



# HumSci News

Keeping Friends of Human Sciences in touch

2023 Edition

## Introduction from the Head of the Institute

I must start with tributes. As I write, near the end of Trinity Term, the third-years have finished finals, the first-years are in the final week of preparation for Prelims, and I am nearing the end of my first year as Head of the Institute. I took over at the start of Michaelmas Term from David Gellner to whom we owe an enormous debt, both for his expert stewardship of the degree as Head of the Institute, and as latterly as Director of Development. The breadth of David's achievements in these roles is amply demonstrated by his welcome letter last year and his report below for this year referencing both significant fund-raising and post-creation, and the very successful 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary events in 2022, which many of you attended. It was wonderful to meet so many of our former students at that event. Apart from the delight at seeing what our graduates have been able to do with a Human Sciences degree, it is hugely satisfying to receive the affirmation that the degree, and what we all, both students and faculty, put into it, makes a real difference in the world.

We were also sorry in 2023 to say goodbye to Susana Carvalho who left her post of Professor of Palaeoanthropology at the end of the year after nearly a decade in the Institute (she joined the School of Anthropology and Museum Ethnography in 2015). As well as for her contributions to the teaching of Human Sciences, we are especially grateful to her for the opportunities she provided to some of our students to attend the field school in Gorongosa National Park, Mozambique, (see <https://gorongosa.org/susana-carvalho-ph-d/>).

My final tribute is to Mrs Naomi Freud, who retired from teaching in 2023, although she retains a position at St Catherine's College in relation to Visiting Students. It gave me great pleasure at my first Institute Committee meeting in Michaelmas Term to be able to make her an Honorary Associate



2023 Finalists (Photo by Amanda Palmer)

of the Institute. This is what I said of her at Committee in making the recommendation "Naomi has taught for Human Sciences for 38 years, been Head of the Institute, Admissions Co-ordinator for many years, a Director of Studies and has made a very significant contribution to outreach as well as instigating the inclusion of Human Sciences within the Visiting Student Programme. Her contribution includes more things but this will do to make the point!" As a Human Science graduate herself, Naomi truly understands the nature and power of

interdisciplinarity, which she brought with great effect to her teaching of Human Ecology. It was a pleasure to work with her after we introduced my own field of ethnobiology into the Human Ecology paper and developed it as a long essay with Prof Stanley Ulijaszek. As with Stanley, she is greatly missed by students and colleagues alike, but we wish her and her husband David all the very best for the future. Naomi is succeeded at Catz by Dr Athar Yawar, who came, justifiably, with her strong

endorsement. A medical Dr, true polymath and outstanding teacher of physiology, we have been pleased to welcome Athar to the Institute.

David and Naomi's legacies are bearing fruit. As we've come to understand, the security of a degree at Oxford comes through the endowment of APTFs in colleges. APTF is Oxford speak for Associate Professor Tutorial Fellow, and it is the tutorial fellowship element that is so crucial for the survival of an undergraduate degree, since tutorial teaching is arranged, and largely undertaken, through colleges. So, the endowment of two posts at St Hugh's (see welcome to Thomas Püschel below), is very significant. Endowment has the potential to make posts permanent, but before that can happen, a post (usually) has to exist. We are delighted then to mention the development work towards the creation of two new APTFs for Human Sciences. All being well, I shall have more to write about these in next year's newsletter, but here I would just note that one of these posts is being created in Demography through the Department of Sociology. Apart from helping to secure Demography, which remains such a key element of the Human Sciences programme, it is hugely significant that another department, i.e. other than Anthropology, has demonstrated its commitment to the degree in this way. This is partly a tribute to David Gellner, but also to our Head of Department, Dr David Pratten, who has shown steadfast support for the degree over the years of his headship. We are also hugely grateful to Prof Colin Mills, Head of Sociology, for taking this forward with us.

The great challenge that remains is to establish such positions in life science departments, but we have strong support at departmental level in Medical Sciences, and from committed colleagues within Biology. Why? Because everyone who tutors for Human Sciences is struck by the quality of our students, by their breadth of knowledge, and by their commitment to working at a high level across disciplines, ultimately to make a positive difference in the world. As David Gellner said, the need to fly the HumSci flag at every opportunity (<https://ihs.web.ox.ac.uk/our-vision>), remains as pressing as ever but through gradual, incremental steps, and your continuing support, I have no doubt we shall see these small green shoots grow, flourish and bear much fruit.

With best wishes and thanks for all you do,

Andy Gosler (<https://www.biology.ox.ac.uk/people/andrew-gosler>), June 2024

## Welcome to:

**Dr Thomas Püschel** who joined the Institute of Human Sciences and School of Anthropology and Museum Ethnography in Michaelmas Term 2023 as the Wendy James Associate Professor in



Evolutionary Anthropology. He is also a Tutorial Fellow in Human Sciences at St Hugh's College. Together with Dr Teresa Street, he convenes the Human Genetics and Evolution Finals paper for which he lectures on Human Evolutionary Genetics. He also gives lectures and practical classes on Human Evolution for Prelims as well as being an examiner for the Final Honour School of Human Sciences.

Thomas obtained his PhD in Adaptive Organismal Biology from the University of Manchester. From 2018–2021 he was a Leverhulme Early Career Fellow in the School of Anthropology and Museum Anthropology here at Oxford before moving to the School of

Biological Sciences at the University of Reading as Post-Doctoral Researcher.

His main academic interest relates to the study of how and why human and primate bodies have become the way they currently are. To address these kinds of questions, Thomas applies a

combination of statistical modelling, 3D morphometrics, virtual biomechanical techniques, computational simulations, phylogenetic comparative methods, and fieldwork. His research has focused on the morphological innovation along the human lineage, primate phylogenetics and adaptive evolution, paleontological fieldwork in the Rift valley, and the development of new tools to analyse primate form and function in an evolutionary framework. Thomas is also a keen amateur wildlife photographer and you can see some of his photographs on his [website](#).

**Dr Susan MacDougall** who joined the School of Anthropology and Museum Ethnography as a Departmental Lecturer in Social Anthropology. Susan teaches Social Anthropology to Human Sciences students for both Prelims and Finals and is the convenor of the Anthropological Analysis and Interpretation Finals paper as well as being on the Exam Board for the Final Honour School of Human Sciences.



