Magdalen & Education
How alumni are transforming children’s lives across the world

Let Girls Learn: the White House global education project
Memories of Dudley Moore
Oscar Wilde: From Incarceration to Liberation
The Magdalen alumni community is a truly global and diverse community of over 8,000 alumni and friends. You will find Magdalen alumni in every corner of the world, and in a wide variety of fields, from law and politics, to charities and education, and from those working in the creative industries to our many entrepreneurs. You are a member of Magdalen for life and we hope that this valuable network can continue to be relevant and beneficial to you at every stage.

The continued involvement of alumni enriches the College hugely; whether as a host or a guest speaker at an alumni event, a member of a College committee, helping current students and alumni with their careers or simply being an ambassador for Magdalen in the world, alumni can contribute to the College at every level.

Our aim is to offer you a wide variety of relevant and interesting events throughout the year to enable you to benefit from the Magdalen network, from business discussions with industry leaders and academic talks, to social reunions and exclusive tours. Our communications aim to keep you up to date with the great things going on in College and among our alumni and to highlight the impact Magdalen has in the world.

Alumni and friends can visit the College with a small number of guests at no charge, so do come back and see us whenever you can. We are always delighted to hear how we can help you, and we welcome feedback, suggestions and contributions from our community. We can be contacted at: alumni.office@magd.ox.ac.uk or on +44 (0)1865 610342.

I hope that you enjoy this edition of Floreat Magdalena and we look forward to seeing you soon.

Best wishes,

Anna Norman
Head of Alumni Engagement
It has been another tremendous year at Magdalen. Our new Longwall Library is in high demand from our students, and has won numerous architectural awards. If you haven’t yet made a visit to see it, I urge you to do so.

Our academic community continues to thrive with our Fellows achieving many honours and prizes throughout the year, including a Lasker award for Professor Sir Peter Ratcliffe, for his research on understanding how cells sense and signal low oxygen levels, an OBE for Professor Alison Etheridge for services to science, and Professor Sir David Weatherall was appointed Knight Grand Cross for services to medicine.

I am delighted that this issue of Floreat Magdalen demonstrates how many of our alumni have been inspired to further the cause of education, enabling children around the world to fulfil their potential. I hope you will share the pride we feel in members of the Magdalen community making a positive impact in the world. I look forward to seeing you back at College or at an alumni event near you soon.

Floreat Magdalen!

The President
Professor Sir David Clary, FRS
Krishanti Vignarajah’s parents fled their home in Sri Lanka when she was a baby. Thousands of people were killed, and children were being forced to become soldiers as the country descended into a brutal civil war. Her mother and father were both teachers, and came to America with $200 in their pockets and a true belief in the power of education and the opportunities it provides. ‘For me, like for so many women and girls around the world, education has been the springboard, the eye-opening, world-expanding fairy-dust that gave me a chance to realise my potential.’

As the former Director of Policy for the First Lady Michelle Obama, Vignarajah helped the Obama administration launch the Let Girls Learn initiative in 2015 to improve adolescent girls’ education around the world. In response to her own fantastic educational opportunities she felt a ‘personal responsibility to help girls around the world to fulfil their potential’.

To launch the initiative they partnered with some of the world’s largest companies, organisations, and international governments to form a global coalition committing money, resources, and expertise to the cause. They also engaged organisations on the ground to work directly with local communities to identify the key barriers to girls’ education, and to empower them to implement tailored solutions.

It is estimated that there are 62 million girls around the world who are not in education. Around a third of girls in Sub-Saharan Africa, around half of girls in South East Asia and 95% of girls in Somalia are not currently enrolled in secondary education. ‘All of this is preventable,’ says Vignarajah. ‘The barriers that keep girls out of school are both big and small, pervasive and persistent. Everything from poverty - where parents can’t pay small school fees - to the fact that some girls are forced into early child marriages, to the fact that some schools don’t have girls’ bathrooms.’

Investing in girls’ education is also an investment in the future. It is an investment in their families,

Let Girls Learn

Krishanti Vignarajah (2002) was a Marshall Scholar at Magdalen where she gained an M.Phil. in International Relations. After Oxford she returned to Yale to study Law. Krishanti is the former Policy Director to the First Lady Michelle Obama where she led Let Girls Learn, an initiative launched by the Obama administration to support girls’ education around the world. She is currently the founder and CEO of Generation Impact, which helps organisations achieve sustainable social impact.
their communities, countries and ultimately the economy. ‘Which is why,’ says Vignarajah, ‘economists like Larry Summers have concluded that girls’ education is the single highest return on investment that we can make in the developing world’, and for each additional year a girl stays in secondary education, her earning potential can increase by up to 25%.

The Let Girls Learn programme has already made a huge impact around the world, and plans are in place for its important work to continue under the new administration. For Vignarajah, the project has a deeper significance, coming to the US at such a young age: ‘Here I could be anything I wanted. This made the Let Girls Learn campaign very personal for me. It helped me have the empathy and determination to be a champion of women’s education.’

