



Our Principal, **Professor Jane Shaw**, announced last year that she would be retiring as Principal in September 2025, at the end of a seven-year term in which she has overseen many significant developments in the College. She will be returning to academic life, remaining in the University as Professor of the History of Religion. If you missed the news, you can view the [full announcement](#) on our website.

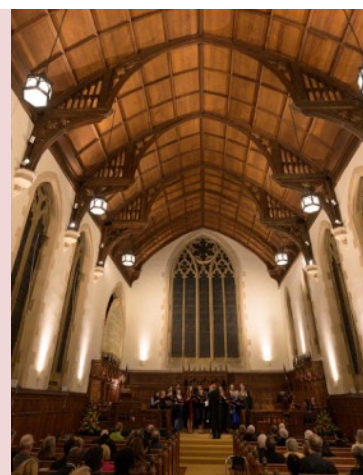
Over the last few months, the Governing Body has been engaged in the process of electing a new Principal, and we are delighted to

announce that **Professor Beth Breeze** will be joining us from the University of Kent, where she is Professor of Philanthropic Studies. She will be taking up office on 1st October. Further details, including more information on Professor Breeze, will be available on our [website news section](#) shortly.

There will be a chance to say farewell to Professor Shaw and to meet Professor Breeze at the [Annual Alumni Dinner](#) on 20th September.

Inside this edition

Page 2:	Projects and Plans:	Chapel renovation
Page 3:		Renovation and reopening in pictures
Page 4:		The Carpenter Centre
Page 5:	Oxford Next Horizons	
Page 6:	My Story, My HMC:	The Reverend Kate Dean
Page 7:	College News	
Page 9:	Student Spotlight:	Arabella Volkers
Page 10:	Alumni News	
Page 11:	Diary dates	



Projects and Plans

Chapel reopens after major renovation project

You might recall that the 2022 Michaelmas Term issue of **My HMC** included an article about the need to carry out some major works to our chapel. Following more than two years of fundraising, design and planning, we are delighted to announce that the renovation is now complete.

The Chapel at HMC dates back to the College's arrival in Oxford and is a key part of our history and our identity. Designated in 1893 for those who could not accept the dogma of any particular denomination, it is a reminder of HMC's Unitarian and Dissenting roots, and the role the College has traditionally played in ministerial training.

However, over the years the Chapel's role within HMC has grown beyond religious services. During your time as a student here, you might have come to the Chapel for concerts, poetry readings, lectures, pre-graduation ceremony briefings or, perhaps, simply to find a tranquil space to escape the bustle of College life. It is also a popular wedding venue, and is the only Oxford college chapel that holds and legally registers same-sex marriages.

The aim of the renovation was to protect and promote the Chapel's many important heritage elements, while installing the infrastructure and facilities necessary to meet the ever-growing demands of a modern College. The work includes:

- More versatile and energy-efficient lighting to highlight the Chapel's many important aesthetic features and improve the experience for all Chapel users
- A new AV system with live streaming equipment so that we can share events taking place in the Chapel with audiences around the world
- Redecorating the interior to ensure the stained-glass windows, organ pipes and furnishings are shown to best advantage

- Replacing the floor coverings with a new carpet made from recycled plastic bottles, enhancing both the visual aesthetic and the sound quality of the room.

The project was made possible thanks to the generosity of many members of our HMC community. The work, which was completed in mid-February, was managed



The project team

by our Clerk of Works, **Mark Longford**, in consultation with conservation architects and a group of staff and Fellows convened to oversee the project.

We are delighted with the outcome and have held a number of celebrations throughout this term to mark its reopening: an opening event for staff, a public service featuring a reflection by artist, potter, writer and Visiting Fellow for this academic year, **Edmund de Waal**, and a separate ceremony for benefactors. On the next page, you can see a selection of photos of the renovation and the celebratory events.