Following her Bachelor of Science in Education and Social Policy at Northwestern University and a Master of Arts in Near Eastern Studies at the University of Arizona, Susan completed an MSc. and then a D.Phil. in Social Anthropology in the School of Anthropology and Museum Ethnography here at Oxford.

Following her D.Phil. she held a College Lecturership at Keble College before moving to the University of Cambridge as a British Academy Postdoctoral Fellow in Social Anthropology in 2018.

Susan's research is at intersections of ethics, friendship and political economy. She has carried out fieldwork in Jordan and Lebanon and has worked with a global network of professional leadership consultants.

## Congratulations to

**Heather Hamill** who has been awarded the title of Professor of Sociology. Heather is a member of the Department of Sociology and is Dean of St Cross College. She has previously been the Convenor



of the Sociology and Demography Prelims paper for Human Sciences. Her research focusses on the various ways in which problems related to establishing trust and reputation are solved. These issues are particularly pertinent in the low-trust environments of high-crime neighbourhoods and illegal political and criminal organizations. Heather has previously researched these issues in various settings including informal justice and policing in Northern Ireland; how taxi drivers develop trust with their customers; and how illegal political criminal organizations recruit their members. Her current

research centres on the problems of trust created by the proliferation of sub-standard and falsified medicines in sub-Saharan Africa and India. As part of the multi-disciplinary Medicine Quality Research Group, Heather uses social networking theory to establish the sources and trade routes of fake medicines, aiming to work out the nature of the relationships between illegal traders, how trust is established within the network, and how regulatory scrutiny is avoided. Heather's work will be combined with research from the fields of pharmacy, forensic genetics, chemistry, geography, criminology, microbiology and food safety to answer key gaps in the existing knowledge and inform global policymaking.

**Lisa Heather** who won a Medical Sciences Teaching Award in the category of Excellent Teacher. Lisa is an Associate Professor and British Heart Foundation Intermediate Fellow in the Department of Physiology, Anatomy and Genetics. She gives lectures on Physiological Biochemistry : Glucose Homeostasis and Muscle Metabolism for the Human Sciences Prelims Introduction to Physiology series. Lisa's research revolves around metabolism and the heart – understanding why metabolism is important and what the consequences are when it goes wrong. She developed her passion for metabolism during her undergraduate degree in Medical Biochemistry at the University of Surrey, going on to do doctoral research which investigated the role of abnormal substrate metabolism in the development of cardiac hypertrophy. Her subsequent research has included the role of hypoxia and metabolism in the type 2 diabetic heart and why fat accumulation in the type 2 diabetic heart is such a bad thing.



**Kate Hunt** who has been made a Fellow of the British Academy in recognition to her contribution to public and behavioural health. Kate is Professor in Behavioural Sciences and Health at the University of Stirling's Institute for Social Marketing and Health (ISMH). Kate studied Human Sciences at St Catherine's College from 1977 to 1980 before going on to complete a PhD at Glasgow University in Gender and Health. She worked for many years in the Medical Research Council's Social and Public Health Sciences Unit at the University of Glasgow. She has a longstanding interest in inequalities in health and in Gender and Health. Her recent research has focused on the development and evaluation of public health interventions and policy, including smoke-free prison policy, the impact of the COVID pandemic on gambling behaviour, people's experience of living with Long Covid, the health and wellbeing of people living and working in prisons, and the power of professional sports clubs to attract people to positive health and wellbeing interventions. She has previously contributed to the teaching of the Health and Disease option paper. The British Academy is a forum for debate and engagement for the world's leading minds in humanities and social sciences, as well as a funding body for research. Kate said "I loved every minute of my time doing Human Sciences and it has been a fantastic background throughout my working life; most of my research has had multidisciplinary at its heart."



**Lars Jansen** who received a Medical Sciences Division Teaching Award in the category of Excellent Teacher. Lars is a Professor of Molecular Genetics in the Department of Biochemistry and the William R. Miller Fellow and Tutor in Biochemistry at St Edmund Hall. Lars gives Prelim lectures on 'DNA is the code of life' to Biochemistry, Biomedical Sciences and Human Sciences students. He is from the Netherlands and obtained his PhD in the Mathematics and Natural Sciences Department of Molecular Genetics at the University of Leiden. Prior to coming to Oxford he held postdoctoral fellowships at The Scripps Research Institute and the Ludwig Institute for Cancer Research, La Jolla CA and was a group leader at the Gulbenkian Institute for Science, Portugal. His research focuses on the mechanisms of Chromatin Inheritance.





**Ridhi Kashyap** who has won a Philip Leverhulme Prize awarded to researchers at an early stage of their careers whose work has had an international impact and whose future research career is



exceptionally promising. The value of the award is £100,000 which will be used to advance Ridhi's research. Ridhi is Professor of Demography and Computational Social Science in the Department of Sociology and Professorial Fellow of Nuffield College. She teaches Demography for Human Sciences (and for Politics) convening the Demography and Population Finals paper for Human Sciences. Ridhi's research spans topics in demography and population dynamics and uses computational approaches for demographic research, forging links between demography and the interdisciplinary field of computational social science. Ridhi's research has focused on gender inequality, considering the demographic implications of son preference as one of

the most striking ways in which gender inequality interacts with demographic behaviours. She has also used social media data, together with survey results, to nowcast global digital inequalities in internet and mobile access, a global Sustainable Development Goal indicator for which there is a significant data gap.

**Eben Kirksey** who has been awarded the title of Professor of Anthropology. Eben is a member of the School of Anthropology and Museum Ethnography as well as a Fellow of St Cross College.

Together with Professor Andrew Gosler he convenes the Finals Human Ecology paper where he lectures on Ecology of Disease and Ethnobiology. Eben was Marshall Scholar at the University of Oxford before going on to gain his PhD at the University of Santa Cruz, California. He has previously taught at Deakin University in Australia and the University of New South Wales Sydney where he helped found one of the world's first Environmental Humanities programmes. He is a cultural anthropologist who is best known for his work on multispecies ethnography, a field that situates contemporary scholarship on animals, microbes, plants and fungi within deeply rooted traditions of environmental anthropology, continental philosophy and the sociology of science.



