

The Oxford Omnibus

Oxford, England

No. 3 Christmas 2022

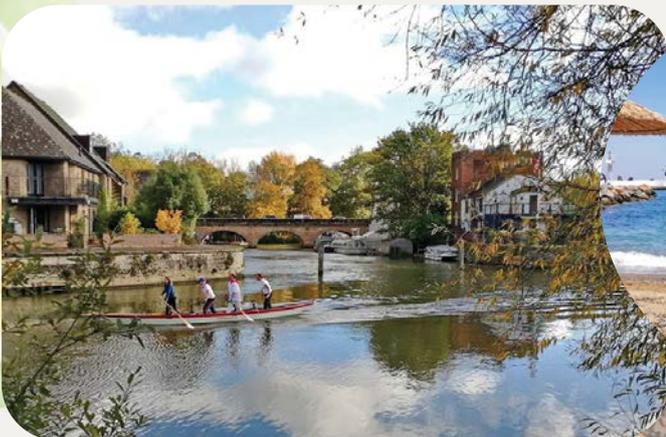
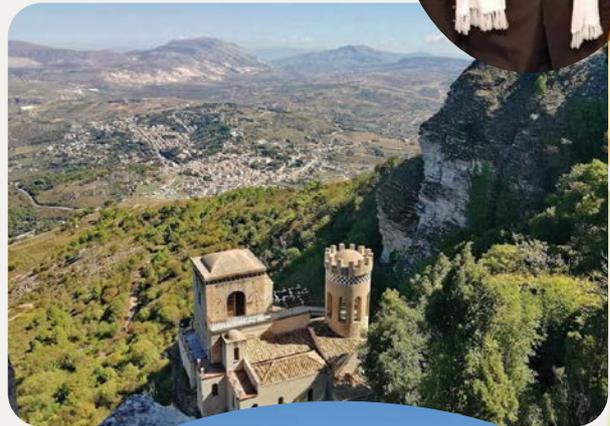
GREETINGS AND GOOD WISHES FOR CHRISTMAS AND NEW YEAR 2023

With this third edition of the Oxford Omnibus, once more we send warmest good wishes to friends in the UK and around the world. At this fine pagan festival, OO joins all those Balham Bulletins and Tropical Telegraphs that have been our substitutes for festive cards for fifty years or so.

Events in the big wide world leave one breathless with shock and despair. Ukraine heads the list, but there is so much else that is going horribly wrong, it's difficult to know where to turn for comfort. My thoughts on royal affairs elsewhere in these pages. (The sunflower, by the way, is Ukraine's national flower; it was Mr Neung's inspiration that we should celebrate it here.)

It's been a great year for reviving old friendships – several people not seen in the flesh for decades – as well as happy times with current friends. Raymond has worked solidly through the year, while I've had a few lovely trips (and increased my carbon footprint). Domestic life by the towpath has been largely harmonious with no external, aquatic threats this year (quite the reverse, in fact, as water in the Thames has dropped and slowed almost to a stop through the summer).

Hoping you're all set for a pleasant, reassuring Christmas and New Year and will enjoy this annual glimpse into the quite ordinary lives of an elderly chap and his youthful companion.

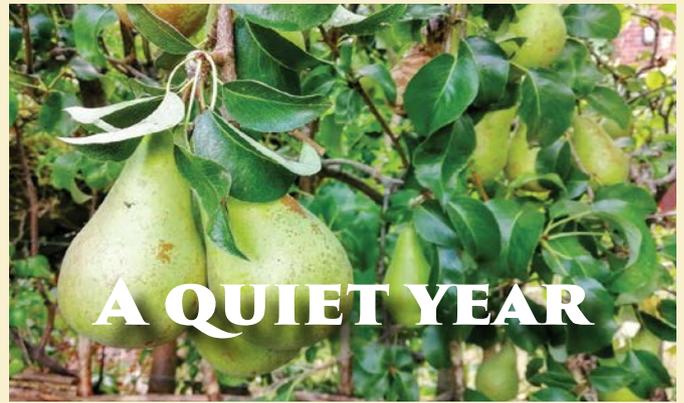


We've just had a few days of blessed rain, intermittent and brief, but enough to settle the long summer's dust, refresh the meadows and reach some roots. It's not enough to fill reservoirs and aquifers in this part of the world; the river is low and sluggish still, but it's wonderful to know that benign weather can still come our way, in spite of everything. For how long, is another question.

