

the OCCASIONAL comment

Welcome to this special edition of the Headington Occasional.

For many of us, Headington often feels like the centre of the universe but at the moment, during this time of crisis, it is the focus of attention for a great many more people than usual. The JR is on the frontline of the region's response to the health emergency. The Jenner Institute, along with all the associated scientists and research facilities that work alongside it, are carrying the hopes of people around the world on their shoulders.

The Headingtonian perspective is shaped by the fact that so many of our friends, family, colleagues and neighbours are working in the field of health and medicine, bearing this weight of expectation and often putting themselves at risk. We are all immensely proud of them and we long for the time when we can embrace them again to show them all how much we love them. We hope that it won't be long and that it will have been long enough.

This issue has something of a 'what I did during lockdown' feel to it but that's no bad thing. The stories we have managed to squeeze in reveal a huge amount about the variety, diversity and ingenuity of the community to which we belong. Everyone is playing their part in making Headington what it is and at the moment that feels like quite a special place to be.

Everyone featured in this issue has been remarkably generous with their time under difficult and sometimes dangerous circumstances, so we are very grateful to them. Many more people offered their stories than we were able to fit into these pages so our apologies if we didn't manage to include them.

We have tried to squeeze in as much as we could, which means that this is a pretty dense issue. At least the charge that there's not much to read in the Headington Occasional is one we will be able to defend.

Barney Jonny

Barney Kemp and Jonny Ives

Under the shark

AN ILL WIND ARRIVES TO BLOW UP A CHARITABLE STORM

It was the message that so many had dreamed of but when it came no one wanted it to happen: free beer at the Butchers.

When it became clear that the Coronavirus lockdown was not going to be a nine-day wonder, the brewery told Pippa and Paul Hitchcock, custodians of the Butchers Arms, that the unsold beer would have to be disposed of. Reluctant to see it go to waste, they invited local beer enthusiasts to help them with the task and perhaps raise some money for charity in the process.

Social media did its work and quite quickly an appropriately distanced queue formed as people arrived with whatever containers they could find to play their part in this time-sensitive takeaway.

Those who feared that they might be intruding on a sombre occasion need not have worried. Despite the serious context of pubs having to close, it proved quite a cheery event.

As Paul told the Occasional, "It was an amazing thing to see so many people coming to our place to support the cause of raising funds for local charities. Everyone was very respectful of space and others, keeping a two-metre distance. It was wonderful to see everyone and we couldn't have asked for more."

The great beer disposal raised £1,200, which was divided equally between four charities: Covid Print Oxford (an Oxford-based collective using 3D printers to make PPE visors for frontline medical staff); Maggie's (cancer support services at the Churchill); the Oxford Health Charity (which enhances the experience of patient, carers and staff at Oxford Health NHS); and Young Dementia UK (supporting those facing early-onset dementia).

NOT GOING OUT, FOR A WHILE AT LEAST

Another pub, another potentially sombre occasion that has turned into a celebration of what we have rather than what we've lost.

The idea of watching a live stream of Chris Meeson sitting in

the empty bar of the Masons Arms on a locked down Saturday night is not everyone's idea of entertainment, no matter how much you might be missing Match of the Day. Add to the mix that he's talking to himself and it would seem more like a cry for help than a social event.

However, the pull of the Masons' Saturday night quiz has proved too much to resist for a great many people. While he makes no secret of missing his punters, Chris is now hosting far more people online than he could ever hope to get into the pub.

Within a few weeks of lockdown the Masons quiz was pulling in more than 300 people from a bewilderingly diverse range of locations. Thanks to Facebook's comments facility, Chris no longer has to put

For households with younger kids, the new normal came in the terrifying shape of a lion-maned boy from Surrey who arrived in your front room at 9am sharp.

up with the cheery abuse of just his regular customers. People from the other side of the world are able to give him grief as well.

FROM RICHMOND TO STOCKHOLM SYNDROM VIA YOUTUBE

While many were frustrated to be locked down at home and restricted to an hour's outdoor exercise each day, to others it came as something of shock to discover that an hour's outdoor exercise had become some sort of socially responsible baseline expectation. As if a deadly virus wasn't enough, the 'new normal' was a horror show that involved being dragged outside to wander about the streets and parks of Headington with the rest of your family in the name of the greater good.

For households with younger kids, the new normal came in the terrifying shape of a lion-maned boy from Surrey who arrived in your front room at 9am sharp and

used a deadly mixture of boundless energy and relentless positivity to grab entire families by the throat and subject them to a high-intensity work out.

Anyone not safely in bed or already out of the house was immediately captured. From his front room in Richmond, Joe Wicks reached through his YouTube channel to break us on the wheel of a 30-minute exercise session.

Within days, the groaning and whimpering of parents in pain could be heard on every street. Despite the protests of aching hamstrings and screaming glutes, he kept going. Spot the difference challenges and geography quizzes. Shout-outs and wheels of fortune. Fancy-dress Fridays and charity fund-raising. We were powerless to resist.

Into the second week, the aches had eased and "getting up for Joe" had become part of the morning routine. New exercises began to seem like fun and the old exercises had got a bit easier. Spider-Man lunges were something to welcome with a smile like an old friend and a 30-second plank had become a bit of a breather.

By the time his little daughter ("Come on, Indy!") began to wander in front of the camera we were doing 40 seconds of reps with 20-second rests and were fully invested in metacarpals, plaster casts and the removal of surgical wiring. By the time Mrs Wicks had joined him, the struggle was finished. He had won the victory over ourselves. We loved our irritatingly bouncy but thoroughly likeable little brother.

FROM BANGING PANS TO A STRING QUARTET

Like so many things that quickly become a regular part of our lives, it is difficult to remember quite how it started. From a suggestion on social media as the full horror of the impact of Coronavirus began to become apparent, the Thursday evening 'clap for carers' captured the general mood and by the third Thursday it had officially become A Thing.

How it might end is now a major

concern for many. The banging of pans held sway for a while and kept us amused during the novelty of lockdown but, as the weeks became a month and more months seemed to be queuing, we settled in for the long haul. The Thursday Clap became a regular appointment with neighbours, an opportunity for some socially distanced solidarity and a little community interaction.

Then there was music and some singing. From saxophones and accordions in the Quarry, the Thursday Clap quickly escalated to violin duets under the shark and string quartet recitals in Old High Street.

We can only hope that our friends at the Jenner Institute make a breakthrough before someone gets a harp out.

IN SEARCH OF CULTURE: FINDING ART WHERE WE MAY

No sooner had the last issue of the Occasional dropped through the doors of subscribers and other lucky recipients than the pandemic crisis rendered its carefully crafted [Some say *hastily lashed together*. Ed] listing of events, lectures and gatherings as redundant as Dominic Cummings' conscience.

The Oxford Literary Festival, the Headington Festival, the Quarry-Roubaix – all fell victim to the need to stay at home and protect the NHS. However, some events

in the listing live on in an online format, among them Oxfordshire Art Week, which always serves as a showcase for the work of artists across the city, not least those painting and potting, crafting and creating under the shark.

You can find details of all the artists via www.artweeks.org.

LIGHTS, CAMERA, INACTION: UP THE HILL IN THE FRAME

A lucky few who have not been donning the PPE on the frontline, running the home-school environment or running actual an actual school have apparently been able to kick back and catch up on some viewing.

To assist these fortunate (and probably fictitious) individuals with their not-quite-holiday entertainment, the Occasional has provided a guide to films featuring the city down the hill. James Cateridge, senior lecturer in film studies at Brookes, stepped into the role of the Occasional's very own Dr Film and curated a cinematic selection to whet the appetite of anyone

wanting to see the dreaming spires on a big (or as big as your home viewing system allows) screen.

It's a fascinating list of great works but many Occasional readers won't be able to stop themselves from asking the obvious question: what of Headington on the silver screen? Shawdownlands is perhaps the most obvious answer and may perhaps be number one in a field of one.

However, the attentive Headingtonian will find something of

From saxophones and accordions in the Quarry, the Thursday Clap quickly escalated to violin duets under the shark and string quartet recitals in Old High Street.

interest in the final offering of the Marvel Cinematic Universe, Avengers: End Game. Near the start of this lengthy final chapter of the Marvel storybook, Tony Stark is discussing the possibility

of time travel and refers to "the Deutsch Proposition". Although no more than a bit of scriptwriter's nonsense, it is probably a reference to David Deutsch, a Quarry-based quantum physicist of international renown, whose book The Fabric of Reality has a chapter on time travel.

And that's all we have until Brookes film studies alumni either illuminate us or make a film with a story set under the shark.

AN ILL WIND AT YOUR BACK

In these unusual times nothing has been more surprising than seeing roads free of traffic. It took a little while to get used to, an eerie early-morning hush that lasted all day, but before long it was noticeable that many more kids and families were on their bikes and making the most of the opportunity to ride quietly and safely.

Down the hill, seeing the city with so few vehicles on the move felt like being part a film set a century ago, with occasional buses, rattling bicycles and beautiful buildings an important part of the script. We can only hope that this is story with a happy ending.