‘For me, like for so many women and girls around the world, education has been the springboard, the eye-opening, world-expanding fairy-dust that gave me a chance to realise my potential.’
The Tutor Trust

Nick Bent (1990) read Jurisprudence at Magdalen, followed by a Master’s in Public Policy at Harvard’s Kennedy School of Government. He spent most of his career in business as a consultant on environmental issues and has also run a think tank and served as a Special Adviser to the UK Government. He is co-founder and CEO of The Tutor Trust.

“You’re absolutely right...no, a baseball cap is not part of our tutor dress code...they do look even worse backwards, yes. It won’t happen again.” Thus ended a rather testy phone call between one of my staff and a Headteacher in Manchester about one of our tutors. Whose crazy idea was it to launch a charity using undergraduates as paid tutors in local state schools? We all know how reliable and well dressed undergraduates are.

The bad news on that occasion was that it had been my idea, so I also had to apologise to the irate Head. The good news is that most of the 750 tutors we now have across Greater Manchester and Leeds are reliable, professional and smart in every sense of the word - good role models as well as great tutors, and warmly welcomed by over-stretched teachers.

In fact, most current undergraduates seem a lot more mature than in my day. But perhaps that was just us Magdalen lawyers?

As any Magdalen alumnus knows, the value of one-to-one or small group tuition with a subject expert is immense, and arguably the best form of pedagogy that exists. For school-age learners, too, there is a stack of research evidence that a good tutor can make a big difference, both to pupils' subject mastery and their self-confidence. Plus, middle class parents are savvy consumers and spend more than two billion pounds each year on private tutors. Everybody knows that tuition works.

So, The Tutor Trust has a simple but radical aim: to democratise tuition. We believe that every kid who needs some extra academic support should have a brilliant tutor. We also recognise that even the most talented teachers don’t have enough time to give personalised additional support to all the pupils who need...
it. Our tutors are an extra resource to help teachers get the best out of every pupil.

Many of the pupils we support are on Free School Meals – the Government’s least bad definition of deprivation. Over 20% of our tuition across Greater Manchester is with Looked After Children – children in the care system who have had a particularly tough start in life and who deserve every fresh opportunity to succeed they can get.

First and foremost, it’s about fairness; the moral imperative to give every young person the best possible start in life and the chance to fulfil their potential. Secondly, there is an economic argument, and one that is more pressing as we head, seemingly inexorably, for Brexit; we need to harness all the talents of all our young people to secure a prosperous future for Britain in an intensely competitive world.

The Tutor Trust got its initial backing from the Education Endowment Foundation and my co-founder, Abigail Shapiro, and I registered the charity in 2011. Since then, what began as a small experiment in Manchester with Abigail and me volunteering our time has grown into a significant social enterprise. We have raised well over £1m in donations and schools have paid over £1.5m for our services. We have eleven staff and our tutors have delivered nearly 60,000 hours of tuition at over 200 primary and secondary schools. I’m now the full-time CEO and we’re actively talking to Liverpool, Bradford and Sheffield about launching The Tutor Trust in those cities.

Running a charity was never part of my career plan. After fifteen years in London, my move back home to Manchester was all about trying to get elected to Parliament (that’s another, less happy story). All my adult life I had been closely involved in education and youth work charities as a volunteer and trustee, but until I had the idea for The Tutor Trust it had never occurred to me that I might work for a charity. Now, I plan to spend the rest of my career in education and I hope to lead The Tutor Trust to become an invaluable vehicle for reducing education inequality in every major city in Britain.

There have been some brilliant moments along the way: the very first school signing up to work with us; our first tutee – from a Somali refugee family in Moss Side – who became a tutor; winning the prize for ‘Best New Charity in Britain’ at the Charity Times Awards; watching so many of our tutors choosing to become teachers when they graduate.

Today, school leaders are more open to new ideas than ever before and the charity world offers hugely rewarding opportunities to anybody with vision, energy and a strong sense of moral purpose to keep you going through the tough times. I can’t wait for the day when one of our tutees wins a place at Magdalen.

‘First and foremost, it’s about fairness; the moral imperative to give every young person the best possible start in life and the chance to fulfil their potential.’
The Ideas Partnership

Elizabeth Gowing (1991) read English at Magdalen before taking her PGCE at the Institute of Education in London. She worked in primary schools in Islington and Hackney, and was a policy advisor at the General Teaching Council before moving to Kosovo in 2006. A chance encounter with children from minority communities led her to create a volunteer education programme which is now an award-winning charity.