It's September as I start to write this, with Christmas seeming a very long way off. I have to make an early start this year because I am going to Italy shortly and designer Mr Neung and his wife and baby are leaving Ireland for six weeks for his old home in Thailand.

2022 has been a year of cataclysms and horrors around the world and deep and terrible problems in the UK. More than ever, I am sensible of extraordinary privilege and good fortune: like many of my friends, I have a partner, a home, an income, books to read, things to do and wonderful people around me; debt is not a threat. I cannot allow myself to feel the pain of my species and the planet more than occasionally – it would drive me mad.

(Il faut cultiver son jardin: I think this is where Voltaire takes us: humanity cannot be redeemed; concern with politics, war, riches, ambition, with striving to change the world, lead only to misery, failure and tragedy; the old Turk counsels us that the salve for melancholy is to find harmony on a small patch of land where you can pick your own apricots.)



A QUIET YEAR

In spite of the drought the pears have plumped up magnificently. No Voltairian apricots, but these will do



A fine harvest in mid-September with more to pick later



Dressed up to the nines for a company dinner in Bicester



Weekend rack of lamb in town



DOMESTIC LIFE

Apart from three trips (Whitstable, Crete and Italy) it's been a relatively quiet year for me. It's been uninterrupted hard work for Raymond in his job in Bicester, managing a large warehouse and logistics for big events all over the country (more than a year already). With a round-trip of sixteen miles cycling for work and sessions in the gym every day, he's supremely fit, unlike me: hating exercise so much, I've given up even the miserable routine I kept up for a few years; now I'm relying just on walking.

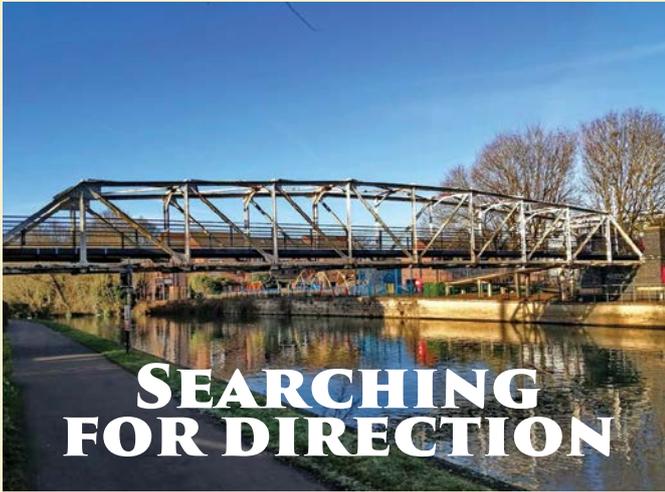
We eat well at home and go out for meals and films at weekends, but do not have a lot of time together (not enough). We're perfectly settled in our lovely home, interrupted only by the theft of Raymond's precious hybrid bike from the garage – which we'd foolishly left unlocked - a few weeks ago.

Life on the towpath and the river continues to entertain. We've had the good news from the County Council that the pedestrian bridge on our doorstep, which has been closed for a couple of years, is going to be renovated and opened next summer.

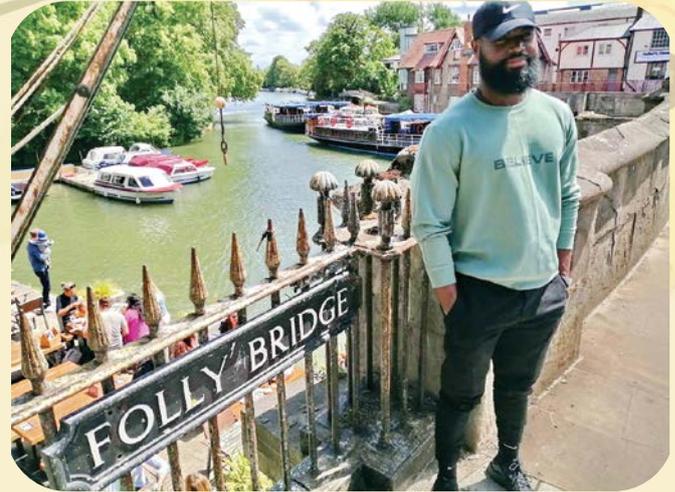
Raymond is booked to go to Ghana for a few weeks over Christmas. He's saved up his holiday allowance for the trip after being away for four or more years. He needs to have time with his people; I'd be in the way and shall stay at home. I've had a generous allowance of memorable travel already.