A WORD OF THANKS

Many thanks to everyone who suggested an edition of the Occasional would be welcome in these uncertain and unsettling times. Thanks also to all our subscribers, advertisers and supporters, all of whom have played a crucial role in getting us this far. Particular thanks to to Debbie Laidlaw and Headington Action who made this issue possible. ●

Gil



by Norm



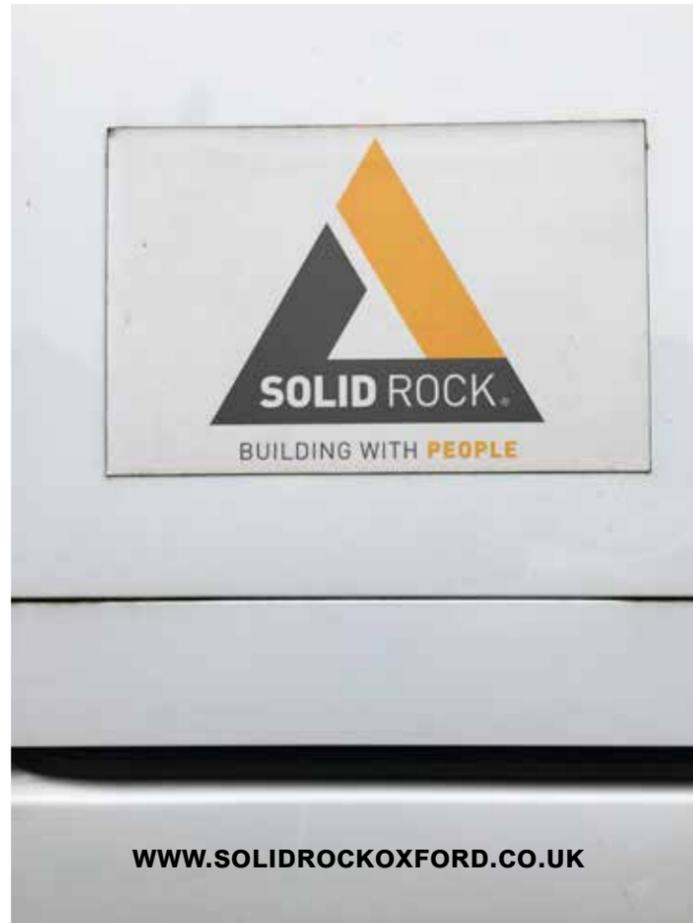
COVID-19 : Community support is available in Headington

The current crisis has made everyday life more challenging. There is much support available locally in Headington, for example

- collecting prescriptions/medications
- picking up or organising groceries
- checking people are ok
- advice on services provided by local agencies

If you or someone you know in Headington needs help with day to day matters visit headingtonaction.org where there are details of local support contacts.

For more complicated needs or for emergency support get in touch with the Oxford City Council contact centre at 01865 249811 or oxford.gov.uk/communityassistance



Community matters in times of crisis

The Waitrose & Partners Community Matters scheme is usually a question of how many green tokens have been dropped into which slot but the Coronavirus emergency brought some changes. The Occasional spoke to Marie Hale about how the Headington Waitrose & Partners has been able to help out at a time of crisis.

Anyone who visits Headington Waitrose & Partners will have seen, if not always paid much attention to, the Community Matters project. Customers with small children will know it as the ultimate destination of the 'green money', the charity tokens that their junior shopping assistants rush off to drop in the slot under the name of one of that month's chosen charities.

The green totalizer columns have become a part of everyone's visit to the store and although the green tokens have temporarily disappeared, the support for local charities and good causes has continued; in fact, it has been significantly expanded.

Marie Hale looks after the Community Matters scheme as part of her role as a Partner at the Headington branch. She explained how it usually works.

"The most visible aspect of Waitrose & Partners Community Matters involves three charities each month sharing £1,000, with the green tokens indicating the proportion of the total. Charities and local groups are invited to add their names to the list of beneficiaries and we try to involve as many as we can over the course of a year. The Community Matters scheme also enables us to offer support in other ways as well, so if any local schools, care homes or charities are having events we are often able to contribute prizes to the tombola or the raffle."

However, the Coronavirus crisis has required the Community Matters scheme to react to a new environment.

"Community Matters has changed slightly because we can't really have everyone handling tokens," Marie said. "So the staff in the branch picked three charities this month: CEF, the food bank based on the Slade; Oxfordshire Domestic Abuse; and Barton Community Centre. Each were provided with gift vouchers to the value of £333 and we've been able to help these organisations get what they need for the people they are supporting."

Additional funding has also been made available by the John Lewis Partnership as part of a national Community Matters Fund support scheme. Funding totalling over £1

million has been made available to branches across the UK.

"Each branch has received an additional £3,000," Marie said. "This can be used by the branch manager to help anyone in their local community who might need assistance. It has allowed us to be quite flexible about who we can help and how we can help them."

Since the lockdown, Marie's role has expanded dramatically. From her usual few hours a week, she has been working pretty much full time all week, ferrying and delivering produce and packages to wherever they might be needed. The intensive care unit at the John Radcliffe hospital has been getting regular deliveries of snacks, drinks and ice lollies to help staff cope with the demands of working long hours with restrictive protective clothing and equipment. Each of the eye department's 40 staff received a care package that included toiletries, hot chocolate packs and boxes of chocolates. Wheatley Park School



Marie Hale: Partner

has opened its own food bank to support pupils and their families and is receiving regular deliveries depending on what they need. Food and care packages are being delivered via CLIC Sergeant for families undergoing chemotherapy and also to ODAS, the Oxfordshire Domestic Abuse Service. Some local

primary schools are also receiving fresh fruit courtesy of Community Matters.

"It's been hard work but hugely rewarding to be able to help so many people in so many ways," Marie said. "Food banks have been able to tell me what they need and we've been able to help. We've sorted out shopping for people who haven't been able to get out of their house. And with everyone locked down for Easter, I was able to be the Easter bunny. We delivered hundreds of Easter eggs to departments across all the Headington hospitals, to primary schools and care homes.

"We did the same thing with

Mother's Day flowers. We gave them to churches, hospitals, primary schools, anyone who might appreciate a bunch of flowers."

As stock levels in the store have returned to more normal patterns, the pressure on Marie's distribution system has eased but there are still plenty of people and organisations that are being helped. The work of Marie and her colleagues at the Headington Waitrose & Partners branch on behalf of their community has been recognised by Sharon White, chairman of the John Lewis Partnership, after White received letters of thanks from Headington residents.

Marie admitted that it is nice to be acknowledged but that it is really a reflection of the ethos of the organisation.

"Waitrose really is a partnership," she said. "Store managers are given the flexibility that enables them to be generous and understanding. They are trusted to make appropriate decisions and they in turn trust my colleagues and I to really take our work in the community seriously."

"We are able to think about what we can do rather than just what we need to do and it is nice to be able to take that ethos to the customer's door in the current climate." •

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Assistance, support and supplies in Headington

All non-essential shops and businesses have been required to close under the terms of the Coronavirus emergency regulations for an indefinite period. While day-to-day life has become a lot more challenging for many people there are plenty of places to find help, support, supplies and deliveries. This is a list of just some of the local shops and businesses still open, along with the many groups and organisations able to offer assistance. If you think you might need help, please ask.

This list is not exhaustive and is really only a guide to what supplies and services may be available. It was as accurate as we could make it as we went to press. Please check with the relevant websites, Facebook or the ever-excellent Headington News at www.headington.org.uk, to whom we owe our usual debt of gratitude for so much information and detail.

HEADINGTON ACTION

www.headingtonaction.org
Headington Action has been supporting the local community response to the coronavirus emergency. If you or someone you know in Headington needs help with day-to-day matters visit headingtonaction.org where there are details of local support contacts.

The Headington Action website has contact details for the street-by-street support network established by Oxford Together (also known as Oxford Hub). There is a direct email contact for almost every street in Headington that puts anyone in need of help, advice or assistance in touch with the relevant Oxford Together neighbourhood coordinator for your street or area.

Support might include collecting prescriptions/medications, picking up or organising groceries, checking people are OK or advice on services provided by local agencies.

OXFORD CITY COUNCIL

www.oxford.gov.uk
The Oxford City Council website has links to all the current information and advice about coronavirus. If you have specific needs or enquiries, or emergency support, visit www.oxford.gov.uk.

For more complicated needs or for emergency support you can get in touch with the Oxford City Council contact centre at 01865 249811.

Information on the city council website includes:

- support for vulnerable people
- directory of essential support
- volunteering opportunities
- businesses still open
- business support
- guidance for taxi drivers

- school closures
- waste collections
- activities to stay healthy
- guidance for people who may be homeless

The city council has created six hubs across the city to deal with complex issues in local areas. The Barton Hub is covering Headington, Sandfield, Risin-ghurst, Barton. Contact the city council with any problems in the first instance.

OXFORD TOGETHER

www.oxfordtogether.org
Oxford Together is a community-led response to Covid-19 coordinated by Oxford Hub. They are working with communities and local services to provide key functions to support those who are at high-risk or currently self-isolating, including:

- street champion recruiting and training, empowering local people to coordinate support on their street
- daily phone check-ins for isolated people
- practical support, such as shopping.

Volunteers receive briefings and back-ground checks if they are coming in contact with vulnerable individuals.

Oxford Hub, which has created the Oxford Together initiative for the current crisis, is "a centre for social action that's open to everyone, and that takes a collaborative approach to solving some of today's most pressing issues".

HEADINGTON MARKET

www.headingtonmarket.org
Many of the Headington Market traders have moved online. You can order online from nearly all of your favourite traders for home delivery or to a local collection point.

They are also working to provide bulk deliveries by special arrangement to support street facilitators, charities, and other groups who are distributing food within local communities.

Visit www.headingtonmarket.org to order directly from traders and support your local market. Many are offering free delivery. Visit the Headington Market website for all delivery and ordering details.