If you haven't already, we hope you will come and see the improvements for yourself in due course. And, if you can't make it to the chapel in person, we are now trialling the new streaming system to transport you back to services, lectures and concerts at HMC from the comfort of your own home – an option only made possible by the generosity of our supporters.

Projects and Plans

Chapel renovation, reopening and celebration



Clockwise from top:

During renovation; stained glass windows after the renovation; the new carpet; the opening event for staff; Edmund de Waal speaking at the public service to mark the reopening; the ceremony for benefactors

Projects and Plans (continued)

The Carpenter Centre: Reimagining the Dissenting Tradition

As an alumni community we know that we stand on the shoulders of giants, among them the remarkable interdisciplinary scholar of Sanskrit and Pali, and world religions,

J. Estlin Carpenter, who was College Principal from 1906 to 1915. Carpenter was from a distinguished and widely travelled Unitarian family, and his own own library is held here at HMC, part of our world-class special collection of Unitarian and dissenting papers, books and artefacts.

This collection forms a relatively small but significant archive, unique in being the only dedicated collection of its kind and is used by scholars from all over the world. We have felt for some time that we could do more to open this gem of a collection to a wider range of researchers, which is why we are thrilled to announce that alumna **The Rev**

Dr Ann Peart (1986, Ministry Studies) has given a financial gift that will fund future fellowships for researchers who will help us to uncover histories and reclaim some of the untold stories hidden among these papers.

Dr Peart trained in ministry at HMC, and went on to become Principal of Unitarian College Manchester and to pursue a career both as a minister and historian. As a feminist Unitarian historian and as a champion of LGBTQ rights, her donation is focused on enabling researchers from minority groups, and on bringing to light un-researched minority stories. The **Ann Peart Fellowships** will be open to applicants across disciplines and will alternate between placements for scholars already participating in a research project and placements for new researchers.

Researchers will come to Oxford for periods of two to four weeks to explore, develop or complete a project that may result in a book – or indeed an artwork or play – and will sit within the emerging centre named after J. Estlin Carpenter.



Initiated as a proposal by **The Rev Dr Claire MacDonald** in 2022 and now nested within the College's strategic plan, the Carpenter Centre has been quietly growing through the creation of visiting fellowships, sabbaticals for minister scholars and, since 2023, hosting a yearly think-tank as part of our Summer Research Institute. In late June 2025 the College will host the first **Carpenter Centre Summer Institute**, which will fully launch this new and exciting venture.

Growing the Carpenter Centre is part of the attention we are bringing as a community to the institutional and cultural history of the College as we envision a sustainable future. It's about reimagining the histories of dissent, opening doors to new, interdisciplinary and creative research and, importantly, about training ministers for the future.

Sign up for updates!

We would love to share the journey of this new Centre with you. In order to share our research and the stories from our archive with a wider audience we have created a dedicated mailing list for the Carpenter Centre. You can sign up to receive emails [here](#).

Update on Oxford Next Horizons

In last year's Hilary term edition of **My HMC**, we reported on the positive response to the launch of **Oxford Next Horizons** (ONHP) – a unique six-month experience running from January to June each year, co-designed by Harris Manchester College and the Rhodes Trust. Its aim is to give those at a mid-to-late stage of their careers time to think, explore and reinvent through tailored academic and social activities. Now, with the second year of the programme successfully underway, we bring you an account of the inaugural year in the participants' own words.

Nineteen participants and four associated partners from across the world formed the first cohort. From the very beginning, they took advantage of the opportunity to form close-knit relationships with their peers, scholars and the wider University and College Community.

Academic insights, unexpected collaborations and personal reflections shaped many of the participants' original intentions.

[Read more insights](#) into the 2024 programme from its co-directors: our College Principal and the Warden of Rhodes House.

A sense of gaining space to step away from the routine of their lives and reflect on what they want to do next was expressed in a number of participants' feedback:

“ I am leaving the programme with a sense of boldness and purpose I never imagined.

Others felt the programme had supported their specific projects or interests:

“ It was a celebration of curiosity, courage and the boundless potential of the human spirit! I explored the realms of philosophy and history discussions, trading quarter-on-quarter financials for Shakespearean plays.