Santa Claus was as generous as ever to us both last year



Our footbridge is set for renovation and re-opening in 2023. Massive relief for its hundreds of users (including us)



A sunny summer day close to home

Trying to bring some sense of direction and purpose into my retirement, I've resurrected what I've always regarded as a promising book project that's been sitting around for some years: 100 Words on Things that Matter.

It ranges over all the great issues of the day - cultural, political, philosophical, social, moral - presenting each with the utmost brevity - no more than 100 words. I've written over three hundred so far; I've been encouraged to find just how much you can pack into such a short form when the words are tightly conceived and edited. The rationale is that few people want to tackle fat books of lengthy prose but that a provocative, short summary of core issues may be accessible and attractive to a wide audience. There is a profound need for us to understand where things have gone wrong and to debate every last detail of the path to a better world. The book provides a foundation for those discussions.

It's been rejected or ignored by four agents so far. I must just resign myself to the long process of submission and rejection until someone sees that they have a jewel in their hands.



The Oxfam bookshop on The Turl, my volunteering workplace



View from the cash desk at Oxfam, across the street from the entrance of Lincoln College. My best sale ever was a 40 volume edition of Dickens for 250 quid

RETIREMENT

I am still struggling with a lack of purpose and things to do, particularly the end of external demands for my time. Voluntary work (Museum of Oxford and the Oxfam bookshop) have brought some routine and stimulation, but there's still a lot of time to fill. I am reading a lot and writing, but I can't shake off the nagging feeling that there's something more significant lurking somewhere, if only I could find it (I think it's a delusion).

BEYOND THE WRITER'S DESK

Out there, in the big world, things are not looking good. I've more or less arrived at the dreadful conclusion that there is little long-term hope for organic life as we know it on planet earth. Our new PM confirms her determination to pursue the reckless path of growth and the drive for profit (and fracking) above all else. She's just the latest arrival in the worldwide cohort of élitist, small-minded, short-termist leaders, with incipient leanings towards the nationalistic fantasies so rampant and catastrophic in other parts of the world.

I am appalled by the waste of cash and resources in the pursuit of military ambition and by the indecent profits being raked in on the back of armaments, energy and public services. Children are going hungry here and around the world: how can priorities be so perverted?

It seems that the goodness, kindness and (un)common sense you can find in communities everywhere simply has no generalized impact on national policy or on anything much, even when such qualities have not been corrupted by anger and lies.

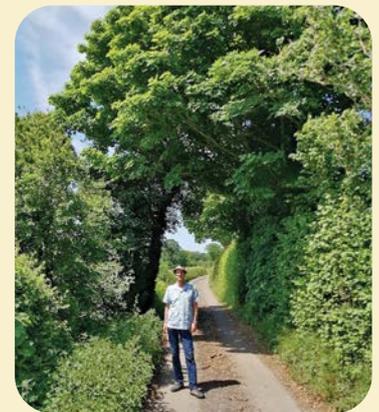
My natural optimism has to be focused on the people and the fruit in my orchard; beyond that it is, I fear, illusory and doomed.



Though the famous local oysters have gone, Whitstable is still a popular seaside town



Our smart little hotel on the seafront at Whitstable



Mark on the long drive down to Hurst Farm's secret location

My old friend Mark and I took a three-day trip to Whitstable in June. It's the town where he was born; the town where, as deputy head of English, I taught at the notorious secondary modern school, where he was a pupil and I met him in the mid-1970s. I was living in our little communal smallholding in Chilham and he used to come out at weekends to help with the animals, haymaking and the multiple tasks of small-scale farming. We got on well, shared a love of motorbikes; in later years we went to Spain on our bikes – he on a venerable Triumph, me on my Yamaha 650 – and kept in touch through the decades. In 2014, when I rented the house in Oxford, the city where he had lived for decades, he opened local doors and opportunities for me and we met often for trips or G&T and talk. He's an important chap in my life, along with his partner, Rose, a valued friend too.