Headington Market traders still open for business online include:

• STYAN FAMILY PRODUCE

Order veggie boxes, honey and eggs for collection on Saturdays from 38 Sandfield Road (order by 10pm Thursdays). Veggie box delivery available when ordered from Cornfields.

• BLACKLANDS ORGANICS

Fresh organic produce. Fruit and veggie boxes delivered by Jamie and his team on Saturdays from the Blacklands Organics Oxfordshire farm.

• APPLE'S PANTRY

Thai food, bakes, plus Oxfordshire free range eggs and more. Organic raw honeys, artisan jams, preserves and chutneys, plus ready meals freshly prepared to order, available in portion sizes from individual to family, either chilled or frozen. Minimum order £30. Free delivery to Headington Wednesdays and Fridays

• EADLES REDWAYS FARM

Award-winning meats, poultry, sausages and more. Free delivery Mon-Sat. No minimum purchase.

• CORNFIELD BAKERY

Gorgeous breads, cakes, bakes, and more. Also delivering Styans veggie boxes. Free delivery to Headington on Saturdays (last orders 1pm Fri). Minimum purchase £7.50.

• ECO BONOBO

Your favourite plastic-free, eco-friendly store. All products for home and pantry are zero waste, cruelty-free, and vegan-friendly. Also whole foods. Delivery £3.95 or free for orders over £30.

• N&J THAMESDOWN NURSERY

Gorgeous plants to brighten up your home and garden, delivered to your door. Top-quality plants and brilliant customer service. Also selling eggs. Select from the plant list and place your order by email or phone. Free delivery available.

• MUNDIES SOUTH AFRICAN FOOD

Featuring delicious South African boerewors sausages and other treats. New website for online ordering.

• GO GREEK SOUVLAKI

Now Oh My Greek! Online Market. You've loved Go Greek souvlaki and now you can shop online at Oh My

Greek online market. Featuring meats, cheese, legumes, wine, sweets, pastries, and much more.

• DELI AT NO. 5

Best of British cheeses, butter, jams, wine, and deli items, all sourced from top-quality producers within the UK.

• THE FRESH FISH SHOP

Top-quality, sustainably caught fresh fish and other seafood. Fish cakes, platters and more, all delivered in a temperature-controlled box.

• PINDY'S SAMOSAS

For a taste of authentic Punjabi home cooking, delivered direct to your home. Pindy's offers the finest quality samosas, bhajis, paneer rolls and curries cooked fresh, from family recipes. Personal delivery for Headington customers.

• STONE PINE DESIGN

Beautiful handcrafted cards.

• PICKS ORGANIC FARM

Award-winning organic meats, poultry, and sausages direct to your door. Also featuring organic fruit, vegetables, wines, condiments and many other grocery items.

• HARRY THE WOODTURNER

Oxfordshire-based. Beautiful handcrafted items, including bowls, chopping boards, pens and more. Unique gifts or practical pieces to brighten up your home.

MENTAL HEALTH HELPLINE 24/7

People of all ages living in Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire can get mental health support for themselves or a loved one round the clock by using the Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Mental Health Helpline, launched by Oxford Health with third sector partners earlier this month. This service is open to all and it's not just for those in crisis but for anyone who is concerned about their emotional or mental wellbeing at the current time.

- Adults: 01865 904997
- Children and young people: 01865 904998.

BARTON COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

www.bartoncommunityassociation.com
The Barton Community Association is still

operating and offering assistance, advice and support to everyone who might need help. Contact them via the website, the Barton Community page on Facebook or get in touch with Sue or Tanya directly:

- Sue Holden
sue@bartoncommunityassociation.com
07866 460446
- Tanya Field
tanya@bartoncommunityassociation.com
07929 868284

BANKS AND BUILDING SOCIETIES

Many of Headington's banks and building societies are now open but may be operating restricted hours. For example:

- **NatWest:** 10am to 1pm, Mon–Fri
- **Santander:** 10am to 2pm, Mon–Fri
- **The Coventry Building Society:** 9am–3pm Mon, Tue, Thu, Fri, Sat and 9.30am–3pm Wed.
- **The Skipton Building Society:** 9.30am–3pm

SUPERMARKETS

The following supermarkets in central Headington are open:

- **Co-op:** Open as usual. Special hour for elderly 9.30–10.30, Mon–Fri
- **Iceland** has reduced its Monday to Saturday opening hours to 9am–6pm, and Sundays to 10am–2pm. First hour each day is dedicated to older/vulnerable people, and the last to NHS workers
- **Sainsbury's Local:** Open as usual
- **Tesco's** has changed its hours to 6am–10pm each day
- **Waitrose** has changed its hours to 8am to 7pm, Mon–Sat (Sunday as before). Entrance via the car park
- **Priority** for elderly and vulnerable 8am to 9am Mon–Sat and 9.30 to 10.15 on Sundays

SMALLER FOOD SHOPS

Small food shops still open include:

- Headington Butchers & Groceries
- Headington Food and Wine
- Holland & Barrett
- Polish food shop
- Thong Heng Chinese supermarket

TAKEAWAY FOOD

Restaurants and cafes are allowed to continue as takeaways under the current emergency regulations. Headington's takeaway offer currently includes:

- **Adria:** takeaway pizza
- **Asian Mama** (www.asianmama.co.uk)
- **Black Boy**, 5–9pm: (www.blackboyoxford.co.uk)
- **Café Bonjour** (find them on Facebook)
- **Domino Pizza** delivery only
- **Rio's Piri** takeaway and delivery
- **Craft Burger:** available via Deliveroo Wed-Sun 5-9pm

COCO NOIR

www.coco-noir.com
Headington's very own speciality chocolatier delivering Belgian and Italian delicacies to your door locally or further afield by post.



THE BLACK BOY COMMUNITY SHOP

www.blackboyoxford.co.uk
Having been required by the Coronavirus regulations to close shortly after its reopening, The Black Boy bounced back with the opening of a community shop that offers a wide range of fresh fruit and vegetables, meat, salad and dairy produce, along with store cupboard essentials, including flour.

The shop is open Monday to Saturday 10am to 5pm and offers a reservation service for NHS workers to enable them to place an order and collect after their shift. Orders for delivery can also be made online via the website, with free delivery within a very generous 10-mile radius of the shop.

HEADINGTON DOCTORS' SURGERIES

THE MANOR SURGERY

www.manorsurgeryoxford.co.uk
Patients are requested to phone the surgery or use the online form in the first instance. Prescriptions and video consultations still available.
Tel: 01865 762535
Email: manorsurgery@nhs.net

HEDENA HEALTH

www.hedenahealth.co.uk
Surgeries at Bury Knowle Health Centre and Barton Surgery are open but all patients are asked to make contact via the eConsult forms on the website



WATERPERRY GARDENS

www.waterperrygardens.co.uk
Accepting orders for local deliveries on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday. Stocks of seeds, compost, pots, furniture, roses, shrubs and indoor plants that we can deliver. Phone order 01844 339226 to place your or email mretallick@waterperrygardens.co.uk

RECTORY FARM

www.rectoryfarmpyo.co.uk
Farm shop open with appropriate social distancing measures in place. Online ordering service available with a few changes. Order and pay online. £5.50 delivery charge with minimum order of £20. Order at least 48 hours in advance. Enquiries via email to: orders@rectoryfarmpyo.co.uk

ESSENTIAL NON-FOOD SHOPS

Essential non-food shops that are still open, some with reduced services:

- **Il Botanico:** flower deliveries. Free delivery on orders over £25. Email ilbotanico.oxford@gmail.com or phone Gianni and Gioia on 07707 888373
- **Headington Homewares:** bedding plants available for delivery. Phone 01865 775271 to discuss your requirements. Staff are also able to serve personal shoppers in person at the door.
- **Savers**

- **Boot's the Chemist**
- **Headington Dry Cleaners and Alterations** (Mon–Sat, 10am–4pm, free dry cleaning service for NHS staff and carers in uniform)
- **Rowlands Pharmacy** in Osler Road (open 10am–1pm and 2pm–5pm)
- **Headington Heating & Plumbing Supplies:** heating and plumbing supplies. 57 Lime Walk, Mon–Fri 8am–3pm
- **Gardiner's Opticians,** Osler Road
- **Blanchford's,** Windmill Road: orders and deliveries for customers with trade accounts only.

DOWN THE HILL

OXFORD COVERED MARKET

www.oxford.gov.uk/coveredmarket
Down the hill, the Covered Market is closed to visitors but is operating a delivery service on behalf of many of the traders still operating online. Visit the Covered Market page on the city council website and click to order from a wide range of suppliers, including:

- **BONNERS OXFORD**
Fresh fruit and veg, plus combined packs from other fresh produce traders and florist listed below
- **CARDEWS & CO**
Tea and coffee, plus related gifts
- **M. FELLER & DAUGHTER**
Family butchers (Order by phone only, 9am - 1pm, 01865 251164)
- **OXFORD SKATE CO.**
Skateboarding equipment and clothing
- **PIEMINISTER**
Hot pies meat, veggie and vegan to your door
- **TEARDROP BAR**
Locally brewed ale, cider and combined fresh produce packs. Email: teardropbar@gmail.com
- **THE COLLECTORS COMPANY**
Collectable items. Model-making kits, toys
- **THE GARDEN**
Fresh flowers and seed shop. Add flowers as part of your fruit and veg order with Bonners
- **THE MARKET CELLAR DOOR**
Wide selection of wines.
- **THE OXFORD CHEESE SHOP**
Wide selection of cheeses, crackers and wine
- **THE OXFORD SOAP COMPANY**
Handmade soap
- **WICKED CHOCOLATE**
Chocolate gifts available as part of your veg delivery with Bonners

LOCAL OXFORD

www.localoxford.co.uk
Pedal & Post, Oxford's very own team of superhero cycle couriers, is working with the Covered Market and other businesses in the city to offer a quick and convenient online shopping experience. Order from numerous suppliers via one simple online shop and pay one delivery fee (£3). The aim is to boost the local economy while showing that a low-carbon economy is possible. •

Richard Bradley Action, opportunity and connectivity

The chair of Headington Action talks to the Occasional about the organisation's role, it's reaction to the Corona crisis and how being a bit of a nuisance can be helpful.