At the check-in desk for the flight to Prishtina I bet that mine is the only bag containing seventeen pairs of children’s shoes, thirty bars of handmade olive oil soap and a three-times-life-size model of a breast. I have become used to muling strange cargo across Europe in the last eight years of volunteering with The Ideas Partnership, the charity I co-founded along with Rob Wilton, my partner whom I met when we were both in our first year at Oxford. There was a time even after we moved to the Balkans with Rob’s job, that my luggage on flights from Heathrow contained the usual expat comfort food. But once I had started work with the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian minority communities and seen the need in these families of rubbish-pickers, I found priorities for my luggage space that were even more compelling than salt-and-vinegar crisps.

It started with shoes - when I’d met two young brothers who, like 96% of their community, were out of education but who told me that they’d happily attend school if only they had shoes. My experiences working as a deputy head in a Hackney primary school came back to me and I was unattractively sceptical about the truth of what they said. To put them to the test I bought them each a pair of shoes, telling them I’d be back in a fortnight to check that they really had registered for school. That was in 2010 and they have been in school ever since.

Buoyed up by the sense that solving the chronic education problem in this vulnerable Kosovo community might be as easy as a rucksack full of second-hand footwear, I got friends in Britain collecting shoes through their children’s schools, and we soon had a small but slick operation passing on pairs of Clarks that literally walked children in Kosovo into education. But when we offered them to children over nine years old we discovered that it wasn’t as easy as that. A bizarre by-law was invoked, despite what Kosovo’s constitution guaranteed on education for all, and we were told that if children were over nine and hadn’t yet registered for school then they could not be accepted - unless they could pass a test. And how to

‘As every teacher will tell you, the most powerful learning happens when you seize an opportunity for something meaningful even if it wasn’t in the curriculum.’
pass the test if you’d not been in school? It was like having to prove that you were healthy in order to get into hospital.

So with a fundraising party to pay the rent for a small teaching space, and with some friends volunteering with me, we started classes open every morning to children who were out of school. We spent the afternoons lobbying to try to change the policy that was keeping kids out of education. From 23 children on our first day of teaching our classes grew to 50 children by the end of the first week and soon we had to bring in more volunteers, and curtains from home to spread on the concrete floor so the children had somewhere to sit. It was the dirtiest classroom and the most exhilarating teaching of my career. Everyone – children and adults – were there only because they wanted to be.

It took six months but we did eventually get 62 children admitted to school. But then we turned to trying to substitute the income they had brought to their families from their rubbish-picking and begging. We knew that unless this economic support was in place then in the hard, cold days of a Balkan winter - when firewood and food become matters of life and death - the children would drop out of school. That’s where the olive oil soap came in, with the small – and now medium-sized – social enterprise I own where 37 women are employed making soap or other handcrafts like lavender bags, tote bags and silver filigree greetings cards. The women are employed on condition that their children go to school.

As I got to know the reality of their lives I realised there were other ways we needed to support these families and that a good start in life began earlier than school. Child mortality is frighteningly high (in this community 41 children die out of every 1000 live births) so we employed a midwife to offer antenatal support including ensuring that mothers understand the benefits of breastfeeding.

Hence the three-times-life-size model breast in my luggage, as I struggled to explain to the customs official on arrival in Kosovo. I would have struggled to explain the luggage even to my younger self – this wasn’t my plan when I did my PGCE.

As every teacher will tell you, the most powerful learning happens when you seize an opportunity for something meaningful even if it wasn’t in the curriculum. That’s how lives get changed, and mine certainly has.

For more information about The Ideas Partnership, visit: theideaspartnership.org

Elizabeth’s book, The Rubbish-Picker’s Wife, came out in 2015 and tells the story about how friendship with one family has led to community transformation.
It’s not all change, though, and what I’d like to share with you here is something that really hasn’t changed.

In my years as a teacher and a school leader I have had the pleasure of working in a variety of state schools in a number of locations in England and London. I am very proud to have studied at Magdalen for three years as an undergraduate, and an additional year during my PGCE. Oxford and specifically Magdalen have given me so much and have helped shape me into the person, teacher and school leader that I am today.

But across my whole career, the response of my students when they find out that I studied at Oxford has remained the same.

The run up to the conversation and its finer points may vary but there will always be a reoccurring refrain: ‘So, what are you doing here, Miss?’

Students are barometers of the truth – you will often find the truth being spoken from teenagers and children in a refreshing way not normally seen from adults; ‘out of the mouths of babes do we learn’.

But every time I hear the comment it saddens me greatly. It represents the undertone that still exists of ‘them and us’. You went there – why would you care about us? There’s work being done to counter this – by universities and schools. But there is still a huge amount to do. It needs to become normal to have teachers from Oxford and Cambridge in the classroom and in school leadership. Top graduates who stay and commit to schools and the profession are the only way that things will truly change.

There are rules, both written and unwritten, that exist in every school. Never take someone else’s mug from the staffroom. Priority One in any new school environment is to locate the toilet and the photocopier. Students will always push the boundaries (a key part of their growing up and how boring would it be if they didn’t?!). And managing and responding to change is a fundamental part of working in education.