Mark in Canterbury on a bridge over the River Stour, a lovely fresh chalk stream. It ran past our front field at Hurst Farm



Helly and I both taught English at the school where Mark was a pupil in the 1970s

During the trip, we met up with several people we had not seen for many years, several decades in some cases. We met Helly, a colleague English teacher from the school, for lunch at the Woolpack Inn, Chilham, where I had once worked in the kitchen; Vanessa, the widow of my best friend David Pickup (fellow detached probation officer in Sheffield, then companion on the farm); Gawain and Nikki in Deal, who had been tenants of the farm before I moved in and they moved out (I first met Gawain when I was at Oxford); Chris, a schoolfriend of Mark's who had also been a visitor to the farm, and is now a celebrated folk singer (he's staying with us in Oxford as I write; he has a gig in the Holywell Room). These four encounters were rich and intense – reviewing our memories of times long ago; where we had been going and what we had been doing during the years of separation; what we were doing with our lives now and our plans for the future. It was remarkable and moving.



1970s Hurst Farm where we were breeding sheep, milking cows and living the self-sufficient dream

We walked down the long, dusty track to Hurst Farm where I and fellow residents had had such an intense and extraordinary time in the 1970s. We also walked about Whitstable, sat on the seafront eating chips, passed any number of places familiar to Mark from his younger years and drove through the glorious Kentish countryside. Our small hotel was on the beach and we both had balconies overlooking the sea.



2020s Hurst Farm, neater and more trees, but largely unchanged



RIP Nicholas Gendle. Distinguished art historian and traveller, he was not a close friend, but he was good company for a meal and a bottle or two of wine. He died in September.



Claire and I enjoy coffee and patisserie together and go to films. She's a great comfort to have around



FAMILY AND FRIENDS

Summer trip downstream on the Isis on one of Salter's electric launches. Ian, Pippa, Rafe and Marie



Jet Schouten, Dutch friend and distinguished investigative journalist, stayed a night with partner JP on their way home from Wales to the Netherlands



Guy outside the Natural History Museum. We had a pleasant couple of days together after not seeing each other for decades



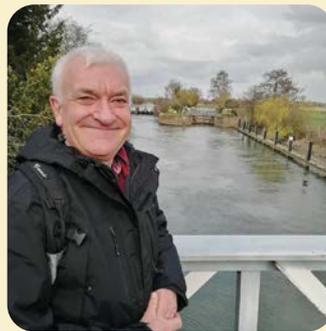
Geoffrey, Marie and Rafe in Oxford. Geoffrey's been a colleague and friend for around thirty years



Dear friends Rafe and Marie from Sweden regard Oxford, I think, as their second home. Next year they're coming for a weekend to celebrate Rafe's 80th birthday



Ian at Nuneham House where we found it was owned by the Brahma Kumaris. I had spent a strange week on Paros with them, many years ago. Sadly, I did not find enlightenment



Ian on Little Wittenham bridge, below Wittenham Clumps, on a chilly but happy day out from Oxford



It was special day when the young Hugmans came to Oxford, here outside Christ Church. George, Laura, Chloe and nephew Andrew



Steven Isenberg was a contemporary at Worcester. He had a high-flying career; now has his pied à terre in Oxford at River House when he comes for lectures and meetings

Jenny, my sister-in-law, with her sister Tig, called in to see us after an expedition to Northants. She reported that the Methodist chapel in Paulerspury (see OO 2021) – where four of our family are buried – had not been sold. However, the Parish Council has taken over the graveyard and has made it a pleasant, landscaped public space. My parents' marker stones (and many others) have been re-established or relocated and the graves of brother and nephew left in position. It's a pleasing result to what was initially a very badly-handled exodus by the failing church authorities.



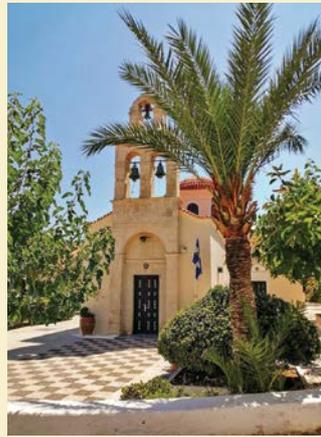
Worcester College garden party. Colin and I have been friends for seventy years. By completely divergent paths, we ended up at the same college in the same year.



RURAL CONTROVERSY - UPDATE



Above the lovely mountain village of Spili



The church in Panormo



10 DAYS ON CRETE

Roy's distinctive silhouette on one of the little beaches in Panormo

The island was a joy from beginning to end. My old friend Roy and I achieved a degree of companionable harmony and relaxed movement through the days that suited our mood perfectly; we did our duty to the place, but not to excess; on the other hand, we drank the wine and explored the cuisine, with moments of excess.