Like so many of us, Richard Bradley became a Headingtonian by choice rather than accident and 20 years after he and his wife, Hilary, decided to make Headington their home, he is among the most active of active citizens, chairing Headington Action and supporting numerous other groups and organisations along the way.

"Hilary and I were married in 1999 and up to that point Hilary had been living in London and I was living in Buckingham," he said. "We had to choose somewhere to live and Oxford seemed like a good place on the map. I needed to travel round the south of England quite a lot, particularly Swindon, and she needed to get into London."

West Oxford had originally seemed the best place to be but the pull of Headington, or more accurately the lure of a particular house in Headington, was hard to resist.

"Quite by accident we found this house in the Quarry," he explained. "We loved it and so we decided that we would come here. But apart from a couple of visits over the decades as visitors, we didn't know Oxford at all. Once we decided we liked this house, we found that Hilary knew somebody who lived in east Oxford. We asked them questions about the Quarry. They knew someone who lived on the street and we chatted to them. We were convinced that it was a nice place to be with good people, although I was a bit concerned about the traffic."

As befits someone who spent a career specialising in project management, procurement and strategy, Richard did some further research.

"I actually came and sat outside the pub one day at 8am and looked at the traffic," he said. "It didn't seem bad – this was 20 years ago remember – and it was no reason not to come. So we bought the house and we've been delighted. It's a great place to live."

Given that it is difficult to avoid mention of traffic in any conversation in or about the Quarry, it is not surprising that the subject cropped up but it seems that traffic and transport is a theme that runs through Richard's Oxford story.

"It wasn't long before I came across the Oxford Civic Society and I thought their walks and talks would be a nice way to find out about the city and to meet people," he said. "I joined the society and began to get involved. I got to know Paul Cullen, who was very involved with the



Pedestrians Association at the time. He was interested in traffic management as part of promoting cycling and walking. I was interested as well and got hooked in."

But getting involved with the promotion of cycling and walking led to greater involvement with cars.

"I then got interested in car clubs, which were just starting," he said. "There were some commercial organisations, including one in central Oxford, but CommonWheels were just coming on the scene and I began to think about how we might be able to get this going in east Oxford."

Working with others with a similar agenda, Richard was able to help make the case to CommonWheels that Oxford would be a viable location for their operation. Now CommonWheels have a strong presence in the city, particularly in Cowley and Headington, and their white cars with the green logos on the doors are a regular part of the local streetscape.

"The car club project is really where I came across Headington Action," he said. "I was looking for a bit of support and perhaps a bit of funding to promote car clubs so I got involved with Headington Action. The car club idea sort of took off by itself but we certainly helped it on its way."

Next on Richard's traffic-related story line was the campaign for a 20mph speed limit across the city. Represent-

▲ Richard Bradley: keeping the Occasional at an appropriate distance

ing the Civic Society, and working with the Pedestrian Association and CycloX, Richard chaired the group. It was an idea that had found its time and within a year of the campaign group being established the county council announced that it would be adopting a 20mph limit for Oxford.

"So that's really how I got into community action. I dabbled a bit and was a bit of a nuisance, and then I got involved with Headington Action."

Set up around 2005 with support from the city council, Headington Action was established with a remit to support people living and working in Headington. An umbrella group representing local organisations, it undertakes projects and serves as a forum for information exchange among local groups. Having spend five or six years as treasurer, Richard became chair last year.

"The role of Headington Action is really to connect and bring people together," he said. "It works

through other organisations so its public profile is not so important but the Headington Festival and the weekly market are two good examples of projects that have brought people together."

While the festival and the market are Headington Action's most high-profile events, its projects also include the Headington flower baskets, the Christmas lighting and the associated switch-on event, which has grown over recent

years into a very popular annual gathering. Less visible is the Headington Action grant fund, which offers support to local community groups and organisations.

"The market been going for ten years now and it has been a great success," Richard said. "Not only in commercial terms – it is one of Headington Action's major sources of revenue – but in terms of bringing people together and adding joy to the area. Of course, everything is uncertain at the moment but we have a new market manager, Ewan, and we hope that it will be able to thrive again after the Coronavirus emergency."

The issue of the market was one of the first challenges that the pandemic presented to Headington Action.

"The first action we had to take was to sort out the market," Richard said. "We realised quite quickly that we couldn't run it with the need for physical distancing. However, the online version of the market has been going really well and we're working on how we might be able to get up and running again as soon as it becomes possible."

Before the Covid-19 crisis emerged to reshape every aspect of daily life, Headington Action had been developing a number of themes for its work. This agenda included local environmental projects, tackling social isolation and exploring the role of social engagement in health improvement. With the Coronavirus lockdown in place, these topics looked to be more relevant than ever.

"With the lockdown situation, we realised that what Headington Action had to do was encourage street-level community support," Richard said. "That was one of our aims but Oxford Together was already setting up a network so we felt that the best thing to do was support them. We also felt that we needed to be a point of contact for all matters Headington, serving a role as an information exchange. This is working quite well and I chair a weekly meeting to review what's going on."

"We're moving now to thinking about the future. Clearly there have been a lot of very bad consequences of Covid-19 but there have been some good things and we're thinking about how we might be able to build on these for the benefit of our community."

"There seem to be three main areas: one is how to build on how communities have been able to help themselves and support each other. Another is the clear environmental improvements, especially noise and pollution. How do we support others doing that? Third is the new ways of working. Online conferencing and online trading have really become the norm, and there are new ways of working with all the structures of local government."

"Ultimately, it's about connectivity between people and building on the connections that have been made." ●

The joys of working from home

Graeme Wearden

While travel broadens the mind, being banned from travelling broadens the waistline.

Like most businesses, the Guardian newspaper instructed staff to work from home (if possible) back in March. This has meant I've swapped one of Headington's longer and earliest commutes for one of its shortest.

Rather than rising like a weary lark to catch the 4.40am Oxford Tube to London, I get a lockdown lie-in until perhaps 6.30am, before travelling the one metre from bed to desk for another day of drama in the financial world and the global economy. Thanks to a natty three-monitor setup, it's possible to watch the world's stock markets, monitor Bloomberg TV, Sky and the BBC, read the latest economic data and write all about it, within a stone's throw of Shotover.

Exercise has already been neglected. Instead of cycling across London on a hired bike, one rarely journeys beyond the biscuit tin and the fridge. But there are compensations, not least Aldens the butchers delivering meat, veg and even wine to keep the home newsroom fed and watered. One particularly joyous moment was discovering that the Oxford Cheese Company would dispatch 2kg of their finest wares by bike.

For a regular commuter, the Covid-19 pandemic has led to a new experience –

The trials of working from home

Graeme Wearden

If journalism is the first draft of history, then recent newspapers have only carried the history of bad news. And the lockdown has proved that misery does crave the company of one's colleagues.

The economics and financial sector (which I liveblog for the Guardian) has been through some busy weeks. First the stock market tanked, then came the profit warnings and the job cuts. France fell into recession. Six million Americans lost their jobs in a week. UK factories and shops shuttered. Economists frantically redrew their graphs with longer y-axes to accommodate unprecedented bad news.

It is only money but March's market madness was genuinely unnerving to report on. And seeing hundreds of billions of pounds wiped off the FTSE 100 is particularly alarming when watched alone, without the comfort blanket of knowledgeable colleagues to help explain exactly what's going on.

For previous big events – Brexit, Donald Trump's election, the Scottish independence referendum, the Greek debt crisis – the newsroom has been buzzing. After the EU referendum in 2016, a small crowd gathered round my Reuters terminal to see the FTSE 100 falling faster than a cyclist down Headington Hill. Now, we reporters have been trying to piece things together remotely.

Julian Barnes once wrote that the New Yorker's fact-checking department "bug you to hell, and then they save your

spending lots of time with the family, rather than with fellow hacks at the Guardian's Kings Cross HQ. Sharing the Today programme over breakfast, wondering why the latest sourdough loaf resembles a stone discus, or cracking a spelling and grammar exercise from Windmill Primary (most educational!). These things will be missed once normal life resumes.

Another lockdown upside is that children across Headington, and beyond, now have a better idea of what their parents do all day in between juggling the school run. For us, that meant my wife video-conferencing clients downstairs while I tracked the swooning stock markets. Zoom in the kitchen, gloom in the attic.

Not commuting also saves several hours per day. Time to put to good use – making a dent in the pile of quality unread books by the bed. Or a new hobby – growing an ill-advised beard, which may have to go to avoid the mockery of colleagues when we meet again.

Being at home during this crisis also brings one closer to the friends and neighbours nearer to the firing line, from the teachers grappling with online classes to builders and architects wondering where the next job will come from. Plus, of course, those heroes manning our hospitals and shops, delivering our post and emptying the bins.

Thanks to Slack and Google Chat, the Guardian's team of editors and subs have continued to protect my posterior but online messaging is no substitute for leaning over to the boss for a quick 'how does this sound?' while hammering out a newflash.