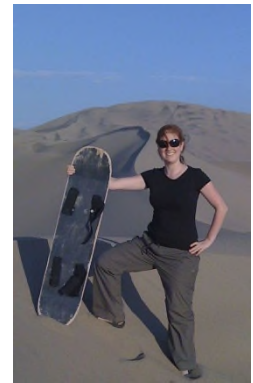
**Chris Norbury** who won a Medical Sciences Division Teaching Award in the category of Major Educator for his substantial and ongoing commitment to the teaching of students in the Medical Sciences Division and the outstanding contribution to teaching excellence. Chris is based in the



Medical Sciences Division where he is Deputy Director of Pre-Clinical Studies, having responsibility for the organization and delivery of the three year degree course that forms the first three years of the standard six year Oxford medical course, as well as being the co-ordinator for Admissions for undergraduate entry to the Oxford Medical School. He is the Kingsland Fellow in Medical Sciences in Queen's College and teaches a range of subjects in biochemistry, medical genetics, pathology and molecular medicine. He has previously given Prelims lectures on 'DNA is the code of life' which Human Sciences students have attended along with

Biochemistry and Biomedical Sciences students. His research, which is based in the Sir William Dunn School of Pathology, concerns post-transcriptional regulation of gene expression, and particularly how this is altered in cancer cells.

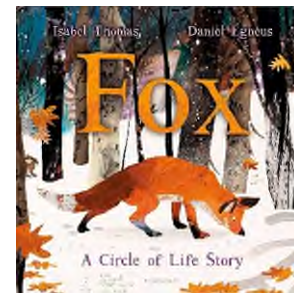
**Jill O'Reilly** who won a Medical Sciences Division Teaching Award in the category of Major Educator. The award was in recognition of her ongoing commitment to the improvement of the teaching of statistics in the four main undergraduate degree courses taught by Experimental Psychology and for her development of new practical class teaching, as well as redesigning of the examination format for mathematics-based examinations within the Medical Sciences Division. These changes have impacted a large number of students including Human Sciences students who attend Jill's Prelims statistics lectures and classes which have received excellent feedback. Jill is an Associate Professor in the Department of Experimental Psychology where her research focusses on computational models of behaviour, thought and brain.



**Isabel Thomas** whose children's book: *Fox: A Circle of Life Story*, illustrated by Daniel Egnéus, was the 2023 Children's Sciences Picture Book winner in the AAAS/Subaru prize for excellence in science books. The AAAS/Subaru Prize for Excellence in Science Books is the biggest international prize



celebrating outstanding science writing and illustration for children and young adults. Isabel read Human Sciences at Mansfield College from 1998 to 2001, and says "It's the perfect degree to inspire and enable a career in science writing – I gained such a broad knowledge, and the ability to seek out those human perspectives that make readers connect with and care about the science." Isabel has written more than 280 books about science and nature for young audiences which have been translated into more than 25 languages. This is not the first time Isabel has won an AAAS Subaru prize: her critically acclaimed picture



book *Moth: An Evolution Story* won the 2020 prize for Excellence in Science Books, and China's Dapeng Children's Nature Book Award 2023. Her most recent titles include *The Bedtime Book of Impossible Questions*, a *Guardian* children's book of the year.

**Kerry Walker** who won a Medical Sciences Division Teaching Award in



the category of Excellent Teacher. Kerry is an Associate Professor of Neuroscience in the Department of Physiology, Anatomy and Genetics and is a Research Associate of St Catherine's College. She gives lectures on sensory system (audition and vision) for the Human Sciences Prelims Physiology course. Following her undergraduate degree in Psychology and Mathematics, she completed an MSc in Neuroscience at Dalhousie before studying for her D.Phil. in Physiology here in Oxford (at Brasenose College). She was a Postdoctoral Researcher in Professor Andrew King's Auditory

Neuroscience Group for 3 years before establishing her own research lab which examines the brain processes that allow humans and other animals to understand sounds, particularly communication calls.

## Report from the Director of Human Sciences Academic Development

As I hope you know, we launched an appeal for £12.5 million in association with our [Human Sciences 50th Anniversary Celebrations | Institute of Human Sciences \(ox.ac.uk\)](#) in 2022. Along with many small and very welcome donations, we have had a couple of notable successes: one alum has offered £100,000 over four years; and we have also had a major donation that supports the [New endowed position in SAME: The Wendy James Associate Professorship in Evolutionary Anthropology](#).

[with a Tutorial Fellowship at St Hugh's College | School of Anthropology & Museum Ethnography \(ox.ac.uk\)](https://www.ox.ac.uk). This means that both tutorial fellowships at St Hugh's are now fully endowed, a fitting reward for the college's strong support of our subject.

We do need more, however, to support a designated statutory professorship of Human Sciences, studentships, and further tutorial fellowships. If you know of anyone who might be willing to help, who might be inspired by the wonderful, world-changing achievements of former Human Scientists and who might want to help ensure that the degree continues to flourish for the next half century, please put me in touch with them.

*David Gellner (david.gellner@anthro.ox.ac.uk)*

## **Mark Howard Wakley Roberts, 7<sup>th</sup> October 1950 – 10<sup>th</sup> June 2023**

*By Daphne Roberts*

Mark Roberts was born in Bradford and attended Bradford Grammar School, studying the sciences. He had a fascination for the natural world and was knowledgeable about all kinds of obscure creatures. Suffering with severe asthma from an early age, it was a great disappointment to him that he was unable to learn to dive. He went up to Brasenose to read Zoology, matriculating in 1969.



After a year in which he found fieldwork rather trying, because his asthma held him back, he switched to Human Sciences, the first new degree in Oxford for many years. He took papers in Animal Behaviour; Human Genetics and Evolution; Human Ecology; Demography; Sociological and Social Anthropological Theory; Social, Developmental and Personality Psychology, and Advanced Quantitative Methods. He was left to find his own tutors at least for the first year of the course. He chose to take three years over it, although some other pioneers completed the course in two, and he graduated with a Class II in 1973. He valued his grounding in the human sciences, which formed a good foundation for his future career, and he maintained a lifelong interest in many of the subjects he had studied.

Many stories of those times became part of the Roberts family mythology, including a famous party at the home of Mary Douglas, 'tutorials' with a certain anthropologist at The Gardeners Arms, the time when Mark fell off his chair in a tutorial because he'd fallen asleep and was 'revived' by a caring tutor with half a Crunchie bar, and some of the lingo, notably the phrase '*Gemeinschaft, Gesellschaft*'.

