a fight
In the run up to a fight, all you can think about is that. Everything else just becomes routine, as you prime yourself – we train at least 12 times a week in the two months run up to a fight, with the added pressure of making weight. Early mornings, regular sparring and fitness: for me, this discipline is what makes the sport so unique. If you train for a fight, you have to put in 100%. If you don’t put in 100%, it’s likely you won’t make it into the ring on the night, as it could be dangerous.

What's the most exciting fight you have been in?
My first fight, in the Oxford Union debating chamber, is always going to be a favourite – getting into the ring for the first time, and a win in front of a home crowd, is something I'll never forget. I was terrified in the run up though, as all my coach had told me was my opponent was “an army girl”.

Tell us about becoming President of the Club, organising the Varsity matches and the support that OUABC gives to disadvantaged young people who are interested in boxing.
As the first female President of OUABC and previously Women’s Captain, I have been able to change the Women’s Blues status to make it comparable to the Men’s Blues status, and also organised the first Women’s Team Varsity Match with Cambridge, which will now be an annual fixture. Being awarded my Blue in that match, in front of family, friends and Old Blues (making up a crowd of 700) made this bout both a personal and team achievement.

We organise the Town vs Gown match (Oxford Union, 400 spectators) and the Varsity Match (Oxford Town Hall, 700 spectators) ourselves, which is a pretty big undertaking. This year we are hoping to find sponsorship, so that we can get event planners to help organise these events.

Beyond organising our own shows, we also have a large focus on outreach work. Members of the Club run workshops with local schools, and also sponsor young boxers from disadvantaged backgrounds. The Magdalen College Trust’s support has been integral in ensuring we can commit to supporting these young boxers – two of whom have since started training with Team GB and England, and have been able to gain Sport England funding. We support boxing at the grassroots level, a bottom-up approach, to complement the Amateur Boxing Association’s top-down approach.

What do your friends and family think about you boxing? Do they worry about you getting injured?
Boxing gets a bit of a mixed response. My mother’s been to almost every bout, and even gets up at 6am to do my hair for the fight (it’s got to be plaited tightly to make sure it doesn’t come out – hair-plaiting is a bit of a pre-fight ritual). Some of my friends have also travelled to watch me compete (thank you Millie!). Equally, my siblings seem surprisingly unbothered towards my endeavours, while my father definitely falls on the disapproving side, whilst still being supportive.

Do you plan to continue with boxing post-university?
I think it’s unlikely I would have the time to commit to competing after university, as I study food security, and would ideally like to get involved in aid work. I think boxing will always be part of my life though, and I’m training as an assistant coach (there is a lack of female coaches), so I am sure I’ll still be part of the boxing family even after I get my DPhil.
How did you end up at Magdalen?
I grew up on Osney Island. When I left school I wanted to join the Navy, but the friend I was signing up with was too young, so we had to wait a year. In the meantime, mum forced me out of the house to get a job, and I came to Magdalen in October 1970 as a trainee, working for six months in each department. I enjoyed the SCR the most and I was particularly interested in wine. I served under two Butlers before taking over as SCR Butler myself in 1981.

What has changed in College since you’ve been here?
When I first started, the College seemed to have an unlimited budget for parties and dinners, and it was exciting to be here during that time. A seriously good bottle of wine would cost £1, and the Balls were really lavish – you wouldn’t believe the amount of free food and drink. Over the years, the cost of food and wine has increased, so we’ve had to cut back.

What keeps your job interesting?
Wine is the thing that keeps me interested most of all – each year is different, and being at Magdalen for such a long time means that I have been able to follow particular wines over the years to see how they change. You need years of experience in wine to be able to predict which wines might be good in the future.

How are the wines chosen?
We use several wine merchants, and taste all our wines six or seven months after it has been made and casked, before it gets too acidic. We then predict what might happen to the wine, and look at whether the prices are right for selling to Fellows and students. I then look after the wine from the moment it is delivered to College, to the moment when it is drunk.