In one sense newspapers are lucky right now: there's no shortage of readers interested in the coronavirus crisis; the news grinds on with plenty to fill the paper and keep the website buzzing. But reporters are also missing the newsroom banter and the chance to gossip at the coffee machine about the affair of the nation. Now a trip to the kettle runs the risk of being hauled into PE with Joe Wicks, or distracted by a hefty pile of washing-up.

I also find I'm pining for the Oxford Tube, whose drivers have shuttled me up and down the M40 for over a decade. Colleagues were often amazed I could live 60 miles from the office and still get in before 7am, or home safe after last orders. Stagecoach suspended the service in early April, so fingers crossed that its staff are OK and back behind the wheel soon.

Awkwardly, I've also learned my body clock has become hard-wired for a mid-afternoon nap, after being rocked to sleep on the Tube ride home all those years. The temptation to neglect the Footsie in favour of 40 winks could yet prove irresistible... ●

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THE OCCASIONAL QUESTIONNAIRE

Sonia Brough

Former translator and lexicographer

How did you come to be in Oxford?

In 1980s, working for a dictionary publishing company. A good friend of mine invited me to a dinner at Jesus College, where I met the home bursar, John De'Ath. Nine months later he wrote to say he would be in Munich and asked if I would show him around town. My guided tour must have been so good that he soon proposed to me and persuaded me to move to Oxford, although not straight away; it would be another nine months before I finished my dictionary project and I wasn't giving that up for anyone.

Was Headington your first stop?

We were in a college flat on the Woodstock Road for the first nine months but then moved into Headington in 1992. We had struck lucky; we hadn't appreciated all the advantages until after we arrived, and quickly realised it was what I like to describe as 'the centre of the universe'.

What makes it the centre of the universe?

The neighbours, the sense of community, the general atmosphere, the park, the lovely houses in the conservation area, the transport links into Oxford, London and the airports. Above all, it's the people who live here. Neighbours look after each other, there's a real buzz and plenty of interesting social events going on. Shortly after moving in, a neighbour – one of Headington's longest-standing residents – came over and invited us to coffee. Since then, whenever somebody new moves in there is always a drinks party to welcome them.

What might make Headington better?

I would like to see a huge reduction in traffic. We've seen the effects of this in lockdown: cleaner air, fewer accidents and reduced traffic noise.

I fear for young children breathing in noxious fumes and just wish there were a practical way to take some of the vehicles off the roads.



How are you getting on in during this lockdown?

I've got plenty to do in the house, so there's no threat of boredom yet. My neglected exercise bike has come into its own – I watch art history documentaries while pedalling away – and I'm getting plenty of fresh air in our little

walled garden. I'm a social person but also happy to withdraw for a while and spend time reading, which I love. John was an athlete, a middle-distance runner who made it to the Olympic trials in his youth, and loves sport of any kind. There are plenty of old highlights for him to watch on TV; in fact there isn't a great deal of change for him during lockdown. He has post-polio syndrome, which significantly limits his mobility, but he's enjoying having me around in the house more.

I like to describe Headington as 'the centre of the universe'

If not Headington, where else would you like to be?

My first choice would be to stay here forever, but if I had to choose another place, it would be Italy. It has everything – art, architecture, food, wine, beautiful landscapes and a pleasant climate. I've been there many times and it's most certainly my favourite country.

Any other passions to declare?

I collected religious icons over many years and now have walls covered with them. I'm not religious but I became fascinated with them as a child in Cyprus, where we were living – my father was in the British army. We got to know the monks at the Monastery of St Barnabas, one of whom painted icons, and it really sparked my interest. Out of the many I own, my favourite is 17th-century Russian icon of St Simeon taking the Christ child into his arms. It is so beautiful and tender, I can just gaze at it for ages. I've stopped collecting now, as it was getting out of hand. ●



THE OCCASIONAL QUESTIONNAIRE

Paola Cicconi

Infectious diseases doctor

What brought you to Oxford?

In 2013 I was on maternity leave in Italy. An employment opportunity came up to move to Oxford and we were keen to try something new. Milan is a big city, very crowded and not terribly kid-friendly. In Oxford we found what we were looking for: an international setting, easy access to London, beautiful countryside and lots going on. After a couple of years we decided to stay.



these are pre-clinical and some are already at the clinical stage.

How are you coping with the lockdown situation?

It's a very strange time for everyone. My medical work means I'm in accommodation on my own at the moment. If I'm honest, I enjoyed the first week but it's tough now. I pass by the house on my way back from work, ring the bell and step back. It's lovely to see the family, al-

How did you discover Headington?

Purely because it was between the two main hospitals! I was still in Milan with the baby, remotely directing my husband, Claudio, on which properties to see. Headington is in the perfect position for us. The schools are really good, the park is lovely and for a bit more wilderness, Shotover is just around the corner. I love the local shops but would love to see another bookshop.

What do you miss about Italy?

I was born in Milan, grew up and went to university there. I miss my friends and family, my personal history, but there's nothing specific I miss about the Italian culture; perhaps because the culture is part of who I am, it's always with me. We return to Italy every summer with the family and we speak Italian at home but there's more than just the language.

Where do you work?

I work in the infectious diseases department at the John Radcliffe, and currently on a Covid ward. I also maintain an outpatient clinic, which has changed now as face-to-face appointments are restricted. Coronavirus is challenging. It spreads easily, can cause severe disease and we don't currently have significantly effective drugs to treat or prevent it. At the beginning I worried about contracting it but as I'm part of a study, we're tested periodically. And as the result has always been negative, I know the precautions I'm taking and my approach to PPE is working. We are working extremely hard, testing and conducting research and trials into vaccines and anti-viral treatment. Some of

though I do tell them off if I can see the house is untidy. Claudio is working from home and managing home schooling, stuck in the house with three boys and my parents. That may well be the shorter straw...

I'm a very social person and struggle being away from family and friends. My colleagues at the hospital are in similar positions though, so we've all got to know each other better and built a really supportive team. I worry about my kids too. They're missing out on really important social interactions

How do you see the future?

I really hope we can learn from this Lockdown experience and implement more smart-working. We've had successes at working remotely, which has already had an impact on the climate. Also, we must support and appreciate independent, local businesses. When we were all struggling to book a shopping delivery from the big supermarkets, actually the local shops had a lot of the things we needed.

And regarding Coronavirus, there will be a vaccine. It's just a matter of time. I'm optimistic that we'll get back to normal at some point but it's hugely important that we don't relax the measures taken to avoid the virus - social distancing and handwashing still play a significant role. We shouldn't be scared but everyone should continue to take it seriously. Looking at it from my professional interest, it's challenging and exciting...although of course, that's not to suggest there's anything good about it. But as an infectious diseases specialist, I'm driven by the chance to understand it and control it. That's my job. ●

LOCKDOWN STORIES



Kate and Spike



Hazel Faithfull



Andi Reiss



Harriet Eagle



Louisa Howard



Paul Cross

CLAIRE GARTON TEACHER

It all started with a message to our street's WhatsApp group: "In case anyone at our end of the road is interested, we're planning to try to keep our performing lives alive by opening our windows at 6pm and playing a few minutes of violin and cello music. Anyone who feels like listening could open windows; if you'd prefer not, do keep them firmly shut. Spike and Kate at no.53."

And from then on they have played every evening, come rain or shine, and 13 May saw their 50th performance. From Bach to the Beatles, from the familiar to the new, the performance is always beautiful and greeted with loud applause.

Pieces have spanned centuries and genres, with some special requests added in too. We have sung Happy Birthdays and danced to Singing in the Rain. We have smiled at the very apt choice of the theme tune from Neighbours and enjoyed the specially requested theme from Dr Who. A very special wish from one of our youngest neighbours saw Spike and Kate play Frozen, with Kate dressed as Elsa and dropping a glove from the window (disinfected washing up glove, of course).

And what of the WhatsApp group? It has gone from strength to strength and had to become two groups to cope with the offers of help, support, shopping requests, jokes, videos, stargazing tips and so much more. New friendships have been formed which will last much longer than lockdown. We have come together to clap, to sing Somewhere over the Rainbow and to listen to our amazing neighbours. The music often touches emotions that we have kept inside during the day and it is an important constant in a time when so much is uncertain.

HARRIET EAGLE ARTIST

Luckily, I love being at home. I have a garden which was reworked last year and now a new path zigzags through a planting scheme of grasses and multi-stemmed silver birches, leading to my art studio bolt-hole. This season, every day brings a new delight as the bulbs burst out and the leaves expand, filling the twiggy gaps.

It doesn't take long for my workspace to become a mess. I am following many online courses, including for the second year running, the Creative Visionary Programme by Art2Life. Starting before the lockdown, the mostly San Francisco-based team are now unable to get to their studios and like many others have had to adjust their teaching process. Video tutorials, Zoom calls, homework sheets and Facebook galleries punctuate the weeks over an intense three-month period. And artists from every corner of the world tune in to comment and converse. At a time like this, it's very restorative to connect with such an enriching and sympathetic global community.

The course emphasis is on play, intuition and exploration. Instead of planning what to paint, it allows instincts and decisions to pave the way. It is about being present, discerning what you do and don't like. And to have fun in the process! Layers of acrylic are painted on wooden panels while being aware of design and value. It is all about differences – soft edges against hard, large shapes versus small, dark and light. Scraping back reveals hidden treasures, surprises and problems, although often I wish I could return to a previous layer. Perhaps as in a visual of my unsettled mind, my studio is littered with panels, all in an unfinished state. Covid-19 has certainly been a major external distraction.