He spent his time as a student making the most of the numerous available cultural offerings of music, film, theatre and art, while also frequenting the local hostelrys, playing darts in the Buttery, going punting and playing cricket and squash with friends, mostly from other Colleges. On the first day of Freshers' Week Mark met the woman who became his wife, and they were married in 1972. In early 1973 he had a very severe asthma attack and almost died, which proved to be a turning point in his life, as he decided to study Medicine. Although his father was a GP, and Mark had considered Medicine, he had declined to study it straight from school. After a couple more years in which he thought hard about it, while working at Bradford University Library, he enrolled at The



University of Leeds Medical School in 1975. He graduated in 1980 and stayed in Leeds for house officer, senior house officer and medical registrar jobs (as they were then called).

His next move was to Southampton in 1986 for a research registrar post leading to a DM awarded for a thesis entitled *Disablement in a Community Survey of Multiple Sclerosis (MS)*. His dedication is a nod to his time studying Human Sciences too:

The completion of a thesis is increasingly a standard part of medical training – a ‘rite de passage’ (van Gennep, 1960) on the route to a Consultant post. The period during which the thesis is completed has much in common with other ‘rites de marge’: “The general characteristics of such rites of marginality (rites de marge) is that the initiate is kept physically apart from ordinary people, either by being sent away from the normal home surroundings altogether, or by being temporarily housed in an enclosed space from which ordinary people are excluded.” (Leach, 1976, page 77). My family would recognise this description and I thank them for their tolerance.

In 1989, he went to work in North Wales as a Senior Registrar in Geriatric Medicine, spending a year in Cardiff, where he received training in Rehabilitation Medicine, before finding his lifetime’s vocation as a Consultant in Rehabilitation Medicine in Cumbria. He was appointed in 1992 as a single-handed consultant and served both the Cumberland Infirmary in Carlisle, where he was based, and the West Cumberland Hospital in Whitehaven, caring for patients with acquired brain injury, neurological conditions such as MS and others, many of whom were profoundly disabled, while also acting as Clinical Director of the wheelchair and artificial limb services. He was utterly dedicated to the NHS and to public service and built up a comprehensive inpatient and outpatient service for rehabilitation in North Cumbria, in collaboration with valued colleagues in many disciplines.



When he retired in 2010, he took up vegetable gardening, stained glass work and travel. He was delighted to acquire at long last a VW campervan and he and his wife spent many wonderful holidays exploring Europe until the pandemic put paid to such things.

Deteriorating health made the last few years more trying for Mark, but he retained his sense of humour. He made the most of life and took great pleasure in the exploits of his children and more recently his little granddaughter, Martha, born in 2022. He died after a short acute illness in June 2023 and is much missed by his wife Daphne, daughter Felicity, and son Luke.

*Note: Another version of this obituary is published in The Brazen Nose Vol. 57, 2022-2023*

## Meeting Minds Alumni Events

Human Sciences again took part in the University’s Meeting Minds Alumni events in September 2023. We were thrilled that as part of the central talks in the Maths Institute, our alumna, Cat Haigh, gave a fascinating talk about making her documentary *Women Behind the Wheel*. This films her and



fellow Oxford alum, Hannah Congdon's road trip along Central Asian's Pamir Highway from the southern Uzbek deserts through Tajikistan's Pamir mountain range and into Kyrgyzstan, providing an insight into the extraordinary lives of the many women who they met along the way. The talk was interspersed with clips of the film with its stories of female solidarity and empowerment in local communities. (Anyone in the UK can now purchase the film [on-line](#).) Later, Eben Kirskey, Professor of Anthropology, gave an interesting talk on 'Meeting Animal Minds' which provided an insight into his research on multispecies ethnography. Both talks were well attended by Human Sciences and other alumni and led to some interesting discussions. It was wonderful to catch up with so many of you.

This year's alumni weekend is taking place from 20-22 September 2024 and we are delighted that on Saturday 21 September, the Pauling Centre will host a talk by our Head of Institute, Professor Andrew Gosler on 'Knowing and Naming: The Roots of Ethno-ornithology' which will be based on the lecture he gave to the Linnenan Society in January 2024. Do look out for further details which will be circulated nearer to the event as it will be wonderful to see many of our alumni there.

## Older People's Care Networks in Indonesia

*By Elisabeth Schroeder-Butterfill*

Between October 2019 and March 2023, Elisabeth (Lissy) Schroeder-Butterfill (1991-1994 & 2004-2006) and Philip Kreager (Institute of Human Sciences) were involved in a collaborative, comparative



research project on older people's care networks in Indonesia. The research was funded by the Economic and Social Research Council. Together with colleagues at Atma Jaya Catholic University, Jakarta, and HelpAge International, we wanted to understand how older people with care needs (e.g. mobility issues, stroke, Parkinsons, or dementia) are cared for, whether and how they access healthcare, and who emerges as vulnerable to a lack of care. Seven anthropologists conducted ethnographic fieldwork in five sites on Sumatra, Java and Alor. Three ideas were central to our study. First, we consider care a cultural practice. By this we mean that culture shapes preferences for

care providers, what counts as acceptable care, and what being dependent does to a person's social value. This is why we used comparative ethnography with different ethnic groups across Indonesia. Second, we recognise that care is often provided by a mix of family members, neighbours, health care providers and volunteers, and care needs evolve. This is why we collected data on people's complete care networks over time and placed these within the context of people's life histories to understand how care in later life is related to a person's past contributions and relationships. Third, we appreciate that older people differ in terms of gender, wealth, family networks etc. This is why we collected information on people's economic, demographic, and social status and compare care



among sub-populations. Our key findings and policy recommendations are written up in a short Briefing paper which can be downloaded here: <https://www.helpage.org/what-we-do/healthy-ageing/providing-care-for-older-people-in-indonesia/>

As part of the project, we organised training sessions for healthcare volunteers in the different sites, and we developed a pilot intervention in one of the sites, whereby trained volunteers make home visits to older people no longer able to leave the house. As a way of sharing our findings in an accessible way, we made a short film which brings to life insights from the research and the intervention. You can watch the film here: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y\\_4tkXEQTOI](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y_4tkXEQTOI)

Since completion of the project, Elisabeth has become Head of Department in Gerontology at the University of Southampton. As Gerontology – the study of ageing and later life – is as interdisciplinary as Human Sciences, the distance learning and face-to-face Masters and PhD programmes we run might be of interest to Human Sciences undergraduates and alumni. Please have a look at the course we offer here: <https://rb.gy/p2ehgg> and follow us on [LinkedIn](#) and [X](#).