I look back to my PGCE year, and every year since then it feels like we have always been planning for, evaluating, and responding to change. The reality is that whilst education is part of the political repertoire it will always be a priority for political initiatives and innovations. Dealing with change and responding to change whilst putting the needs of our students and staff at the core of decisions and actions are at the heart of strong school leadership.

I always try to spend some time deconstructing the comment with the student: helping them to think about why they said it, and perhaps more importantly why they felt it.

For what it’s worth, my response is always the same: I’m here because I want to be here. I can’t imagining a more satisfying role than helping young people to grow and find their passions, and interests. Guiding young people with their lives in front of them and bright futures ahead. Helping them to find their love of learning, nurturing and supporting their curiosity.

Sophie Welch (2000) read Modern History and Politics at Magdalen before taking her PGCE at Magdalen in 2003. She is an Associate Headteacher in a London school and is a trained Ofsted Inspector. She has worked in state education since 2004, first as a history teacher and then as an Assistant Headteacher and Deputy Headteacher.

‘My dream is that I never get asked that question again.’
What made you decide to become a teacher?
I always loved my time at school, but I was never sure of what I wanted to do after university. Whilst at Magdalen I had some wonderful tutors, such as Nick Stargardt and Matt Houlbrook, who showed me how rewarding it can be to work with young people and how to make the past come to life. I really enjoy feeling part of a community and so working in education seemed like an excellent way to do that.

Why did you choose to do Teach First?
Teach First is an organisation which aims to address educational inequality by getting top graduates to work in schools in low-income communities for a minimum of two years. I applied to Teach First because I was blown away by the idea and it also offers you the flexibility and support to pursue another career after the two years.

What is the best thing about being a teacher?
I laugh every single day! The students can be challenging, but they really make me smile. It’s great as each day is different and there are so many skills involved in being a good teacher: creativity, data analysis, teamwork, public speaking and many more. I like variety at work and teaching certainly provides that.

What are the more challenging aspects of teaching?
We’ve had a lot of curriculum changes recently and there are massive pressures on school budgets all across the country. This can affect staff and student morale, but if we can get more talented people into the profession, then hopefully we can come up with exciting new strategies for positive change.

What advice would you give to undergraduates thinking about teaching as a career?
Try to get into some schools and see what it feels like to be back in a classroom: primary and secondary. Also have a look at the different schemes out there such as Teach First or School Direct, and read through the careers brochures the university sends out - that’s how I first found out about Teach First. It can be a really challenging profession, but it is incredibly rewarding and I couldn’t imagine doing anything else.

‘It can be a really challenging profession, but it is incredibly rewarding and I couldn’t imagine doing anything else.’

For more information about Teach First, visit: teachfirst.org.uk
All of the manuscripts and early printed books in Magdalen’s Old Library have a story to tell: where and why they were made, who owned them previously, how they travelled through time and space to arrive on the shelves of our beautiful College. None, however, are perhaps more beautiful and more enigmatic than Cardinal Wolsey’s Gospel Lectionary (MS Lat 223). The Library and Archives team are preparing to embark on a phase of digitisation which will bring Magdalen’s collections to much wider audiences than previously possible, and as a first step into the digital world I wanted us to make a splash instead of a tentative ripple. So, when I began to survey the collections for initial projects, the Wolsey Lectionary was a glaringly obvious candidate.

The Wolsey Gospel Lectionary here at Magdalen is actually one of a pair produced for Cardinal Thomas Wolsey just a few years before his fall from grace and his rather early death. The other book, an Epistle Lectionary, now resides just a few hundred metres down High Street on the shelves of the library of Christ Church. Together, they lavish form all the readings necessary for worship on major feast days, and were likely produced for Wolsey for one of his private chapels.

We know roughly when both books were produced, the Christ Church manuscript has the date ‘1529’ in one of its borders, however scholarship has been trying to tease out for more than 30 years more of the story that these two manuscripts hint at. Did Wolsey actually see these books finished before his fall in 1529? Where were they actually intended to be used as service books? We know how they made their way into the Royal Library (via Henry VIII’s stripping of Wolsey’s property before his fall in 1529), but how did they get out of the Royal Library? At what point did they get split up? Why did Magdalen end up with one manuscript and Christ Church the other?

We now know the answers to some of these questions; however scholars are still debating and scratching their heads over several of the above. So, late into Michaelmas Term I began...
working with Dr Cristina Neagu at Christ Church library to devise a web resource that would reunite these two manuscripts in a digital environment permanently, allowing viewers to see these two books side-by-side as they were originally intended to be. However, as web technology has made leaps and bounds in the past few years in making extremely high-resolution images easily accessible, we knew that we wanted to provide the ability to interrogate these manuscripts at far beyond standard magnification.

So, during the winter months, Dr Neagu and I schemed to get both of these manuscripts photographed and loaded onto the new Digital Bodleian website, to build a mini-website that would stand alone from our institutional websites, and to make the home page and online resource as snappy and easily-accessible to generalist and specialist users alike. The resulting website, www.wolseymanuscripts.ac.uk, was officially launched on 11 May 2017, the site and the images being made free to all.