Artweeks this year will be online. And seemingly coming around quicker than ever, I am unprepared. However, I will lessen my concern by following the advice of American psychologist and spiritual leader, Ram Dass: "Start from where you are – not from where you wish you were. The work you're doing becomes your path."

MILO KEMP YEAR SIX STUDENT

The Coronavirus outbreak has swept across the world like a blade, cutting our normal lives into pieces. All over the world, people have been confined to their own homes and children have been home-schooled while all the time, the death toll rises.

As an eleven-year-old boy, I have been excluded from school at a crucial time in my education. Thankfully, my primary school has excellent technology, so we have

been able to do frequent Zoom chats and teachers have uploaded lessons onto Google Classroom.

We all wish we could know the secret to a vaccine, but that wish has not come true... yet.

But I applaud the NHS for their constant, incredible research towards this, as well as their work caring for the unwell and putting themselves at great risk in the process.

We can all do our bit. So let's join forces to try a stop this virus by staying strong, staying united and staying safe.

ANDI REISS INDEPENDENT FILM-MAKER

Everyone already knew that Netflix, Amazon, Apple and the like are astonishingly ambitious companies, with plans to disrupt the natural course of television and become world-consuming film destinations. And the streamers plan to release a crazy number of films annually to ensure their place in the greater pop culture conversation, perhaps to the point where none of us unsociable, non-essential workers will have the time to go back to normal.

But the fact is movies can affect us powerfully because the combined impact of images, music, dialogue, lighting, sound and special effects can elicit deep feelings and help us reflect, better understand our lives and those around us, and even how our society and culture operate. Moreover, the moment we cry in a film is not when things are sad but when they turn out to be more beautiful than we expected them to be, and the year 2020 certainly has the potential to prove this.

In these circumstances perhaps we have a chance to make our own little mark on history, right here in Oxford.

As a media practitioner working in the fields of film, photography, design, new media and education, I'm looking for one-minute videos from anyone and everyone in the neighbourhood who would like to participate in a little local project for posterity. These recordings can be on any subject relating to the idea that during a pandemic, terror and tedium can walk hand in hand with humour and humanism.

With enough material, I'd like to put together a seven-minute, seven-screen multi-channel installation, that you might find in a gallery. If you have the inclination

to participate and send me your recorded thoughts, your hopes, fears, readings, poetry or anything else, they will certainly be included.

Your recordings can be as profound, political, petty, personal or peculiar as you wish; on working online, having kids home from school, social distancing, shielding, our social obligations deferred to an indeterminate future, what we may lose or indeed what we may learn and benefit from. They can be as observational, reflective, impassioned, arrogant, particular or inarticulate as you please.

And if you've applauded when your brave key worker family member arrived home, noticed grandpa dressed as a dinosaur en route to the store, or just caught your neighbour sneaking around covered in shrubbery, as long as you have the permission of said hero, hipster and fern lovin' freak, all the better.

Karaoke Zoom parties also welcome. email.andi@andiandireiss.com

HAZEL FAITHFULL YOGA TEACHER

The bane of my life was always being stuck on the ring road between the various village halls where I teach, so moving online has had some benefits.

I had a slow step into the world of Coronavirus. Some of my students had to self-isolate quite early so I started teaching in the classroom with most of the class with me in the room and another few at home using Zoom. That was great because it enabled me to work out how to help people online, making sure I can see them and they can see and hear me, and still be interactive.

Now we're all isolated, it's worked incredibly well. People say that they love having one normal thing in their week. It's their regular local class at the normal time but it just happens to be in the front room. It might be the one time they do something on their own and they can still be with their old group. They might have to banish everyone else in the house out of the room and they might have to move that table but they make it work. One student was doing their poses with one foot in the bedroom and one in the sitting room but they were not going to let that stop them.

One aspect of the change that has been really interesting is that some former students who had moved away from Oxford have been able to join us again now

we're online. Some people are also able to do classes with friends and family even though they're living in different cities.

Although I'm not having to travel to different venues, I've found that each class is more tiring for me when online because I can't pick up the nuances as easily. I hadn't quite realised how much the odd comment here and there helps during a class. However, we've managed to keep the connection, creating a positive and inclusive atmosphere even though we're getting together remotely.

So there have been some challenges but plenty of positives. There's a lot more admin involved and I struggled with the technology at the start but having a soft introduction at the outset meant we were able to make it work. I stumbled in, fumbled about and learnt with my students along the way but I'm quite proud that I've managed to step up and deliver.

PAUL CROSS SOUTH CENTRAL AMBULANCE SERVICE

Part of my job is looking after the buildings at South Central Ambulance Service and, while I've been at home, I also need to visit stations and call centres doing various things to keep the clinicians and call-takers going.

It's a privilege to work for the NHS at any time but particularly now and I feel lucky to have the opportunity to make a direct impact on our healthcare response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

A big part of our operation is our two clinical coordination centres. Working flat out 24/7, the CCCs house all the people and processes dealing with 999 and 111 calls.

The pandemic has impacted these areas, both increasing the volume of work enormously and presenting the service with a challenge to keep the staff safe from the virus. The call centres are busy places, where a close-knit team deals with a huge variety of situations, always with the focus to provide the best and most appropriate care for each person in need. The working environment means that people are sat physically close to one another and always communicating.

A recent challenge posed to me was to provide screens between call-takers that would provide a

physical barrier, while at the same time still allowing the call centres to function efficiently and effectively – and to do it quickly!

By happy coincidence, local businessperson Derek Williams from Mayfield Press, had been in touch with his local NHS volunteering to make visors and screens for GP surgery and healthcare workers. We contacted Derek and, after some experimentation and testing, the design was amended and within a few days an order of nearly 500 screens was placed and are now in. It is a great example of partnership working with an innovative local company to provide a quick and cost-effective solution to an emergency problem.

LOUISA HOWARD GRADUATE

I am an unemployed graduate with little experience. When all this ends, I will still be an unemployed graduate with little experience. But I will apply for everything and anything that might move me forward, even if it's just by inches. And I will adapt my CV for each application, in the hope that I really will sound like someone who has always "dreamt of the high-paced world of sales".

A lot of this is no different from job hunting before Coronavirus. What is different, is just about everything else I know. The supermarket across from my house has changed. The park down the road has changed. The centre of town has changed. The circumstances in which I find myself have completely changed. Everything has gone quiet. There is no traffic, no rush hour, no school run. Every morning is Sunday morning. It's the film Groundhog Day, only instead of a fair and a romance, it's face masks and social distancing.

Long gone are the weekends with friends in busy pubs or loud obnoxious nightclubs, happily chatting nose-to-nose just so we can hear one another. I spend my weekends as any other day of the week, at home with my family, being so wholesome it's frankly a little sickening. Luckily, we all get on and I would be lying if I said I didn't love it. I'd love to see my friends again, of course, and to know the people I care about are safe.

But coming out of these social restrictions will bring its own challenges, not least for work. There will be a rush for jobs, on a track ▶



Becca Howard Burrell



Jude Bennett



Kevin Burrell



Liz Hurrant



Pindy Basan



Cath Hooton

◀ that's smaller, tighter and very much uphill. It will be very claustrophobic. There will be more runners; some like me and some older with more experience but perhaps more to lose. The competition will be fierce, the opportunities scarcer. And what once were not great odds, will be terrible odds. Odds you wouldn't bet money on, definitely not thirty thousand pounds worth of philosophy degree.

However, that's tomorrow's problem. Today I am happy, healthy and surrounded by people I love. And the sun is shining.

PINDY BASAN PINDY'S SAMOSAS

What have I been doing since lockdown? I've been making a lot of samosas.

As soon as lockdown started, I was busy. Very early on I had 15 orders in one day. People realised quite quickly that if they couldn't get out, they could look to have their produce delivered. We're getting a lot of orders through the website and doing a lot of deliveries. We're promoting on Facebook and offering free delivery in and around the Oxford area.

I need the morning for preparation and delivery, which means I'm having to manage the home schooling tasks with my husband.

It's been tricky but we're making it work. It really has been a juggling act but I've been able to keep on top of it. Being so busy means that the time seems to be going quite quickly and it feels good to be helping people out.

I'm sure that it has been an eye-opener for everyone trying to manage their priorities. My husband generally works online but we are trying to give each other the time each of us needs to manage our businesses and look after our child.

While there is so many things competing for your time, you do have to try to fit in time for yourself as well. I'm a gym fanatic so I'm doing online classes and fitting in a daily walk. As any regular gym-goer knows, you need to find the motivation. You need to get yourself in the right frame of mind to exercise. It was hard initially to make time for it with everyone at home but I've been able to keep going. It makes me feel good about myself and I can't let this lockdown force me to waste all the effort I've put in over the years!

With family, work and exercise, it's been a tiring time but feedback from our customers is a real motivator. We're offering a good product, presenting it well and people are really appreciative.

KEVIN BURRELL EDUCATION CONSULTANT

In a recent article a resident of Wuhan discussed how the city's residents broke down into two groups under lockdown: cats and dogs. Cats were likely to suffer less from the quasi-house arrest that could drive dogs mad. Cats relaxed, stretched into the time. Dogs scratched impatiently at the doors and tried to fill the time with activity – quizzes, online meet-ups, games, social media, setting tasks and challenges.

Our family was a mix. Two of us are cats. We relaxed into the space, read, dozed, did everything as slowly and quietly as we could. We embraced anti-social distancing. The dogs in the family fidgeted, paced around, planned meals, called friends, followed the news, were rarely offline. The difference has probably been a good balance for each of us and kept us sane. A house full of cats or dogs may well have been more of a challenge.