“ I wanted to make a career shift from the daily practice of medicine to a historian of medicine. At Oxford I worked with a history tutor, did interviews and archival research and sent a manuscript off for publication. I couldn't have done it well without ONHP.

OXFORD NEXT HORIZONS



“ ONHP gave me the space and time to reflect on next steps in my life and to reconnect with myself and what's important.

And many highlighted the importance of the connections they developed:

“ It's unusual to build new friendships at this stage in our lives . . . I've gained wonderful new friends and . . . an ongoing source of support as I re-integrate back home and continue on life transition. I consider ONHP a gift in myself that will be paying dividends well into the future.

“ It was exhilarating and awakened a desire to be part of a 'learning community' on an ongoing basis.

2025: a truly global cohort:



This year – reflecting the character of HMC itself – the scholars are particularly geographically diverse, with representatives from Australia, India, Nigeria, Mexico, Ireland, the UK, the US and Zimbabwe. And the enthusiastic and positive reactions from the participants featured here have been echoed in the initial feedback from this year's cohort.

Applications for the next cohort (2026) are now closed. But for further information about the programme and how to apply, you can visit the **Oxford Next Horizons** website [here](#).

My Story, My HMC

The Reverend Kate Dean

(2015, Ministry Studies)

After a diverse career including toy and games designer, freelance crafts trainer and working in youth charities, Kate retrained to become a Unitarian minister. She took part in Ministry Studies at HMC while also pursuing an MA in Abrahamic Religions at Heythrop College, London.



What I'm doing now

I have served as the minister of Rosslyn Hill Unitarian Chapel in Hampstead, north London, for eight years. We call it 'a spiritual home for open minds'. While honouring our Judeo-Christian roots, we are also inspired by many other religious traditions, Humanist philosophies, pagan spirituality, music, art and science (i.e. all the good stuff which makes life worth living!). I've just completed a three-month sabbatical, which included some time at HMC studying the topic of 'spiritual resilience'.

Best memories of HMC

It felt like a great privilege to become a full-time student during my two years of training. It gave me the space and time to read, learn and really consider what it means to become a minister. My best memories are of the interactions with my fellow ministry students when we were getting into the nuts and bolts of ministry work. I also appreciated the spontaneous conversations with other students at the college during mealtimes in Arlosh Hall.

Favourite activities at HMC

As well as the weekly tutorials with my Unitarian tutor, I spent a few months as student pastor for the Oxford Society, the Unitarian congregation in Oxford which meets for Sunday services in HMC's Chapel. This was a great opportunity to explore congregational ministry in a supportive and familiar setting.

Why HMC?

As the College was founded in 1786 to educate those who could not accept the dogma of any particular denomination, and is one of only two places in the UK to offer training in Unitarian ministry, HMC was an obvious choice for me. Coming to ministry after a number of other career moves, the fact that HMC is a mature student college meant I also didn't need to worry about being the oldest student in the room!

"Attending to one's spiritual and emotional wellbeing is important."

Why is giving to HMC important?

Training for ministry at HMC was an incredible opportunity, which enabled me to grow and develop into the minister I am today. I feel it is very important for me to spread the word about the options at the college for Unitarian ministers to continue their professional development, as the college is a resource which we should all be very proud of.

My advice to current students

My research into spiritual resilience has highlighted the overlap between spiritual practices, self-care and sustainable living. It's very easy to work too hard when you are studying at such a prestigious university. Attending to one's spiritual and emotional wellbeing is important, too.