We stayed in the small village of Panormo, on the north coast, between Rethymno and Heraklion. With a population of maybe a few hundreds, the main buildings, on narrow streets, were clustered round the small harbour and three modest beaches. There were plenty of shops – small supermarkets, souvenirs and local products, lots of tavernas and restaurants; bright bougainvillea and oleander everywhere.

Our lovely, renovated, old village house was approached through a gate in a high stone wall and by a long path, overarched and roofed by vines, heavy with dozens of large bunches of young grapes. In the basement lived the mother and father of the owner, while the two upper stories were ours. Off the sitting room was a large balcony, overlooking the roofs of the village, out to The Med. Below the balcony was the small village's main street, quiet by day, but by night lively with customers at tables outside the bars and restaurants.

On our first day, the old lady brought us fine, warm filo pastries stuffed with cream cheese, drizzled with honey, and glasses of freshly-made lemonade.



Heavenly pastries and fresh lemonade from the generous old lady in the basement



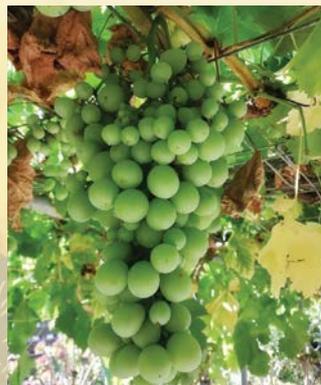
Our balcony was the perfect spot for relaxing and keeping an eye on activities on the main street below



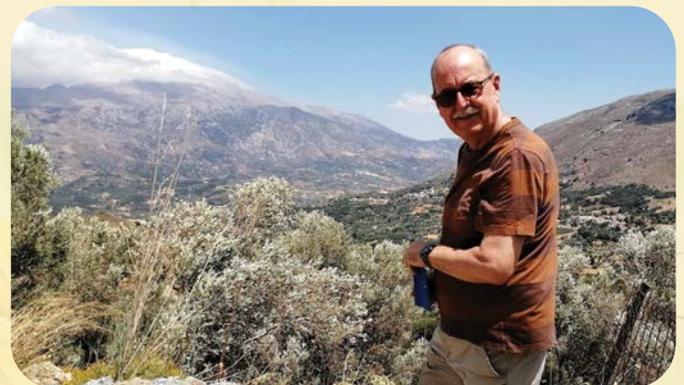
Night-time was a dream of tavernas and restaurants and right below our balcony



The magical vine-covered entrance to our house



Sumptuous bunches of young grapes above the path



Impressive landscapes in west central Crete

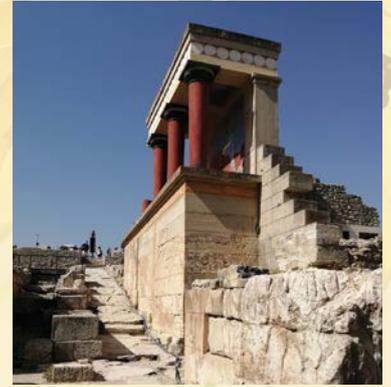


ANOTHER REUNION

The incentive to go to Crete was provided by my old friend Mary. I had got to know her and her partner in Sheffield in the early 1980s when I was on the buses; we had many indulgent evenings together. When her partner died, she moved first to Cyprus and then to Crete, running a small holiday villa business. During all the years we had not seen each other, she had constantly suggested I should visit her. She was a very good companion and guide for much of the holiday.



Mary, our generous hostess, drove us around in her smart little red-topped Hyundai



Knossos. The site is enormous, only a fraction of its huge expanse currently exposed. Most of the ruins are the footings and lower few feet of walls, with just a few partial structures standing



Knossos. The enormous scale and complexity of the palace are astonishing (giving rise, in its time, to the legend of the labyrinth of King Minos and the Minotaur)



The much restored fresco of Minoan bull-leaping. Pic Jebulon - Own work, CCO

OUT AND ABOUT ON CRETE



We took a coach to Chania, with its Venetian harbour and castle - reminded that Crete had been occupied by successive invaders since the Greeks, including the Germans in WW2. Mary took us into the mountains to Spili with its row of Venetian lions heads spouting fresh spring water from the mountains; to Margerites with its multitude of pottery studios; on east then north with breath-taking views of great mountains and vast valley floors beneath the towering Mount Psiloritis (2,456 metres), capped with cloud and a fleck of snow still remaining; past Arkadi Monastery where, in 1866, 900 Cretan Christians and their families blew themselves up in the powder magazine rather than surrender to the invading Turks. Such a fine, evocative, tragic, beautiful island!