How do you feel when a stock of a particular wine is finished?
There’s always a new wine that is ready to take over once one stock is finished, but there is a 1975 Claret that has matured really interestingly in our cellars – we almost binned it all at one point, but a few years later it tasted great again. We only have one bottle left now, which we will open for my retirement!

Have you met any particularly interesting people in your time here?
We’ve had so many famous people in College over the years. I always remember the Sultan of Brunei visiting when his son was coming up to College. When he walked down the line of tutors waiting to meet him, he gave each one a little bag. It turned out each bag contained a Rolex watch! I could have done with one of them.

What hobbies do you have outside work?
The river was at the end of our garden when I was a boy, and I got interested in fishing. I now do a lot of salmon fishing, in the River Severn, or the Wye Valley, or other nice parts of the countryside. At one point I was catching 50 or so a year, and I sold them to the College for use in the kitchens. The biggest salmon I’ve ever caught was 27lb.

What’s your favourite part of College?
I love walking up to the New Building from Cloisters – I’ve done that walk to the cellars so many times, but it’s always beautiful.
The Royal Opening of the Longwall Library

Prince William, the Duke of Cambridge, visited Magdalen on Wednesday 11th May 2016 to formally open the Longwall Library. A large gathering of students, Fellows and staff were present to greet the Duke. He talked to benefactors and students in the Library and unveiled a stone inscription after a speech by the President.

The Duke’s great-great-uncle, The Prince of Wales (later Edward VIII), opened the New Library in 1932 when it was converted from the original Magdalen College School building. The College is honoured to have received a second royal visit to celebrate the redevelopment and extension of John Buckler’s original building.

Christine Ferdinand, Fellow Librarian:

It is not surprising that the Duke’s visit to Magdalen went well: hours of planning went into it on the College side, especially on the part of the Home Bursar, who is not only experienced in this sort of thing, but actually seemed to enjoy these preliminaries. Probably more importantly, the Duke arrived on time – by train and car.

He was duly greeted by the President and Lady Clary as well as other Oxford dignitaries, before being escorted to the Library. William’s first words to me, “I like your shoes”, set the tone and I was very happy to show him the Longwall Library.

He had something apt to say to everyone else he met too. He commented to the librarians that the Longwall Library must work far better than “The Tent”; he asked others about the pronunciation of Magdalen and, while he admitted that he hadn’t spent much time in the St Andrews University library, he tactfully suggested that he might have done better if he’d had access to a library such as Magdalen’s. He seemed most comfortable with the students he met in the Library, joking with them and commiserating with them about upcoming exams.

At the end, he pulled the cord to the curtain covering the dedication carved by Alec Poever into the stone near the entrance, and the curtain fell away exactly as planned. On his way to his next royal opening in Oxford, he still took the time to chat with a group of Magdalen scouts about dealing with messy student rooms. Charming is a word overused when it comes to describing princes, but it can appropriately be applied to this one. He couldn’t have been more so.
I’m a weathered veteran of four telethon campaigns during my time at the College. Fundraising efforts have enabled me to speak to people from all walks of life. It’s great to hear how Magdalen has remained the same (or, shock horror, changed!) over time. Few jobs facilitate such high-profile career advice. I’ve taken friendly encouragement or inspiration from Nobel Prize winners, politicians, judges and journalists, as well as marine biologists, top academics, documentary makers and authors. It’s often light-hearted, but each conversation reminds me that Magdalen is just the beginning, rather than the culmination, of my education. There are still many types of people I’ve never spoken to. I haven’t come across a professional footballer (nor, judging by the present College team, is that likely to change any time soon). Nor have I personally spoken to a Magdalen Labour MP (they sadly seem rarer than their blue counterparts). Until May 2016, I’d also not spoken to a member of the Royal Family.

This changed when Prince William came to open the library that we telethon students had been campaigning for tirelessly. HRH was on a strict schedule, so it would be a brief encounter. A group of us plucked books off the shelves in the Huscher reading room as we waited for his arrival – our instructions were something along the lines of ‘look busy’. We knew he was on his way, first from the chatter of the crowds outside, second from the stampede up the tower stairs caused by the excited press and dignitaries following the Prince around. Emma Simpson of the Development Office introduced the Prince to us. He shook our hands, and was friendly, personable, and a bit embarrassed to be asking us about what we studied (he wasn’t a great student, he later admitted). He sharply picked up on our eclectic readings – what exactly had compelled me to read about medieval urban infrastructure, he wondered with a wry smile – and asked further questions about our uses of the library, and our experiences at Magdalen.