College News

Stephen Taylor has been appointed the first Sanders Director of Music, having previously been Acting Director. His appointment was made possible thanks to a benefaction in support of music at HMC from the Souldern Trust. Stephen has enjoyed a successful career as a singer, conductor and teacher. His singing career began as a chorister at Ely Cathedral and church music



has remained an important part of his musical life. Having lived in Oxford since 1987, Stephen has worked at a number of colleges, including Christ Church, Brasenose and New College. He has sung with prestigious groups such as *The Tallis Scholars* and *I Fagiolini* and, as a soloist, he has performed with *The Academy of Music* and *The King's Consort*. Stephen's appointment follows the death of James Whitbourn in March 2024. While the circumstances are sad, we are delighted that Stephen will be continuing his association with HMC.

Professor Lesley Smith has been elected Emeritus Fellow after holding a number of roles at HMC spanning 35 years. Most notably, for nearly 30 years she was History and PPE tutor, as well as spending 23 years as Senior Tutor. Lesley's research work concentrates on the medieval Bible, as both a physical and an intellectual



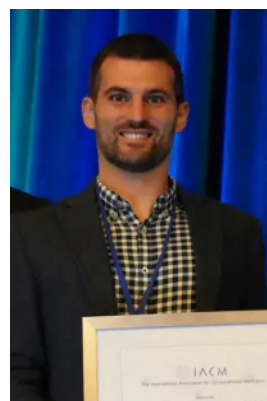
object. Her latest book is *Handwritten: Remarkable People on the Page*, a celebration of the art of handwriting, including samples from famous writers, scientists, and historical figures drawn from the treasures of Oxford's Bodleian Library.

A research project led by **Dr Linda Hullin**, HMC's Fellow and Tutor in Archaeology, has received significant funding from charitable initiative Augmentum. The project team, based at the School of Archaeology, will

investigate the ways in which pan-Mediterranean trade routes re-emerged and reconfigured at the end of the Late Bronze Age, following a period when rainfall declined sharply and state-run networks buckled under social and political pressure.



Dr Linda Hullin



Professor Emilio Martínez-Pañeda, Supernumerary Fellow and Tutor at Harris Manchester College and Associate Professor in Engineering Science at the University of Oxford, has won three prizes for his work, including the prestigious John Argyris Award for Young Scientists.

Early Career Fellow and Tutor in Theology, **Tobias Tanton**, was awarded the ESSAT



Research Prize 2024 for his book, *Corporeal Theology*, which explores the relationship between the human body and theological concepts.



Research Fellow **Dr Mary Jean Chan** delivered the University of Oxford's 2025 LGBT+ History Month Lecture in which she explored the role of queer poetry in their own journey of becoming a poet, editor and lecturer of creative writing.

College News (continued)

We are delighted to welcome the following new members to the HMC community:

- **Dr Finnian M Moore Gerety** is Senior Research Fellow and is in the Faculty of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies. His research focuses on the intersection of Sanskrit texts and Hindu ritual in early India, especially the sacred utterances and chants known as mantras. This is also the focus of a major new research



initiative (MANTRAMS) he is leading, which has secured a landmark €9.65m award from the European Research Council.

- **Dr Caroline Ashcroft** has joined HMC as Stipendiary Lecturer in Politics. Caroline's research interests include: 20th-century political theory and history of political thought, particularly on concepts of violence in politics, technology, environmentalism, and feminism. Her recent book, *Catastrophic Technology*, explores the influence of technology on modern politics.



- **Birgitte Surtees** joins the College as Domestic Bursar, having previously been the Accommodation and Conferences Manager at St Antony's College.
- **Mark Longford** joins the College as our first Clerk of Works.
- **Will Clark**, our new Conference, Events and Bursary Officer, joins us from New College.
- **Tracy Madden** is our new Head Scout. Tracy joins HMC from Trinity College.

- **Malcolm Gilmour** joins the College as its new Communications Officer.
- **Brent Dalton** is our new Maintenance Technician.

Congratulations...