Lockdown for our household has been about oppositions – cats and dogs, constraint and freedom, before and after, with and without, inside and outside, hope and fear. The space we've had to live in, and the experience of lockdown, has been shaped by each of these.

There has been a newfound freedom. We've become time-rich and many of the pressures we previously experience in our day-to-day lives have lifted. We've begun to lose track of what day it is or what time it is; we've had more relaxed routines. While the sun was shining it, there are times when it has even felt like a great holiday.

But we have, of course, missed people, especially those of us with the dog personalities. We've missed our family desperately, missed our friends, missed the people we see in our day-to-day lives. But we've also enjoyed the peace that has descended on Headington, hearing the birds, seeing the clear blue skies untainted by vapour trails from jet engines or the filter of pollution.

Yet it's impossible to live like this without being aware of how fortunate we are as a relatively

independent, middle-class family. Unlike so many people, we have a garden, secure income, food, shelter and, thankfully, our health. Like many people in Headington, we live close to the John Radcliffe hospital and have friends and neighbours who work there. The buses and cars taking staff to work regularly go past our house. Ambulances speed up the road, blue lights flashing. While we relax in our garden, enjoy the sun, cook our meals, we are always aware of the intense drama, hope and despair that plays out just over the road. The contrast of inside and outside brings us up short.

BECCA HOWARD BURRELL COUNSELLOR

Shopping and eating in lockdown? I wanted to write about the 'new normal', the routines and rituals around shopping and eating in my home. I had been reflecting on how food, particularly supper, had morphed from fuel to the high spot of the day; and how, with two teenagers and a semi-retired partner, all with quite different routines, it had become our only definite point of contact, a sacrosanct evening meal to connect, catch up and generally bookend our time together.

I wanted to write about how I had more time to plan and cook new things (what would Nigel Slater do with all this kale from the veg box?) and how I was really enjoying it. How catering to a household that consists of one vegan, one nearly vegan, one who eats absolutely anything (but not tomatoes) and one pescataria was a bit of a challenge to include a full range of protein. How, at times of anxiety and crisis we revert to real or imagined comforting tastes from happier times: fresh bread, full roast, real puddings.

I wanted to write about how shopping was now an event planned with military precision, about the hunter-gatherer pride and gratitude I felt in returning home with eggs or flour that I had previously taken for granted, and never will again. How nearly anything edible can be recycled into a pie, wrap or soup and how much less we are wasting. And how much I am longing to share food and the table with friends and family again, and my detailed plans for post-lockdown feasting.

Somewhat misty-eyed, I asked my son what he had enjoyed most about food during the lockdown. His

response: "It's been OK. But I really miss restaurants."

JUDE BENNETT HEADTEACHER ST ANDREW'S SCHOOL

St Andrew's is open but we're operating in a very different way during the Covid-19 emergency. The government advice was that schools should be open for key workers' children with only 20% of the usual numbers of children at school. However, with so many of our families linked to the NHS, we have had to come up with a bespoke system to meet the needs of the whole community. We have had to prioritise families with two key workers while also recognising the special needs of certain families and any who might be vulnerable at the moment.

We have a staff group that meets in school every day and everyone has been really positive. We're operating in teams to minimise exposure, either by time, coming in one day a week and working from home online for the rest of the week, or minimising exposure by numbers. We're still running breakfast and after-school clubs for key workers and vulnerable families, so we're open from 7.45am to 6pm daily. There are only a few children in these clubs but we felt it was important to keep it going.

Children are working from home using online platforms and work is being sent out daily. Children have lots of direct contact with their class teachers via online class dojos and class team meetings.

Connectivity is clearly a key issue and it is important that we maintain that. People are obviously feeling quite isolated but St Andrew's has a really strong school community, which is a great help. You realise quite quickly that school is often as important to parents as the children, particularly in terms of all the incidental communication at drop off and pick up that isn't happening at the moment.

We're working hard around connectivity, using email, phoning and sending work for those can't access it online. I'm doing a newsletter for parents every Monday and there is a real sense of everyone working together.

In terms of my work, nothing has really changed for me. I'm doing everything I did before but doing it differently. Like all of our staff, I'm in

one day per week and having lots of meetings on Zoom. We're in hiatus at the moment and waiting for what happens next: the how, the when and the what in terms of directives. Unlocking is going to be an interesting problem. Children at school find the concept of social distancing very hard. They want to run and play and be together. Taking the current model to the next level will be quite a challenge.

LIZ HURRAN FOUNDER, VELOVIXEN

Aristotle said that nature abhors a vacuum. Actually, he said 'horror vacui', according to the Romans, but then I only know that because I've been learning Latin during lockdown.

Lockdown. What felt like it would be the end of the activity has turned out to be the start of endless activity. So scary was the potential vacuum that into it rushed countless opportunities for action. Plays from the National Theatre, ballet from the Bolshoi, virtual zoo tours, live-cam seascapes, yoga with experts, grunting with Joe Wicks, bread-making basics, online origami, virtual mediation, ways to be better, leaner, stronger, wiser, ways to enjoy it, critique it, curate it, onscreen dinner parties and birthday bingo. Zoom, zoom, zoom.

And if that wasn't enough you could clap in the street with the nation, play on your path with collective orchestras or sing from the window in communion with the choirs. I found myself diarising TV events and the NHS clap, for fear of missing one of these chances. I was starting to get overwhelmed while not going anywhere.

I decided we needed to find our own pace. While admiring it all hugely, I couldn't do all the things. I found relief first by actually pacing. The daily walk began to shape things nicely and soothed my mind.

Then we started to live a bit like we always used to. We never, for example, went to the theatre six times a week or felt like we had to stuff our kids full of knowledge until they burst. So we get up and walk, then do some of the school stuff and all of the work stuff, we participate online in the activities we always did (not the swimming), we watch a play perhaps instead of the TV but we haven't gorged ourselves on a culture or improved our minds much.

We haven't taken up new hobbies or become lean and mean, but we have dug a veg patch and we went away for the weekend to a tent in the garden. We have lunch online with grandparents and we have a quiz on Zoom once a week with mates. We shop online and we don't use the car. The best pace for us, it turns out, is all rather ordinary during the extraordinary.

But I still abhor the vacuum. And I haven't learned Latin.

CATH HOOTON PHYSIOTHERAPIST

There is a team of us at OxPhysio and we are usually running around 19 classes a week, mostly in Headington, along with regular clinics. Our classes are devised from a rehab and therapeutic perspective but we do have people without injuries who do our Pilates classes for fitness.

We're continuing with our classes on Zoom. It's not quite the same but we are all loving the fact that we can make the connection, still motivate each other and carry on with our routine.

We're recording the live classes and making the video available to clients. People had suggested this to me before and I'd never done it, partly because of the time it takes and partly because of not having the confidence to do it. Recording yourself feels a bit weird when you're not used to it but I've been forced out of my comfort zone, which has actually been really positive. People are saying that they're doing the classes more frequently because they have access to the recordings, which is great.

As well as leading classes, I'd usually be in the clinic three days a week seeing clients individually. Currently I'm only seeing three people a day rather than the usual ten. Working remotely, I'm still able to offer advice and draw up exercise programmes for existing clients. I'm dropping off equipment and showing people how to use a band or tape up an acute injury.

This quieter time has at least given me an opportunity to slow down a bit and tackle some things on the list of tasks that I wouldn't usually have time to do. I've been able to find the time to do more things on social media, like short advice videos or tasters of exercises we do in classes, and these have worked really well. ●



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How to...

CUT YOUR HAIR AT HOME

Karen Westfield at ICE

I've have been asked this a lot. And I feel bad every single time I say, "Just don't." I might be leaving people high and dry but there is a good reason for it.

First, let me tell you why I am a hairdresser and not bartender or a neuroscientist. It is because I grew



up having my hair cut at home. Mother would look at me puffing my fringe out of my eyes and get this look of artistic inspiration. We learned very quickly that this was something to fear; out came scissors – probably wallpaper shears – and she would set upon my fringe. Dear sweet Deity! It was horrendous and one side would always end up shorter than the other. I was unintentionally sporting the asymmetric fringe long before any 1980s band thought of it. And it never looked cool.

Then there's my apprenticeship days. It took a lot of time and practice to learn my trade and this is where my unfortunate younger siblings now suffered. Well, who else are you going to practise on? We rarely talk about those days now. The years of therapy are finally helping.

Thankfully, to save you family rows, we have added a fringe trim and a partial root tinting tutorial to our social media sites. And we are of course happy to continue giving advice through Messenger. If you really must do a cut, the BBC have a full tutorial online but please remember, it is not nearly as simple as it looks and there is nobody around to fix mistakes.

My best advice is, just let your hair grow. And perhaps we'll look back with pride and stoic acceptance at our long roots and bad flicks, knowing that we did the right thing in extraordinary times. •

ORDER, MAKE AND APPRECIATE A MARTINI

Tim Fitz-Gibbon at Raoul's

What is it?

The martini is the one cocktail that everyone has heard of. Even the most fanatical abstainer of alcohol has heard of it.

Will I like it?

I've lost count of the number of times I have witnessed a martini ordered at a bar, then seen a face screwed up like they're chewing barbed wire because it was not what was expected. The martini is boozy and can be an unforgiving drink but is also clean, crisp and full of flavour.

Who drinks it?

Movie stars, politicians and, of course, James Bond.

Did James get it right?