Time was up; he was ushered away, and the tabloid press swarmed to ask us if he had said anything about Prince George, or Kate, or his ascension to the throne. Oddly enough, he didn’t divulge such opinions in our meeting! The circus moved on. I was left with the impression that he might have been born into a life of entitled privilege, but underneath it all was a funny man who took his public service seriously. With my insights from the telethon, I’m glad I don’t and won’t have his job, and that there are many other routes for me when I leave!

Honours for President and Alumni

The President, Professor Sir David Clary, was knighted in the 2016 Queen’s birthday honours for services to international science.

The citation for the Knighthood emphasises Sir David’s leadership of Magdalen College, his research on the quantum theory of chemical reactions, and his contributions as the first Chief Scientific Adviser to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

Five Magdalen alumni were also honoured this year:

Paul Johnson (1946), journalist, historian and author
Was made Commander of the Order of the British Empire (CBE) for services to Literature

John Micklethwait (1981), Editor-in-Chief, Bloomberg; formerly Editor-in-Chief, the Economist
Was made Commander of the Order of the British Empire (CBE) for services to Journalism and Economics

Simon Robey (1980), Chair, Royal Opera House and Aldeburgh Music
Was made Knight Bachelor for services to Music

Larry Siedentop (1960), political philosopher, Emeritus Fellow, Keble College, University of Oxford
Was made Knight Bachelor for services to Political Science

Mr Peter West (1979), Commercial Manager, Great Western Franchise, Department for Transport
Was made an Officer of the Order of the British Empire (OBE) for services to the Rail Industry
It has been another great year for alumni events around the world, providing a wide variety of social, business and academic opportunities for you to enjoy, and building up the Magdalen community of which you are all part. For forthcoming events please see the back cover and www.magd.ox.ac.uk/alumni-friends/events

Longwall Library Opening
Over 400 people attended the opening ceremony of the Longwall Library earlier this month for donors to the project to see the new Library for themselves. Teas on the lawn and music in Chapel preceded the official opening by the Vice-Chancellor of the University, Professor Louise Richardson.

Brexit Debate
In May the Auditorium was sold out for a debate on the then impending EU Referendum, between John Redwood MP (1968) and former Attorney General Dominic Grieve MP (1975) (see page 10).

Oscar Wilde
Benefactors’ Gaudy guests were treated to an afternoon of talks on one of Magdalen’s best-known members, Oscar Wilde, including one from his grandson Merlin Holland (1964), to tie in with the current Library exhibition which will be open at the Alumni Dinner in September.

US events
Dinners were held in New York, Washington DC, Los Angeles and San Francisco, including topical speeches by political journalist George Will (1962) and John Micklethwait (1981), Editor-in-Chief of Bloomberg News.
Events

Academic talks
Fellow in History Nick Stargardt took his talk on *The German War* to alumni in London and New York, while Fellow in English Robert Douglas-Fairhurst spoke about his book *The Story of Alice: Lewis Carroll and The Secret History of Wonderland*.

University Challenge: Magdalen vs Magdalen
The student team who reached the 2015 series final of the celebrated TV quiz took on the team who won the 2015 alumni competition captained by Louis Theroux (1988), in front of a packed Auditorium of students and alumni. The event was filmed and can be found on the alumni pages of the website for those wishing to play along.

London Drinks Reception
A record 600 alumni signed up to attend the annual London Drinks Reception at Porchester Hall, generously hosted by Luke Johnson (1980), with matriculation years present ranging from 1946 to 2013.

Business Breakfasts
Our Business Breakfast series continued with talks from David Abraham (1981), Chief Executive of Channel 4 at the television company’s iconic headquarters, and Peter Norris (1973), Chairman of Richard Branson’s Virgin Group.