At the end of the last academic year we were delighted to hear that a number of HMC students had received University prizes for their work. We hope you will join us in congratulating them all:

- **Anja Segmueller** – awarded the Richard Cobb Prize for the best thesis in modern European History. Anja has also been awarded a Gibbs Prize (awarded for the highest average mark over seven papers in the Final Honour School of History).
- **Andrei (Rick) Longley** – awarded the Best Research Project in Final Honour School of Experimental Psychology.
- **Bertie Bloomfield** – awarded the Law Faculty Prize in Constitutional Law, and also the Law Faculty Prize in Contract Law.
- **Joshua Lim** – awarded the Braddick Prize (Proxime Accessit) by the Department of Experimental Psychology for the Second Best Overall Performance in prelim papers submitted for the Preliminary Examination in Psychology, Philosophy and Linguistics.
- **Joseph Ng** – awarded a Gibbs Prize in Politics for top performance across all Politics papers.
- **Aron Szocs** – awarded the Chancellor's Prize for Latin Prose Composition; having previously become the first HMC student to be awarded the Gaisford Prize for Greek Prose.
- **Gideon Tay** – awarded the John Hicks Foundation Prize for the best performance in Macroeconomics (Economics & Management candidates).

College News (continued)

Following his acclaimed Upton Lecture last year, we are thrilled that renowned artist, potter and author **Edmund de Waal** has returned to HMC as Visiting Fellow and Artist in Residence this academic year.



We are also pleased to announce that the College has appointed a new Development Director. **Lisa Smars** will be joining us from Linacre College in May and will be responsible for building and engaging our alumni community. The next edition of **My HMC** will feature a personal message from Lisa.

Student Spotlight



My name is **Arabella Volkens** and I am studying for a DPhil in Theology. I fell into this field by accident, quite literally! I broke my back in a fall while riding and faced an operation which had a 50 per cent chance of paraplegia. That crisis

point opened up a space in me which I had either ignored or been disinclined to consider while enjoying a successful career in investment banking. But a seed was sown which would lie dormant for about a decade.

A series of positions as a financial analyst, first at Swiss Bank and latterly at Deutsche Bank, fostered an interest in causal processes that I had discovered as an undergraduate studying Geology. That research trajectory culminated in 1999 in my heading up financial institutions research globally for Deutsche Bank. I also continued building my knowledge of business process dynamics and was fortunate to engage with this emerging field during a Sloan Fellowship at London Business School. That stint proved invaluable when the Global



Financial Crisis of 2008 struck and prompted the restructuring of mortgage banking back-office activities. Another five years whizzed by in a blur.

It was only in 2013, prompted by a friend to take a break, while on retreat I recalled that if my back operation was successful, I would undertake something theological. Eventually I enrolled in a MTh. programme at St John's, Collegeville (USA), albeit with serious misgivings, as this field seemed a world apart from what was familiar. How wrong I was! I discovered a love for Patristics and, with the faculty's encouragement, applied to Oxford to research an early phase of the 4th-century Trinitarian debates.

I was first at St Benet's Hall, and while a necessary migration followed from the Hall's closure, Harris Manchester has much in common and comes with a major bonus of its wonderful library. Having met several HMC DPhil students during my first two years at St Benet's, I have now come to know many others, and their personal histories are a never-ending source of admiration. I have left behind the thrills of hobbies such as flying planes and equestrianism but have taken up several others, including triathlon. And while there are inevitable challenges with any late-stage re-orientation, I can say that HMC is well positioned to help

address them. As for plans after my DPhil? I can honestly say, the Lord alone knows!

Alumni News

Johan Floderus is free!

We were delighted to learn that Swedish diplomat and HMC alumnus **Johan Floderus** was freed after more than two years imprisonment in Iran.

Johan was arrested in April 2022 and spent 790 days in Evin jail, the majority of which was spent in solitary confinement.

While news of Johan's arrest had remained undisclosed for over 18 months, a report by The New York Times in September 2023 increased public awareness and led to the creation of the **#FreeJohanFloderus** campaign. Vigils and marches took place around the world, including a vigil in Oxford in June 2024. Johan was returned to Sweden on 16th June 2024 and immediately proposed to his partner at the airport. Everyone at College sends their love to Johan and his partner. Johan has expressed his grateful thanks for all the messages received from HMC alumni.