HERAKLION

Our first expedition was Knossos, where the ruins of the great Minoan palace are the island's prime tourist site. Minoan civilization flourished between 2,600-1,100 BCE achieving astonishing cultural and technological sophistication.

The Museum in the city centre that houses thousands of artefacts from Minoan sites, is a treasure-house of wonders. There is a vast range of pottery; swords and daggers; great ceremonial double-headed axes; fine jewellery in gold and precious stones; household objects; rings and seals; gods and goddesses and religious artefacts; clay coffins – and, most impressive of all, the frescoes. Some of these are glorious, high art; partial and damaged as many are, they still proclaim the life of the palace and the people in rich colours; the most famous – representation of a youth leaping over a huge, charging bull.



Greece is not an easy place for LGBTQ+ people, so this march was a brave act of defiance and protest



The Venetian harbour, lighthouse and castle at Chania



ITALY: GRAND AND HOMELY PLEASURES

Piazza Bra and the stunning Arena where thousands flock for rock and opera

For a visitor, Italy is endlessly surprising and bewitching; its ancient heritage and architecture, its love of good food and wine, its style, its stunning landscapes and coastlines, the best of its people – all daily evidence of a rich and mature culture in which precious things are likely to be treasured. Such a grandiose declaration takes no account of urban deprivation, ugly estates, rural poverty, political instability, the underworld of criminality and corruption, all but invisible to the casual tourist. That cocoon of privilege allows one to live the dream of loveliness without the darkness encroaching.

Marie, Rafe and I enjoyed that privilege to the full in a fortnight of travel and indulgence first, in Verona and then three locations in Sicily: Cefalù, San Vito lo Capo and Erice. First and last involved some professional activity, but there was spare time too and in between, pure leisure.

In Erice, as guests of the Ettore Majorana Centre, we met and slept in restored monasteries in the midst of the almost unreconstructed medieval and renaissance town. The three of us had first been to Erice in 1997 when the invited international group produced The Erice Declaration on Communicating Drug Safety Information, a document that has had lasting influence and been extensively cited ever since. We attended several subsequent Erice meetings, but none achieved the impact of the first.

In Verona we stayed in Albergo Aurora, a lovely, unassuming 3-star establishment with a terrace overlooking the city's oldest square, Piazza dell' Erbe, with the 12th century, 84m Torre dei Lamberti, and its huge clockface, dominating the skyline. There was a wonderful breakfast buffet which you could enjoy out on the terrace on fine days. The busy square, full of market stalls, was a colourful backdrop to evening cocktails; on Friday evenings, a band played from the terrace for crowds on the street below.

In Cefalù and San Vito lo Capo we had rooms in small, unusual guesthouses (Ammaresiamo and Sabir) at absurdly modest prices. Our balconies in Cefalù were directly above the coastal rocks where tremendous swells roared and crashed on a couple of stormy days. In San Vito lo Capo we ordered our breakfast patisserie the night before and enjoyed some of the best hospitality service I have ever known.

We ate a lot of distinguished (and, occasionally disappointing) food and sampled a wide range of local wines, including some delicious Sicilian rosé. The trip was, in almost every way, a substantial feast for the mind and the senses.



Taking liberties with a triumphal arch



High style for the conference dinner



The medieval Torre dei Lamberti seen from the terrace of our hotel in Piazza dell' Erbe



At our favourite restaurant in Cefalù, Marie is lit by the sunset she is photographing



The Byzantine mosaic of Christ in the apse is regarded as one of the wonders of Christian art



The outstanding C13th Norman-Arab-Byzantine cathedral in Cefalù



View from the balcony of my little room in Cefalù. The sea had been rough and wild all night.