## 2023 Prizes

The 2023 Gibbs Prize for the best performance in the Final Honour School of Human Sciences was awarded to Hannah Gardner Wadham College. *Proxie Accessit* prizes were awarded to Nicole Borgers (Magdalen College), Cindia Li (St Catherine's College) and Finlay Prout (Mansfield College).

The 2023 Wilma Crowther Prize for the best dissertation was awarded to Selena Ridsdill Smith (St John's College) for her dissertation on 'Bacteria, Bonding and Becoming Human: How culture mediates the development of infant oral microbiota through saliva transmission'.

The 2023 joint winners of the Iain Morley prize for the best interdisciplinary dissertation were Hannah Gardner (Wadham College) whose dissertation was entitled 'When marriage becomes unattainable: a cohort analysis of fertility in rural South Africa' (see below) and to Nicole Borgers (Magdalen College), whose dissertation was on 'Why is Aboriginal Australian knowledge necessary for understanding and healing the ongoing effects of colonialism on wellbeing in Aboriginal Australian communities?'

The Bob Hiorns Prize was awarded this year for the best performance in Prelims and the joint winners were Harshnee Baskar (St Hugh's College), Madeleine Bryant (St Hugh's College), Manon Formaggia (Hertford College) and Layla McLeod (Hertford College). Madeleine writes about her experience of moving to Oxford to begin the Human Sciences degree on pp.12–15 of this newsletter

Many congratulations to all our prize winners.

## When Marriage Becomes Unattainable: A Cohort Analysis of Fertility in Rural South Africa

*Hannah Gardner tells us about her dissertation*

My dissertation takes the rapid decline in marriage rates in South Africa as a starting point. Over three generations of women born since 1945, marriage has gone from being nearly universal to its current prevalence of roughly 15% among 18-34 year-olds. When such a fundamental change in how social relations are organized takes place, I wanted to know what happened to childbearing. How did the experience of partnership and entering motherhood change for women when marriage was probably no longer on the cards?

Marriage has declined for several reasons, but most prominent is the enormous inflation in the cost of bridewealth (payments made by the groom to the bride's family over time) over the 20th century, where today it may cost over 13 times the average black South African man's salary. Chronically high unemployment rates compound the unaffordability. Concurrent to this, women are increasingly choosing to shun the prospect of becoming a wife, with its traditional restrictions on behaviour, decision-making and independence, although it remains generally considered the ideal state.

To understand who it is who manages to marry, I used data from over 100,000 individuals in the Africa Health Institute's surveillance site in rural KwaZulu-Natal who had been surveyed regularly between 2000 and 2019. In line with recent literature, I found individuals who are more educated are more likely to marry than their less educated peers. Over time, the relative importance of high education grows, reflecting nascent class formation processes in rural South African society. Women born between 1985–95 who did not complete secondary school education were 63% less likely to get married than women who had completed it. Two generations earlier, for women born in 1945–65, there was only a 10% differential in marriage prevalence by education status.

I found though that it was not only education, used as a proxy for class, that was relevant for marriage in the younger generation. When linking individuals to their mothers in the dataset, the step-wise advantage of higher education on marriage prospects existed only for women whose own mothers were married. Across education groups, the 25 to 35-year-old daughters of unmarried women all had similarly negligible levels of marriage – about 2%-3%. Increasing class appears to increase your marriage prospects, but only if the propensity to marry has been passed down the matriline as well.

Turning then to the question of fertility – if marriage is increasingly the preserve of the middle classes, how have childbearing trajectories changed? Over successive generations since 1945, married and unmarried women's total fertility converges. In the 1945–65 generation, married women had 33% more children than unmarried women, while there is almost no difference in the most recent generation. Concurrently, the timing of first births across education groups diverges, with more educated women having their first child later in more recent generations. Rather than childbearing being organised around marriage and partnership, the relevant parameter appears to become education and class. Important continuities exist though – as average age at marriage has risen and risen across the 20th century, the average age of first birth has remained stubbornly below 20 for all generations.

Education and childbearing occur simultaneously in this population, with school leaving age commonly after 20-years-old and median age at first birth being 19.5. For the generation of women coming of age after the end of apartheid in 1994, education was expected to bring jobs and upward social mobility. In a context of chronic unemployment in former homeland areas, many women are finding this not to be the case. Motherhood and partnership with an employed man have their own respectability though, remaining markers of social status when marriage is no longer common. I find that women in this generation, when negotiating between education, partnership and entering motherhood during adolescence, find that multiple paths are possible. Completing education is easiest if not impeded by a birth, but if a birth is to occur, her family is much more likely to pay school fees and provide daycare if the baby's father is a serious, formally presented boyfriend. The order in which teenagers enter their first serious relationship, have a baby and leave school is not neutral, but important both for her employment and marriage prospects, and is tightly entwined with social and moral narrative about the type of woman she is.

Overall, my dissertation shows that first birth, increasingly decoupled from marital status and intertwined with educational outcomes, still occurs at the same time on average for a woman in the

1985–95 generation as it did for her mother and grandmother. In a context of large socio-political shifts across the 20th century, nascent class formation, high precarity of relationships and rapid reductions in marriage rates, teenage first birth remains a shared adolescent experience across generations.

I'm excited that the dissertation is being published as a chapter in Dr Philip Kreager's upcoming book 'Low Fertilities Past and Present: Studies in Compositional Demography', published by the British Academy and Oxford University Press later this year.

## **Life in the Diaspora: My Human Sciences Perspective**

*By Madeline Bryant (2<sup>nd</sup> Year Human Sciences Student, St Hugh's)*

When I told friends and relatives from my relatively small, largely Jewish, New Jersey suburb that I planned to attend the University of Oxford, I received plenty of strange looks and questions.

"There are great American universities."

"How does your mother feel about this?"

"Why are you going so far? You're so young."

"Are you going to get a British accent?"