The website has now been live for over a month and we have been busy adding current and past research articles to the site and fine-tuning the home page. In the coming months we will continue to add further research to the site and consider expanding the scope to other Wolsey-commissioned manuscripts, making this jointly-produced site the hub for Wolsey-centred research. The demand to make possible wider and more in-depth research across a whole range of historic manuscripts is enormous and I am keen that Magdalen remains at the fore of developments in Oxbridge colleges to do more to enable it.

The potential scope for new discoveries as materials of this sort are digitised, and studied in new ways, is perhaps as yet unquantifiable.
We asked contemporaries of Dudley Moore (1954) to send us their recollections of his time at Magdalen and we were inundated with replies.

Here are some of the best...

I well remember Dudley Moore. He was an amusing man, but his penchant for starting to play some Bach on the piano and then slipping to boogie-woogie used to cause me some pain. Even in those days he had us in fits – and he did a marvellous imitation of Danny Kaye.

Richard Havery (1954)

I do remember Dudley Moore arriving as an organ scholar. I had rooms in Longwall facing the Chapel and it was a delight to hear Dudley practising – especially when he started syncopating the psalms and playfully introducing a slight boogie-woogie rhythm into the hymns. Initially he was incredibly shy, but as his reputation as a mime artist to entertain groups of friends spread, his popularity escalated. I particularly recall his priceless act as a man on a train desperate to have a pee but finding the loo occupied. The door only opened just as the train stopped in a station. Then he introduced a solo cabaret act playing a double-bass – he tentatively agreed to perform at my 21st birthday party down in Hampshire in May 1958, but was let down by the person who was supposed to give him a lift. It is one of greatest regrets of my life.

Miles Macnair (1957)

I knew Dudley Moore well. During that time I participated in the musical events of the College by singing in the student choir. As we prepared the Hall for a concert Dudley would sit at the piano entertaining us while we worked moving the tables and seats. He was a friendly companion full of fun. Afterwards, watching him in a film at the cinema, I saw that he wasn’t really acting at all; he was just being himself on screen.

Robert Exell (1954)

I have a vivid memory from 1955. One hot June Sunday morning an Etonian undergraduate friend gave a large pre-lunch drinks party, I think in the Oscar Wilde Room. Dudley wore the one dark suit that he possessed. The only drink, alcoholic or otherwise, served at the party was Pimms No.1, which had never previously made Dudley’s acquaintance or vice versa. With growing respect, I watched Dudley rapidly consume some six glasses. At that stage he could still walk, and he left the party. It was from a mutual friend that I learned what happened next – I wish I had seen it for myself. Dudley went down to the river and took out a punt – which I am sure he had never done before. The inevitable sequel was not long delayed. As the drenched Dudley somehow clambered back onto the bank and tried to shake off the water, an American tourist, complete with camera, sought to ensure that the scene would be recorded for American posterity: “Gee, that was swell!”, he called out, “do it again, wud ya! I want you in my album for the folks back home.” And even though he could not swim, Dudley jumped back into the river - five more times - in order to ensure that the American’s album would be complete for the folks back home. I never saw Dudley’s dark suit again.

Michael Sayers (1954)

One very vivid memory of him: playing the piano by a screen showing the silent film Broken Blossoms (starring Lilian Gish). The film was shown in a lecture theatre, his playing made the film. Never to be forgotten.

Richard Coleman (1956)

Dudley was not tall and indeed his stature was much the same as mine. I used to lend him my DJ, as he hadn’t got one and needed...
one from time to time. This meant that for those musical events in which I was also taking part, an alternative had to be found. The very last thing I did when I went down was to retrieve my DJ which spent more time in his wardrobe than in mine. It finally went to the rag bag only a few years ago.

Roger Wakely (1954)

I knew Dudley Moore and had the nerve-wracking if quasi honorary position of playing the triangle in the orchestra he conducted!

Christopher Jackson (1956)

Dudley was the Organ Scholar and I soon found out that he practised regularly on the organ in the College Chapel. It was a marvellous and calming experience to creep into the Chapel and quietly, privately, listen to his playing. Never, ever to be forgotten!

Michael Ridgway (1954)

For a brief spell he was a good friend of mine, mainly through the Magdalen Players’ 1955 production of Measure for Measure in which he was an effective comic as (if I remember rightly) Elbow.

Christopher Kirwan (1952)

Like me, Dudley was a member of the ‘Narcissus’ club. This was as the name suggests a slightly self-conscious dining club where to start with we attempted to dress in reverse dining order, jackets, shirts, ties, i.e. black where white should be and the reverse. That requirement didn’t last long! I remember Dudley deciding to stand on the table towards the end of one dinner and tell a joke about a man on a bus who had a penny whistle stuck up his bottom (you wouldn’t be able to print the rest) but they were cheerful and happy occasions.