If you would like to find out more about how you can help bring the Magdalen community together through an event, contact Anna Norman on alumni.office@magd.ox.ac.uk
Any readers fortunate enough to have scored a ticket for this year’s Commem Ball may have seen the message from the Ball Committee Chair inside their programme. “Using the College Archives,” it read, “we researched elements of Magdalen Balls from the 1920s to inspire the evening; this programme itself is modelled after a dance card given out at the 1927 Ball.”

The week after the Ball, a member of the organising committee kindly delivered to me some of the material produced for the event, including the programme. Before I catalogue and file them (perhaps to be produced another ninety-odd years hence as inspiration for another Ball?) I thought I would take the chance to compare them side by side.

The design of the 2016 programme follows that of the 1927 dance card pretty closely, though the former is a little larger. I was initially unsure of the function of the ribbon attached to the dance card, and had speculated that it might enable a guest to dangle it from their fingers or wrist in a louche fashion. Perhaps so; but further research indicated a more pragmatic purpose. In the papers of Sir Douglas Dodds-Parker, who came up to Magdalen in 1927 and so may even have attended that year’s Ball, I found a dance card from the Trinity Commem Ball of 1930, which still had attached to the end of its ribbon a tiny pencil for – but of course – “marking one’s card”.

The scribbled notes on this card offer a fleeting but wonderfully intimate glimpse of a long-lost social life. We can see, for example, that Dodds-Parker danced a great deal that night, and in particular with someone called Sheila, which he was very pleased about: “Hooray!” reads a note next to a string of dances blocked out in her name.

Both cards feature maps, from which it is clear to see how much the scale of these events has increased over the past century. Whereas our guests in 1927 were funnelled smartly through the Cloisters and the whole show seems to have taken place on the New Building lawns, revellers in 2016 had the run of the College, with food, drink and entertainments scattered through every quad from Longwall to the river.

One may also notice that the Ball Committee of 2016 did not feel it necessary, as their more conservative predecessors clearly did, to set aside an area of the Cloisters for chaperones.

In keeping with the theme, the musical line-up for this year’s Ball featured several jazz acts, though what 1927 would have made of the likes of DJ act Chase & Status – rocking the midnight-to-one slot this year – is anybody’s guess. Still, one might hope that the flappers of yesteryear would have approved.

As luck would have it, the dinner menu from the 1927 Ball also found its way into the archives, allowing us to compare gastronomic arrangements across the century. While the College clearly provided a princely spread in both cases, our Jazz Age caterers sadly could not match this year’s globetrotting choice of pulled pork, pasta, falafel and churros: in 1927 the College’s kitchens remained within the well-trodden path of classic French cookery. Or at least, pseudo-French cookery – the recipe for “rognons grillé Heebie-Jeebie” appears to have been omitted from the works of the great Escoffier.
We hope that all of our guests enjoyed the evening as much as we did!
Forthcoming events

2016
Saturday 17th September
Alumni Dinner in College

Saturday 17th September
1965 and 1966 50th Anniversary Reunion

Saturday 24th September
1989 – 1991 Year Gaudy

Thursday 6th October
Women’s Dinner at the House of Lords

Wednesday 19th October
London Drinks Reception

Saturday 22nd October
Brian Bellhouse 80th Birthday Dinner

Thursday 10th November
Business Breakfast with Sebastian James, CEO of Dixons Carphone

Thursday 17th November
New York Reception

Saturday 3rd and Sunday 4th December
Carols by Candlelight

2017
Friday 3rd February
Hacks’ Dinner at the Garrick Club

Saturday 11th February
Scholarships and Bursaries Lunch

Thursday 23rd March
Hong Kong Event

Friday 24th March
Singapore Event

Saturday 25th March
1992 – 1994 Year Gaudy

Wednesday 5th April
New York Dinner

Saturday 6th May
Benefactors’ Gaudy

Saturday 27th May
Fastolf Lunch

Further alumni events are organised throughout the year, with details at www.magd.ox.ac.uk/alumni-friends/events.