Granted, these are fair questions. Most of the other Americans at Oxford are either graduate students or they're 'American' but have been living in a foreign city and attending international school for their whole lives. I was a typical suburbanite, with no business going further than Boston or Maryland for university. And what was I doing, attending a university without a Hillel<sup>1</sup>?

One year later and I don't have a British accent yet, but I have learned much more than my Human Sciences degree.

I chose Oxford because of Human Sciences. I was confident that somewhere in the intersection of biological and social sciences my passions would lie. And I was lucky: I not only enjoyed the subject, but through each tutorial, I learned more about myself.

When I moved to England, I did not fear the transition. Perhaps it was naivety (I call it optimism), but I thought it would be relatively simple. After all, I already spoke English, plus I loved watching the Great British Bake Off.

The first essay question I received was "How does the theory of transnationalism relate to new and different aspects of migration?" If you don't know what that means, neither did I.

Transnationalism is a theory from Human Geography. Similar to globalism or diaspora, it describes networks and communities of people that span nation-states. It focuses on the agency of the migrant, acting upon the world, shaping it to fit their needs and desires. In our globalized world, it is possible for people to maintain business and relationships from the other side of the world. Or at least, that's what transnationalism describes.

I thought I settled into my Oxonian life pretty well. The work didn't phase me, and I loved making friends from all around the world.

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<sup>1</sup> American Jewish organization for university students



Four weeks in, I had an argument with one of my English friends. Another friend told me we just had 'different styles of communication.' I was caught off-guard, and my emotions about my 'transnational' move boiled over.

I was fed up with politeness, keeping my elbows off the table and waiting for my turn to speak. I hated the drab gray skies and the unpredictability of rain. I missed food from my home and most of all, my family and friends.

I had the particular problem of adapting to a new country and university life all at once. The nonchalant attitude I had about moving abroad seemed retrospectively irresponsible. And I returned to the same questions I was asked when I applied. What 18-year-old has any business deciding their lives' trajectory, shipping themselves 5,000 miles away from home?

Although I was seemingly 'happy' in my new life, I felt out of control and overwhelmed. Any small problem would set me over the edge, and my distance from home put a distance between me and my usual support systems.

My mother suggested I start going to Oxford's Jewish society. A typical Jewish mother, she thought that if I surrounded myself with other Jews, my problems would be solved. It wasn't so easy. I quickly noticed that British Jewry was not like the American Jewry I grew up with.

Don't get me wrong, many things were similar to my Jewish community at home. But just enough was different to put me at unease. The words of each prayer remained the same, but the tune was different. Like my home community, everyone seemed to know everyone else. Except this time I knew no one. It felt like going to a high school reunion of a high school I didn't attend.

I was constantly reminded of how different I was, and suddenly being 'American' was my primary form of identity.

The work of J.L. Waters, published in 2002, described a predictable pattern of transnational adaptation. Like me, these wives and children had moved countries by themselves, without any family to support them in their newfound nations. During the first year, there was shock. After the first year, the wives began to adapt to their new lives, and even appreciate their independence and husbands' absence. But you still had to break some eggs to make the omelette. The vast majority of these wives' relationships ended in divorces.

As Waters suggested, the first year of my transnational life between England and America was a period of adaptation. My life was bi-continental. At least every couple months, I moved back and forth across the Atlantic, and I knew I was bound to lose connections on either side.

I felt I had to bend and break to settle into English society and university. Some of my newfound friends left me – they said I was 'too American' – I was shocked by their cruelty. They landed on something that was easy to blame, and something that was particularly painful for me to hear. My 'American-ness' became the bogey-man for my problems.

Meanwhile, I continued to write essays for Human Sciences. In Sociology, I learned about the integration of ethnic minorities into British society. I had never been an ethnic minority before, but just like with transnationalism, I saw my own experience in every reading.

Arguably, the first ethnic minority in England was the Jewish people. Like me, the Jews of the Middle-Ages wanted to integrate into British society, but not assimilate. Assimilation is when an immigrant adapts to the culture of their host society, giving up some of their own practices along the way. Integration is a two-way process, an exchange that facilitates cultural, social, and economic

understanding. The 'Jewish' model of integration is that: Jews joined economic life, but continued to intermarry mostly within their own ethnic and religious group.

My demand for integration was too much for some of my now-lost friends. I know I wasn't cut out for posh British society. I don't understand when to be quiet and when to speak up, when to complain and when to compliment, and which fork to use and in what order. And these Brits were probably exhausted, having to constantly explain everything to an 18-year-old American immigrant.

I had no intention of giving up my American accent, American spellings, or my American sayings. But I felt ashamed and disappointed that I wasn't quite right to fit in with the people I thought could be lifelong friends. I wanted to quit. I even contemplated rustivating to my personal tutor.

My mother again suggested I go back to the Jewish society (JSoc). Even though I had felt uncomfortable there before, I obliged. After all, I didn't have many other friends.

On my journey back to JSoc, I encountered a girl from my college who was Jewish. Talia first reminded me of my mother and my sisters. Her voice, her laugh, and her delight at all things Jewish. With one Jewish friend, I was instantly less intimidated by the society.

Life felt easier at JSoc. I already had so much in common with the people I met there. Most of us went to summer camp, Hebrew school, and even had the same overbearing, but deeply loving, Jewish mothers.

Every Friday night, we broke bread, sang, and enjoyed each other's company. We shared centuries old traditions together 5,000 miles away from my birthplace and another 2,000 miles away from our homeland. I even learned new tunes to the same prayers I already knew. I felt at home, a sense of warmth that I had only associated with America before. My Jewish friends felt like a family.

In Anthropology, I read Janet Carsten's ethnography about 'Milk siblings' amongst the Malay people. Carsten defined 'relatedness,' or a modern conception of kinship. Eating together made people a family. I couldn't help but feel the same way about Oxford JSoc. Not only did we eat together once a week, but were more related, culturally and genetically, than most. Like me, many British Jews were only a couple generations removed from European Jews fleeing violence on the continent.

Although it was clear to me that British Jewry and American Jewry were distinct, I felt an unmistakable sense of kinship to Talia and my other British-Jewish friends. Here was a group of students, nerdy like me, with parents like mine, who interrupted improperly like me, and understood my favourite foods and holiday traditions.