William Steel (1955)

In June 1958, the Quincentenary Ball took place. Apart from the obvious joys of Magdalen (I have never before or since seen such a towering mountain of strawberries) the highlight for me was sitting in the gathering dusk in somebody’s room listening to him playing jazz and swing classics and some of his own compositions. This was his ‘Errroll Garner period’, when his preferred style was to start with a well-known piece, and just when the audience were lulled into complacency, segue into a stunning performance of a quite different number.

So much for memories. I have a mental picture of a short person of endless energy, inspiring affection in all with whom he had to do, generous in sharing his gifts and very good company. In many respects my performance in 45 years of preaching reflects what I learned from Dudley about timing, audience reaction and so on. Thanks mate, they were good times.

Chris Thomas (1956)

Dudley and I met on the first day of our arrival at Magdalen: we both had rooms in the corner staircase of St. Swithuns Quad. He knocked at my door that very first evening and asked for some Nescafe, we chatted and became very good friends. He had attended Dagenham High School and I had been at East Ham Grammar School, not many miles apart, and we quickly confirmed that we lived in easy cycling distance of our respective homes.

Being with Dudley on the Antigone tour was a memorable experience. Dudley was, even before his fame, hugely attractive to women. We rehearsed in the first-floor assembly room of St. Aldate’s chaplaincy, and at coffee breaks in the cafe downstairs it was sobering to sit alone on one side of the table while the girls all clustered round Dudley at the other. On tour, I drove a Land Rover towing a horsebox full of scenery and costumes. One summer evening, I drove up to the long front of Malvern Girls’ College. The Land Rover had behaved oddly for the last few hundred yards, and we quickly discovered it had a puncture. Whereupon Dudley, who had no idea how to mend a puncture, started on an elaborate imitation of a man mending a puncture. Quickly girls’ heads, one by one, started emerging out of the windows, until there were 20 or 30 of them mesmerised by the performance.

Alistair Hunter (1957)
Fifty years after the partial decriminalisation of homosexuality, current student Oliver Baldwin (2015), Magdalen’s LGBTQ Officer, looks at the impact the law had on the life of one of Magdalen’s most famous alumni, Oscar Wilde (1874).

The Pride flag flying at Magdalen for LGBTQ History Month in February 2017.

Today the United Kingdom prides itself on its liberal democratic values and in the realm of LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer) rights does indeed have a lot to be proud of: civil partnerships, equal marriage and same-sex adoption. British law has not always been nearly so tolerant of queer people, however. Indeed, 2017 marks fifty years since the partial decriminalisation of male homosexuality in England and Wales; it would take until 1980 in Scotland and 1982 in Northern Ireland. Whilst, of course, half a century of technical freedom is something to be proud of, we must not forget the great numbers of men who were persecuted under the preceding laws and how many lives were destroyed as a result. We should be particularly mindful of this at Magdalen, alma mater of the literary light that was Oscar Wilde. Nowadays his memory is marked every year with an annual dinner hosted in his name for the LGBTQ students and staff of the College. This year, being such an important anniversary in the history of queer liberation in the United Kingdom, is an especially apt time to remember his life, its zeniths and its nadirs.

Wilde was born on 16th October 1854 in Dublin to Anglo-Irish intellectual parents. He studied first at Trinity College, Dublin where he read Greats before continuing his classical studies at Magdalen from 1874. It was during his university years that he became increasingly interested in arts and philosophy, particularly the theories of aestheticism. Wilde’s preoccupation with and understanding of art, beauty and aesthetics can be clearly seen in his only novel, The Picture of Dorian Gray (1890). Here, Wilde explored his thoughts on art and beauty but additionally, and more controversially, he wrote characters of such decadence and depravity that the novel was met with shock and horror in the conservative quarters of Victorian society. His editor deleted five hundred words of the more offensive content and critics still clamoured for his prosecution for corrupting public morals.

His reputation recovered – if only for a time. During the early 1890s he wrote a series of wildly spectacular satirical plays which poked fun at Victorian upper-class society. This was the society which had been so offended by Dorian Gray but now, using the more polite medium of a parlour comedy, he was readily accepted. In 1895, he published his most famous play, The Importance of Being Earnest. It was here, at the zenith of his success that his life began to fall apart. Throughout his play-writing years, beginning in 1891, Wilde had been involved in a passionate affair with Lord Alfred Douglas (Magdalen 1889), son of the Marquess of Queensberry. Known as Bosie, he introduced Wilde to the underground world of male prostitution. Wilde’s fantastic success on the London stage would fund Bosie’s every desire and the working-
class men he had been introduced to would frequently satisfy his. Whilst clandestine, these relationships were not unknown. Wilde maintained a tolerant circle of friends who shared his love of art and aestheticism. The Marquess of Queensberry, on the other hand, deplored the poet’s relationship with his son.