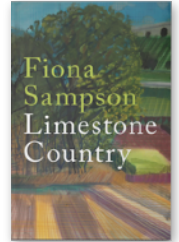
Congratulations to...

- **Scott Fitzgerald Buchanan** (2022, BA PPE) and **Walter Myer** (2019, BA Law), who



secured first prize in the European round of a prestigious global legal tech competition. Their product, Amender, transforms emails and mark-ups into dynamic issue lists for transactional lawyers.

- **Fiona Sampson** (1989, BA PPE), who was in Ross-on-Wye on Thursday 20th March to speak about her book *Limestone Country*, a personal and lyrical investigation into landscapes in Europe and beyond. You can listen to Fiona speaking about the book [here](#).



- **Athina Metaxa** (2023, MSc Evidence-Based Health Care), who published an update to a paper that she submitted to the BMJ while still studying at Harris Manchester College. You can read more about that experience [here](#).



- **Bumble Ward** (1986, BA Philosophy), who worked on the promotional campaign for



Conclave and is the publicist for the film's director, Edward Berger. Bumble attended the BAFTAs where the film swooped four awards, including Best Film.



And last, but not least:

- **Henry Chong** (2011, PPE), who recently announced his engagement!

Please keep in touch with your news by emailing alumni@hmc.ox.ac.uk

Dates for your diary

Alumni Events

The dates for our two 2025 annual alumni events are now confirmed:

Annual Alumni Dinner – Saturday 20th September

Alumni Carol Service – Saturday 6th December:

More information and details on how to book will be available shortly.

Other HMC Events

HMC Summer Event – Friday 9th May. This year's theme is *A Day at the Races!* Email [here](#) for tickets.



The Manchester Lecture this year will be on 12th May at 5.15pm and will feature **Professor Santanu Das** discussing *Rabindranath Tagore and Brahmoism* in Oxford.

HMC Chapel Services – take place in term every Wednesday from 5.45 to 6.25pm.

This year's **Oxford Literary Festival** will feature a number of talks and events in HMC's Chapel:

- **Mick Herron** (author of *Slow Horses*) – Saturday 29th March
- **Gilbert Achcar** – *The Arabs and the Holocaust, the Arab-Israeli War of Narratives* – Saturday 29th March
- **Nona Fernandez** – *Memory and truth: stories from Chile's dark past* – Thursday 3rd April



- **Santiago Roncagliolo** – *Life and fear in Latin America* – Thursday 3rd April
- **Ye Zhaoyan** – *Nanjing 1937* – Thursday 3rd April
- **Jo Harkin** – *The Pretender* – Thursday 3rd April.

The Principal, **Professor Jane Shaw**, and other HMC Fellows, are also featuring in a number of events in other venues at the Festival, including:

- **Jane Shaw** in conversation with **Diarmaid MacCulloch** – *Lower than the Angels: A history of sex and Christianity* – Monday 31st March, the Sheldonian
- **Jane Shaw** in conversation with **Chloe Dalton** – *Raising Hare: the heart-warming true story of an unlikely friendship* – Monday 31st March, Trinity College
- **Alister McGrath** (Emeritus Fellow of HMC) – *Why we believe: understanding ourselves in a complex world* – Tuesday 1st April, the Bodleian
- **Jane Shaw** in conversation with **Jessica Hamel-Akre** – *The art of not eating: a doubtful history of appetite and desire* – Tuesday 1st April, Weston Library
- **Sarah Ogilvie** (Senior Research Fellow at HMC) – *The Dictionary People: the unsung heroes who created the Oxford English Dictionary* – Friday 4th April, Weston Library.

College events – Visit hmc.ox.ac.uk/events for more information and to book.

Open days – be an ambassador for the College! (check our website for these events: hmc.ox.ac.uk/visits-and-open-days).

Stay in touch

Please scan the code to make sure we have the most up-to-date details to enable us to stay in contact with you.