After breaking down, trying, and failing, repeatedly; I was able to look at Oxford without regretting my decision to move. While my friends back home did not always understand me, and neither did my new British friends, I was able to find my identity somewhere in-between America and England. It only took me a year to get it.

I can't say I belong in Oxford. I also can't say I belong in New Jersey. What has shaped my identity the most is my experience of migration. I could have moved to Singapore, and this identity as a migrant would remain. Rather, I have found belonging in my sense of diaspora. Like generations of Jews before me, I am displaced. Although I was not forced to move, I'm still away from many of my friends and family. I'm living life in a new country, where my behaviours and customs are not always understood, nor respected. There is even sometimes an expectation that I will abandon or hide them.

Lucky for me, there are other Jews living here too.

While they have not moved countries themselves, their grandparents or great-grandparents probably did. And before that, their grandparents' grandparents may have moved as well. Our diasporic, or even transnational, community has been fundamentally shaped by displacement. And through it all, across oceans and mountains, we practice the same holidays and we say the same prayers (sometimes in a different tune).

By moving to another country, my most meaningful identity is not as an American, not as a migrant, but as a diasporic Jew.

Moving abroad has been the most difficult experience of my life. I can't say it was easy learning to deal with the NHS, but the hardest part was learning who I was and my place in the world. But the best part was that Human Sciences taught me all about that.

In Genetics, I learned about commonly inherited diseases in Jewish populations.

In Sociology, I learned about Jewish intermarriage and integration.

In Evolution, I learned why so many Jews are lactose intolerant.

In Anthropology, I learned about kinship and commensality.

And in human geography, I learned about my people's diasporic roots.

Every time a paper mentioned the Jewish people, I opened every relevant citation. I read as much as I could and I read myself into every paper. Not only is this a great revision strategy, but it also teaches you to analyse yourself.

Even though I'm away from my Jewish family and miles away from the nearest Kosher food store, I feel a stronger and deeper understanding of my Jewish identity. I'm a transnational migrant, yes, but I've always been a diasporic Jew. And no matter how far I go, that's never going to change. Hopefully, I'll always find other Jews to break bread with.

I'd like to thank my dedicated tutors, lecturers, and university administrators for helping teach me so well. I'd also like to thank the Board of Examiners for awarding me the Bob Hiorns prize and St. Hugh's college for generously awarding me a scholarship.

## Sequencing SARS-CoV-2 in Zimbabwe

*By Dr Teresa Street, Departmental Lecturer in Genetics for Human Sciences and Senior Research Scientists at Modern Molecular Medicine*

In October 2023 I travelled to Harare, in Zimbabwe, to teach a team of scientists how to genome sequence SARS-CoV-2 using Oxford Nanopore Technologies sequencing. The team were taking part in a study to observe COVID infections in Zimbabwe and had a collection of over 600 samples they were keen to sequence.

I spent a week at Professor Tariro Makadzange's Infectious Diseases Research Laboratory (part of the



Charles River Medical Group), teaching the team how to prepare samples and analyse data using the Global Pathogen Analysis Service (GPAS).

I'm so grateful I got to experience scientific research outside the UK, and I couldn't have spent the



week with a friendlier, more welcoming group of people. My time in Harare also really made me appreciate the facilities we have and the things we take for granted. We don't have thunder and lightning storms so powerful they regularly knock out our power for hours at a time; nor do we have labs that leak under the sheer volume of rain that falls. We also take our superfast Wi-Fi for granted: trying to download software and upload data at 2Mb/sec is frustrating, to say the least!

This collaboration would have seriously struggled to achieve all it did in such a short space of time without the help of Bede Constantinides. He made himself available from back home for the whole week to hold our hands through setting up the computing and guiding us through the analysis, so that I could leave the team fully self-sufficient for all their future work.

I'm pleased to report the team have now finished sequencing their 600+ sample collection and are now using ONT sequencing for other studies.

Zimbabwe is an incredible country with fantastic people, and I really hope I have the opportunity to visit again one day!

*This article also appeared on the [Bash the Bug Website](#)*

## **The Oxford Climate Society**

*By Ushika Kidd, Second-Year Human Sciences Student (St John's) and President-elect of the Oxford Climate Society*

The Oxford Climate Society (OCS) is a student-run society headed by co-presidents, an executive team of directors, and many team members across Events, Outreach, Education, and Media. A key vision for OCS, firmly established in the '23-'24 iteration, is to foreground interdisciplinarity and inclusivity within the climate movement.

Focusing on education and accessibility, we have a dedicated Education team to run the highly successful School of Climate Change, a termly programme of eight lectures covering a wide range of topics from the economics of climate policies to learning about Indigenous knowledge and human–nature relations. Additionally in the '23-'24 year, OCS hosted the inaugural 'Planet Art' event in Michaelmas term, and the popularity of the event led to its comeback in Hilary Term. We collaborated with Edgar Wind Society, Anthroposphere (OCS' partner climate magazine), and in Hilary, Oxford Tamil Society. Both 'Planet Art' and 'Planet Art II' were culminations of our belief that bringing together diverse voices, environmental discourse and the arts is fruitful and above all, enjoyable for all. The money raised from ticket sales and Anthroposphere sales went towards ClientEarth and Citizens UK respectively.

This year's committee is proud to continue OCS' legacy as a platform for students to learn about, get involved with, and discuss all things climate and environment–related. Whether this be through our larger–scale events and programmes, attending our many weekly events, or even just keeping up



with our newsletters and social media output, the Oxford Climate Society welcomes all students to consider their role and impact – current and potential – on the environment.

## Graduate News

1974

**Ben Bradley's** (St Catherine's College) new book, *Babies in Groups: Expanding Imaginations*, was published by OUP on 18<sup>th</sup> January 2024. The book, co-authored with Janey Selby and Matthew Stapleton, sets out the discovery that infant sociability is primarily group-based, not one-to-one – as all the current national regulations for e.g. daycare nowadays assume. The authors explore the implications of this finding, documenting, for example, how re-organising two centres for early child education and care on a group-basis has improved life and learning for both babies and educators. The book can be downloaded for free from [OUP's website](#).