Splendid beach at San Vito lo Capo



The fortress Sanctuary of San Vito encloses a medieval church and a sixth century crypt



The Saint's sanctuary displays this extraordinary modern representation of the crucifixion which has inexplicable echoes of Tom of Finland's homoerotic drawings



Sandwiches and warm pastries, ordered the previous night, were delivered for breakfast at Sabir



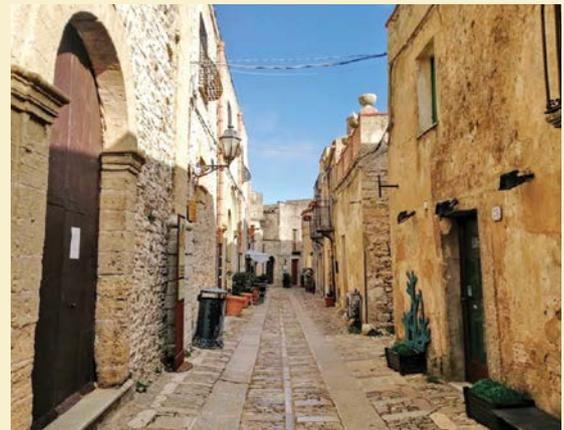
Exquisite desserts were a terrible feature of most menus



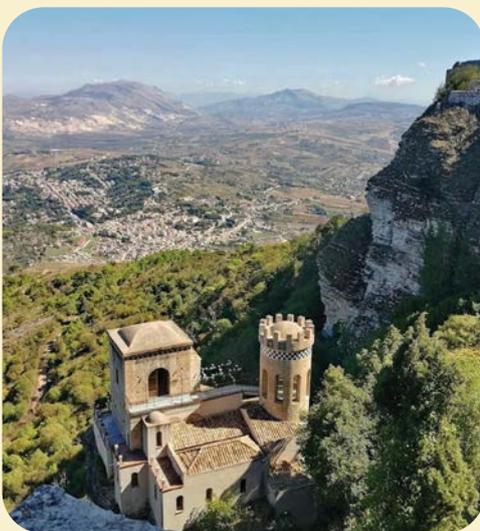
Entrance to San Domenico where we had our meetings in Erice



At the entrance to San Rocco, the HQ of the institute that was our host



A typical, ancient, magical street in the mountaintop town of Erice



Looking inland from the city walls



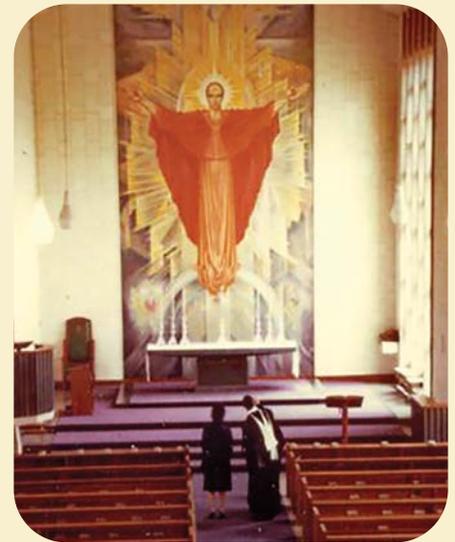
View from my room of the courtyard of the monastery of San Francesco where we were staying in Erice



View north from the city walls, 780m above Trapani and the surrounding countryside



Close encounter - the head of hair in the bottom left belongs to me. On the right is the imposing figure of our terrifying and ultimately tragic headmaster



HM and HM confer beneath the great mural in the quatercentenary chapel. The Kingdom of Heaven is represented by the school buildings behind the risen Christ

A pivotal schoolboy memory for me from the early '60s is a single sentence in the memo the Headmaster circulated before the visit of The Queen during the 400th anniversary celebrations of the foundation of the school. 'During the visit of Her Majesty,' he wrote, 'the royal standard will fly from the flagpole and for the duration of Her visit, the School will be the ostensible capital of the Empire.'

For the conformist, conservative teenager I was at the time, this struck even me as absurd, delusional; a notion worthy of mockery. It was one of a handful of critical revelations during my young years that began the process of dismantling the settled, narrow view of the world I had embraced at home and school. Monarchy and the hereditary principle were among the notions I began to pick apart and eventually discard, alongside my identity as a Christian and my delusional plans for ordination.

As a capable human being and family matriarch, a devoted, hard-working, talented public servant, and a credible (if anachronistic) figurehead for the nation, The Queen deserves our respect and our grief at her passing. None of her personal qualities, however, camouflage the absurdity of the institution in a modern democra-

cy nor the fact that the monarch stands at the apex of an enduring structure of indecent wealth and privilege in an unjust and unequal society.