Bond was known for having his martinis shaken. Shaken martinis will be more diluted, aerated and have a different mouthfeel. Traditionally, the martini is stirred.

Who invented it?

No one knows but it's lineage can be traced to the Martinez cocktail. Over time it changed, with the dry gin martini – one with less vermouth being added to the mix – becoming popular into the 20th century. Churchill's recipe included vermouth but it never amounted to more than him glancing at a bottle of vermouth, such was his disregard for the French. Further evolution led to introduction of vodka.

How is it served?

From the 1960s right up until the early 2000s martinis were 'bone dry' with little vermouth. Recently, and I think for the better, martinis are giving vermouth more stage presence, with a 'wetter' martini catching on.

What's in it?

A classic gin or vodka and dry vermouth in a ration of 5:1; plus perhaps a Pimento olive (in brine) or lemon zest

Temperature is key: it needs to be served ice cold. Start with the 5:1 but play with the ratios and find out if you are in the dry or wet camp. And a word of warning: take your time to experiment or you may regret it in the morning. •

START THAT FIRST NOVEL

David Boyd Haycock

There's a character in Albert Camus's currently apposite novel *The Plague* who keeps reappearing. He's writing a novel, and he offers up the first sentence for regular appraisal. It's not quite right. So he replaces it with another new first sentence – and then another, and another. Each one's never just right, never quite achieving the exact effect he's after. Eventually, when he's asked how he's getting on with the rest of the book, he's forced to admit that all he's written so far is that troublesome first sentence. It's as far as he's got.

This, of course, isn't the way to start writing a novel. True, there's no novel in existence that doesn't have a first sentence – and a good first line can certainly be a killer



("Someone must have been telling lies about Joseph K ..." is my favourite). But you have to keep going. Don't look back.

As boring and predictable as it sounds, the best advice on beginning a novel is getting it started and then keeping on going. When I was a student, a friend had this simple piece of advice pinned to his wall: "If you want to be a writer, write." Thirty years on, and I've never forgotten it. But he's still struggling to complete his first book – largely because he's failed to heed this single piece of excellently banal advice.

Of course, there's far more to writing a novel than just making words. Foremost, it ought to be fun. Sometimes it isn't, and you wonder why you're doing it at all. But when the ideas flow, and with them the words, it's wonderful. Out of nothing you eventually discover you've created something real. So forget the struggle, make the most of the lock down, and get on with it, one word after another. •

MAKE A START WITH SOURDOUGH

Harriet Waters

It's a challenge

A single column to describe sourdough? It's an impossible challenge but one I can't help but accept with the hope that more people give bread-making a go. When it comes to learning new skills, making bread is definitely in the 'marathon not a sprint' category but it is a delicious marathon.

Get a starter

You can make your own (there are loads of instructions available online), get one from a friend (the kitchens of Headington are probably alive with sourdough starter microbes) or buy one (Wild Baker in Abingdon would be my first port of call).

Keep your starter happy

Most of the recipes I use include starters of 100% hydration, so have been fed with equal amounts of flour and water.

Feed your starter before you try to use it

This can be the day before or in the morning if you're baking in the evening. Just keep an eye on the results: you should expect to see the starter rise. A happy starter will have lots of holes.

Find a recipe you like

Oh the sourdough mistakes I have made! There will be recipes that work for you and those that are disasters. It took me a long time to branch out from the recipes I was given on the courses I attended (at Wild Baker and Cornfield Bakery). However, Modern Baker, based in Kidlington, introduced me to a brilliant multigrain loaf that has never failed yet.

You can always cheat

I've recently discovered a recipe for breakfast rolls on sourdoughandolives.com that uses a mix of sourdough starter and commercial yeast, involves no kneading and brings stupendous results.

Sourdough too much?

Follow Jamie Oliver's instructions for flatbreads – equal amounts of flour and yoghurt (I use 300g of each) mixed together, divide into 8 parts and cook on a griddle. •

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Keeping calm in the midst of a crisis
Barney Kemp explains his positive approach to living in lockdown and why letting his love of humanity shape his response to troubled times is paying dividends.

Not so long ago, 'normal' was different. It was dropping kids at school, meeting friends in the park or getting a haircut. Once the activities of everyday, these simple pastimes are now longed-for events, not just because we miss them but because they represent a return to the way we were. When things were normal. And nobody talked about the new C word.

Listen to the radio and you're assured of hearing the C word, a topic so entrenched in our new normal that it needs not be named. There's some light relief from the horror show of American politics and Gardener's Question Time, but mainly everything's about... well, you know what. Among the many discussions, lockdown is a topic on a lot of minds and people are rightly keen to share how well they're coping, as day 40 or 50 of being trapped in their homes rolls around.

As I approach my 89th day of lockdown – a precaution taken earlier than most due to my status as 'sick bloke' – I very much enjoy their 'we can do it' confidence. Their shiny-eyed embracing of the motto displayed on their mugs and cushions – Keep Calm and Carry On – is joyful. I wish them the best, I really do. Just like a Werther's Original, their optimism is sweet and comforting right up to the moment they crunch down and shatter a tooth.

You see, give them another few weeks and they'll be hiding behind coats in the hall, arguing with the goldfish, and eating cup-a-soup powder straight out of the packet. But not me. Apart from shouting out

of the window at people not observing social distancing, I've remained calm, collected and stable. And it's got nothing to do with not having a goldfish.

So what's my secret, my fail-proof mindset, my bullet-proof approach to getting by in an extended lockdown? Misanthropy, that's what. And lots of it. In fact, if we'd all been a bit more misanthropic over the last couple of months instead of hanging out at horse races and football games, the situation now might be a lot less tragic.

OK, I don't really hate mankind but I have taken to being stuck inside with a delight that has

I don't really hate mankind but I have taken to being stuck inside with a delight that has surprised even me.

surprised even me. And apart from blotchy skin, increased nervousness, and an elevated suspicion of the postman, I'm doing very well.

What I'm not doing so well is teaching. Lockdown has brutally highlighted my woeful mathematics ability, a subject I've often claimed to enjoy as an adult; these last few weeks have resulted in a guarantee that I'll never utter that statement again. With my own schooling grounded in the floaty, pastel-coloured educational theories of Rudolf

Steiner, I developed the art of gentle persuasion and manipulation to mask my runty qualifications. Equipped with this skill, I've been offered a broad range of roles and jobs that my child-size handful of GCSEs might otherwise have suggested I wasn't qualified for. But even with this dubious accolade there was no bluffing my Year 6 son. As he sat down to an online maths lesson, I offered support: "Let me know if you need any help." He replied: "Sure, Dad. Is Mum here?"

Thankfully, the local community has performed better. Prosocial behaviours – checking on neighbours, helping people with tasks and generally just thinking about others – have blossomed. A solidarity has developed, and local groups have sprung up to support those around us in greater need. And on a planetary note, Earth has benefitted too. With car use down by around 70%, air-traffic halved, and industrial processing slowed, many countries have shown significant improvements in air quality. Of course, the human cost continues to be horrific, bringing immeasurable tragedy to countless families around the world.

It's simplistic but with the damaging footprint we leave on the planet lessening, we now have the chance to move forwards more sustainably. Perhaps we could consider this a legacy and in memoriam of all those who have sadly died from the virus.

In the meantime, while I wait for the planet to recover, I'll just stay at home; I'll keep calm and carry on, frowning, shaking my head and gesticulating from the top window at passers-by. •

Oxford films for lockdown

Struggling to remember what day it is, let alone which city you live in? Reacquaint yourself with the dreamy spires through our carefully curated selection of the best of Oxford on the smallish silver screen.

- **A Chump at Oxford** (1939). Of course it isn't actually shot in Oxford but Laurel and Hardy's uproarious comedy completely nails the Hollywood stereotype of Oxford students as insufferable posh twerps. Stan even gets to play the toff himself after a bump on the noggin leaves him believing he is a Don rather than a dunderhead.
- **Accident** (1967). If you like your Oxford drama talky and intellectual, then playwright Harold Pinter and director Joseph Losey's Accident is a high-brow treat. The scene where Dirk Bogarde takes Jacqueline Sassard punting is a masterclass in repressed sexuality.
- **Oxford Blues** (1984): This 1980s reprisal of the Yank-at-Oxford story starring Rob Lowe is a straight-to-VHS guilty pleasure, full of big hair, rock tunes and cheesy dialogue. Watch it mainly for the smug pleasure of spotting the diabolical liberties taken with Oxford geography.
- **Shadowlands** (1993): Starring Anthony Hopkins as Oxford's own CS Lewis, this moving period drama is one of the best of the many literary biopics shot in the city. See also Tom and Viv (1994); Wilde (1997); Iris (2001); and Tolkein (2019).
- **Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone** (2001). The Harry Potter franchise is a higgledy-piggledy kaleidoscope of British landscapes but the art design of Hogwarts itself owes a huge debt to Oxford architecture. Baby-faced Harry, Ron and Hermione chow down in a digital recreation of the Christchurch dining hall and can also be spotted in the Divinity School and Duke Humfrey's Library.
- **His Dark Materials** (2019-). Back in 2007, cinemas still seemed to be the natural home for magical worlds and big-budget fantasy. However, The Golden Compass (2007) struggled to capture the depth of Philip Pullman's epic novels. Fast forward to 2019 and peak TV has caught up with cinematic spectacle while continuing to allow ample screen time for fully-rounded characters. Hence His Dark Materials feels much closer to Pullman's vision of Oxford as a place where reality and fiction blur together. •

James Cateridge, senior lecturer in film studies, Oxford Brookes



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