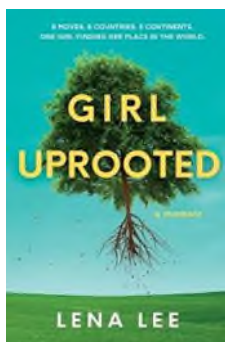
1978

**Mike Spiers** (St Catherine's College) retired from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs after 24 years as development, environment and climate change adviser, becoming a guest researcher at the Danish Institute for International Studies (DIIS), one of the top European think tanks. So far this has resulted in the publication of a working paper on deforestation and climate change, available at: <https://www.diis.dk/en/research/tropical-rainforests-and-global-warming>

1998

**Olivia Nelson** (Queen's) has been the Advocacy Officer for the Floodplain Meadows Partnership, based at the Open University, since 2019. In this role she looks to demonstrate the value of floodplain meadows, to increase public appreciation of them and to advocate for their restoration as a tool for tackling the climate and biodiversity emergencies. The Partnership has had a lot of involvement with meadows local to Oxford and this year is hoping to showcase the [Ecover Fertilise the Future project](#) alongside BBOWT and the Long Mead's Thames Valley Wildflower Meadow Restoration Project. She has got to know Bruce Winney, who many of you may remember as a genetics lecturer and tutor for Human Sciences, before he left the University to pursue a career in Conservation. Bruce now works for the National Landscape Association and Olivia is hoping to work with him on a project exploring the potential for a Grassland Ecoservices Toolkit for farmers. Olivia will be taking part in the [Society for Ecological Restoration for Europe Conference](#) in Estonia in August.

2013



**Lena Lee** (St John's College) published a memoir, *Girl Uprooted*, about her global upbringing as the daughter of a diplomat and ensuing search for a sense of identity and belonging. Growing up, Lena moved countries every three years, her world swinging between East and West. After struggling for many years with her mental health, she recently wrote a deeply personal story about making sense of a life lived between. Told with unreserved candor and vulnerability, *Girl Uprooted* is a fascinating exploration of identity and what it means to belong when you straddle multiple cultures, languages, friendships and homes. *Girl Uprooted* is available on [Amazon](#) and other online bookstores.

## 2014

Between 2022-2023 **Suriyah Bi** was appointed as a Lecturer in Cultural Geography at the School of Geography and Environment associated with Mansfield College. She also delivered lectures and tutorials for the Geographies of Migration course for Human Sciences final year students, which has been really exciting. Suriyah has not only been privileged to work with her undergraduate supervisor Dr Fiona Ferbrache, but also feels honoured to be able to give back to the Human Sciences degree, which gave her so much! She is delighted that the course is continuing to run in subsequent years and is very much looking forward to continuing to lecture on the module. Suriyah has a forthcoming book with Manchester University Press, which began as her undergraduate dissertation and developed into her doctorate research. You can read more about the book here: [Manchester University Press - Bartered bridegrooms](#).



## 2016

**Kathryn (Kaddy) Halliday** (Harris Manchester College) is about to start her final year of Graduate Medicine in Southampton. She has been reflecting on how her studies and tutors at Oxford have shaped her joint academic and clinical interests of today. Although sad to hear the passing of one of those tutors, Dr Piers Nye, the news also brought happy memories of rich and animated discussions together during their physiology tutorials in the springtime warmth of Balliol College gardens.

Before Medicine, Kathryn completed a PhD in epidemiology and medical geography under the supervision of Professor Dibben and Dr Clemens at Edinburgh University. The research called upon all sorts of facets from Human Sciences and hasn't been left to gather dust. Part of her doctorate involved the creation of a novel index to help capture social capital at small geographical level – something notoriously difficult to measure in research. A pilot study is looking at whether the Index might be applied outside of Scotland and contribute to future versions of England's Index of Multiple Deprivation.

She hopes to continue both clinical and academic interests following graduation.

## 2017

**Lucjan Kaliniecki** (St Catherine's, 2017) sends greetings from Aarhus, Denmark! He is excited to share both an update on his current journey carrying the torch for the Human Sciences, and an opportunity to collaborate with Human Scientists past and present.

Inspired by his experience of Arne Jacobsen's exquisite St Catherine's College, he has moved to the architect's home country to continue his studies and deepen his professional endeavours as a Human Scientist. In pursuing a Master's in Intercultural Studies at Aarhus University Lucjan is quickly discovering that interculturality is a unique avenue for meaningful analysis and collaboration, and one that is sympathetic to the interdisciplinarity of the Human Sciences approach.

There is arguably nothing more human than the encounter between the Self and the Other, and subsequent endeavours to collaborate. To this end, and following on from experience in a range of sectors and contexts – from the offices of Whitehall and Parliament, to the farms of the Ecuadorian Andes – Lujan is now acquiring the methodologies necessary to analyse and drive change in diverse professional contexts. For example, he is particularly focused on facilitating cross-cultural mediation and enhancing organisational communication and collaboration processes.

Lucjan is soon to begin his second year of studies, when he will have the opportunity to bridge new professional boundaries and create value outside of the university. Therefore, he would like to extend an opportunity to the Human Sciences community to connect and potentially collaborate.

He is particularly interested in investigating the cross-cultural workplace experience, and analysing online collaboration and facilitating alignment in remote teams. He is also interested in finding out more about professional contexts that work with issues including:

- The technological, environmental and social challenges of modernity
- Nature, coexistence and conservation
- Social justice, diversity and inclusion, cohesion and removing social and cultural barriers
- Mental health, disability and equity

If your professional endeavours intersect with any of these areas, or if you hold roles in HR, consultancy, or advocacy and campaigning, Lucjan would love to connect with you. Your insights and experiences could be invaluable as he navigates the intersection of academia and practical application – as, he hopes, his experiences and insights could be useful to you.

Please feel free to reach out to Lucjan on LinkedIn (<https://www.linkedin.com/in/lucjank/>) or via email at [lcjkn1@gmail.com](mailto:lcjkn1@gmail.com) to explore potential collaboration opportunities, or simply to exchange ideas.

Lastly, to current students considering pursuing a Master's degree in Europe, Lucjan is more than happy to share insights and advice based on his own experiences.

## 2023 Publications by Members of the Institute of Human Sciences

*Names of Institute members are in bold.*

Aburto, J. M., di Lego, V. Riffe, T., **Kashyap, R.**, van Raalte, A., Torrisi, O. 2023. A global assessment of the impact of violence on lifetime uncertainty. *Science Advances* 9: 5  
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