On 18th February 1895, whilst *Earnest* was still being performed and to great acclaim, Queensberry left a calling card at Albermarle, Wilde’s club. On it was written: “For Oscar Wilde, posing sodomite.” This amounted to a public accusation of sodomy, or at the very least gross indecency. Wilde resolved, in an attempt to save his reputation and career, to prosecute the Marquess for libel. The court heard testimony from many of the prostitutes and other citizens of the gay – and thus criminal – underworld. This and Wilde’s fame made the case a national *cause célèbre*, drawing crowds to the public gallery.

Ultimately, the mass of evidence acquitted the Marquess of libel and Wilde was bound to pay all his legal fees, leaving him destitute.

Queensberry having been proved right, the state now pursued Wilde himself on charges of gross indecency. Wilde was finally convicted on 25th May 1895 and sentenced to two years’ hard labour, a sentence described by the judge as “totally inadequate” even though it was the maximum available. And so, Wilde’s life had reached its nadir. He spent time in Newgate, Pentonville and Wandsworth prisons before ending up in Reading Gaol. He would later write *The Ballad of Reading Gaol* under the *nom de plume* C33 which had been his cell. Following his release, he moved to the relative freedom of France where sodomy had been decriminalised under Napoleon. He had no contact with his wife or children and became progressively poorer and unwell. He died on the 30th November 1900, aged 46.

This year we celebrate fifty years of freedom. Following Wilde’s death there were still sixty-seven years to go. Thankfully, in the more tolerant world of today, we can remember this man not as a ‘posing sodomite’ but as an exceptional poet, author and playwright and as a cherished son of Magdalen.
This year, two Magdalen students set up the Oxford Review of Books, a cultural magazine which is produced every term. Katie Mennis (2015) a second year English and Classics student and Benn Sheridan (2015) a second year Historian tell Floreat about the magazine’s foundation.

“He’s witty, he’s experienced, he’s got tales to tell, he’s full of himself, but there’s an edge to him, there’s something about him...’ This is how Sir Derek Jacobi characterises Oscar Wilde, but it’s a perfect self-description.”

Katie Mennis interviews Sir Derek Jacobi on conspiracy theories, student acting and making Shakespeare straightforward
During our stints in various positions at the Cherwell and the Isis, the traditional routes for would-be journalists, we often talked about starting our own magazine. We felt there was a gap in the market in Oxford student journalism for a termly literary and cultural review, in the vein of the London Review or the TLS, featuring long-form essays, reviews, diaries, interviews and poetry. We wanted the magazine to be in print, and to distribute it in such a way that the print product would have value.

This plan was all sketched out over the course of a 22 hour coach trip on the way back from the Varsity skiing trip this year. But starting a magazine is easier said than done: inevitably we faced difficulties along the way. Even so, the ORB seemed to go from strength to strength. We managed to recruit a team of over twenty fellow students, many very experienced in student journalism. Our major coups were securing generous funding from Darius Sanai of Condé Nast and a Magdalen alumnus (for which we are incredibly grateful), as well as a partnership with the Oxford branch of Waterstones, where we eventually hosted our launch.

Our writers – whittled down from fifty applicants to twenty – wrote four or five drafts, including interviews with Peter Singer, Derek Jacobi, Helen Dunmore and Philippe Sands. Meanwhile, our artistic team, half of whom are Magdalen students, created original artwork for every page.

The final lay-in was long and exhausting. Sadly, just as we were sending off to the printers, we learned of the death of Helen Dunmore, who had spoken to us a month earlier for the ORB about using ancient stories to come to terms with terminal illness. We dedicated our first issue to her.

We were all very proud of the final product and we had a great turn-out at our launch event at Waterstones, with speaker Adam Mars-Jones – though the free wine probably helped! Having just handed over to our successors, we know that the ORB will develop long into the future and continue to have a strong Magdalen connection.

To read articles from the Oxford Review of Books, please go to the website: www.the-orb.org where you can also purchase a copy.
Biggest crowd ever for May Morning

An estimated 27,000 people lined the streets below Magdalen Tower for the traditional May Morning celebrations this year. This record number of people listened to the Choir preform the ancient Hymnus Eucharisticus under the direction of our new Informator Choristarum Mark Williams.

Undergraduate wins Uehiro Prize in Practical Ethics

Paul de Font-Reaulx, a third year undergraduate at Magdalen College studying Politics, Philosophy and Economics, has won the Oxford Uehiro Prize in Practical Ethics. This Prize is open to all undergraduates in the University of Oxford through submission of an essay relevant to practical ethics.

Lasker Award for Peter Ratcliffe

Professor Sir Peter Ratcliffe, Supernumerary Fellow at Magdalen, has won the 2016 Lasker Award for his research on understanding how cells sense and signal low oxygen levels.

This is one of the most prestigious prizes in medical sciences and 86 Lasker Laureates have received the Nobel Prize.
Honours for Fellows and Old Members

Professor Sir David Weatherall FRS, Regius Professor Emeritus of Clinical Medicine and Emeritus Fellow of Magdalen, was appointed Knight Grand Cross of the Order of the British Empire (GBE) for services to medicine.

Professor David Coates CBiol FRSA FRSB FLS was awarded an MBE for services to biology

Roderick Williams (1984) was appointed Officer of the Order of the British Empire (OBE) for services to music.

Professor Alison Etheridge FRS, Professor of Probability and Magdalen Fellow by Special Election, was appointed Officer of the Order of the British Empire (OBE) for services to science.

Undergraduate Sam Attias wins Oxford Engineering Alumni Prize

Sam Attias, a Magdalen engineering finalist, won the BP Prize for best chemical engineering project and the Oxford Engineering Alumni Prize for best overall exhibition. Sam presented his work entitled ‘Nanomaterials in Revolutionising Diabetes Diagnostics’. The research shows how Metal-Organic Frameworks can selectively and reversibly react with chemical biomarkers for diabetes found in the human breath.

The Longwall Library wins 3 RIBA awards

Our Longwall Library has won the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) South East Regional Award, the Conservation Award and, most recently a RIBA National Award. The newly refurbished and extended Library was opened by the Duke of Cambridge in May 2016, and has made a huge difference to College life in the year that it has been open. The architects Wright and Wright transformed the library to meet the needs of our students in the 21st century, while sensitively conserving the historic Buckler building, thanks to the financial support of over 1,150 alumni and friends.
Alumni Events

Our events programme is designed for you, as a lifelong member of the College, to continue to be a part of the Magdalen community and enjoy the exclusive opportunities your membership brings, from careers networking to talks from world-class speakers, and from insights into cutting-edge research to social gatherings and access to private venues. We host events around the world for our global alumni base, including in the USA and Asia.

Garden Party

In June we welcomed over 700 guests to a Garden Party in College. The sun shone and the bells pealed, while alumni shared the best of the College with their families over afternoon tea and Pimm’s, including chauffeured punting, Great Tower climbs, Choir performances and children’s entertainment.

Women’s Dinner

120 alumnae attended the Women’s Dinner held at the House of Lords hosted by Baroness Dido Harding (1985), then CEO of TalkTalk Telecom Group PLC. The event provided an opportunity to network with other alumnae as well as hear inspirational words from Baroness Harding, Philosophy Fellow (and first female Fellow at Magdalen) Professor Lizzie Fricker, and artist Eleanor Harris (1997) on her ‘Influential Women’ portrait project.

New York Dinner

In April our New York community got together for a panoramic penthouse dinner, with Krishanti Vignarajah (2002) speaking about her inspiring work as Policy Director at the White House, Office of the First Lady, under Michelle Obama, including leading the Let Girls Learn project.
Alumni Formal Hall

Michaelmas saw the introduction of Alumni Formal Hall, to which alumni can bring guests to a dedicated alumni table at Formal Hall twice a term. This initiative has proved very popular, with the alumni tables fully booked until 2018.

Shakespeare Anniversary Event

Over 100 alumni and guests marked the 400th anniversary of Shakespeare’s death with a unique evening at Shakespeare’s Globe Theatre in London. Fellow in English Professor Laurie Maguire gave a talk on Hamlet followed by an exclusive tour of the iconic theatre.

Other events included:

business talks from Sebastian James (1984), CEO of Dixons Carphone, and Helen Conford (1998), Publishing Director at Penguin; a Hacks’ Dinner for alumni working in the media; the Alumni Dinner with guest speaker Terry Waite; and a performance of Regulation 18B: No Free Man, a play which explored the issue of detention without trial, followed by a panel discussion of the issues raised. Events were held in New York, Hong Kong and Singapore in addition to the UK.

If you have any feedback or suggestions, or if you want 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.
Forthcoming events

2017

Saturday 16th September:
50th Anniversary Tea for 1967 matriculants

Saturday 16th September:
Alumni Dinner in College

Tuesday 19th September:
New York Reception

Saturday 23rd September:
Gaudy Lunch for matriculation years 1957 and earlier

Saturday 30th September:
Professor Laurence Brockliss Retirement Lunch

Saturday 30th September:
Professor Elizabeth Fricker Retirement Dinner and Philosophy Symposium

Friday 6th October:
Private Tour of Knole House

Tuesday 17th October:
London Drinks Reception

Wednesday 15th November:
Bill Emmott (1972): The Fate of the West

Thursday 7th December:
Varsity Match

Saturday 9th & Sunday 10th December:
Carols by Candlelight

2018

Saturday 24th February:
Scholarships & Bursaries Lunch

Saturday 19th May:
Fastolf Society Lunch

Saturday 30th June:
Benefactors’ Gaudy

Thursday 5th July:
Professor Roger Smith Retirement Dinner (London)

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