As I write this, it's not twenty-four hours since she died, and the nation is in a convulsion of extravagant emotion, shelving all other priorities – strikes, football matches, BBC Proms, legislation to support the hungry poor, the operation of parliament itself – as if nothing in the world were more important than the death of a famous, very old lady. This overwhelming reaction reveals profound and worrying aspects of our national character that will stand in the way of our grasping this unique opportunity for reform, let alone abolition.

Nesrine Malik wrote a very intelligent, incisive piece about this in The Guardian on 12 September. I made the following comment on her piece that was published on 14 September on the Letters pages:

"Three cheers for Nesrine Malik's blast of reviving oxygen amid the overwhelming, stifling coverage of recent events. It was a great show while it lasted, but offstage, out on the streets, a very different story has been unravelling for 70 years.

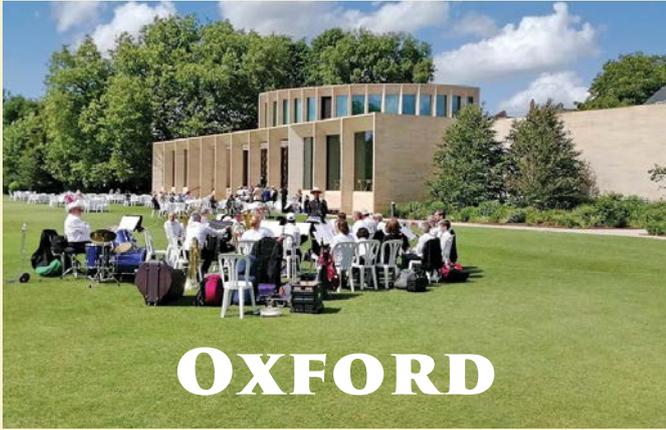
"Props and costumes, smoke and

mirrors cannot disguise it. Anchors may be useful at times, though they do stop you from moving at all; anchors made of papier-mache and cloth of gold set you adrift in stormy seas. The country has been wrecked by neglect and greed, and no amount of royal flummery will remedy that. I admire the devotion that the late monarch brought to the job, but the extravagant institution she embodied is an absurdity and an insult in a modern democracy where so many live oppressed, impoverished lives."



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g Nesrine The rdinary let id the l she do worked. s hard as nodest ng to get	<p>● Three cheers for Nesrine Malik's blast of reviving oxygen amid the overwhelming, stifling coverage of recent events. It was a great show while it lasted, but offstage, out on the streets, a very different story has been unravelling for 70 years.</p> <p>Props and costumes, smoke and mirrors cannot disguise it. Anchors may be useful at times, though they do stop you from moving at all; anchors made of papier-mache and cloth of gold set you adrift in stormy seas. The country has been wrecked by neglect and greed, and no amount of royal flummery will remedy that. I admire the devotion that the late monarch brought to the job, but the extravagant institution she embodied is an absurdity and an insult in a modern democracy where so many live oppressed, impoverished lives.</p> <p>Bruce Hugman Oxford</p>	● There from chi condole church, this one my cat I might m Iain Str Great G
om US	New Zealand - had only ever known one head of state in their life, and	● When acceded the cour with ma

Guardian letter 14 Sep 2022



OXFORD

The brass band at the Worcester College garden party



Dressed up for dinner at Worcester College



We had masses of cheerful bulbs inside and outside during the spring

Living in this city and in this house continues to provide us with everything we could wish for in terms of variety, opportunity and comfort. We have the joy of the river and extensive nature around us, even, as we are, right next to the City centre. I hope our landlords will remain as satisfied with us as we are with their lovely property for many years to come.



Beautiful modern stonework for the gate of Lincoln College's entrance to their Mitre estate on The Turl, behind the old pub (which is set to open sometime)



Beating the Bounds - the historic ritual in which priests and grown-ups chase around the town with choirboys beating old stones on the ancient perimeter of the City



Benefactors' dinner at Worcester College



Independent book fair with some of my publications on display (foreground)



Queuing at the Paperboat cafe in the old tollhouse on Folly Bridge. Just close enough to dash along for a fresh croissant.



Only in Oxford. A newly elevated (probably) DPhil punts on the Cherwell in full regalia



This haunting homage to Ukraine was placed in Broad Street for a while



This fabulous narrowboat moored near us for a day or two



A geranium coloured narrowboat passes the geraniums on our balcony



In spite of the drought, the Virginia creeper, like the pears, showed undiminished vigour



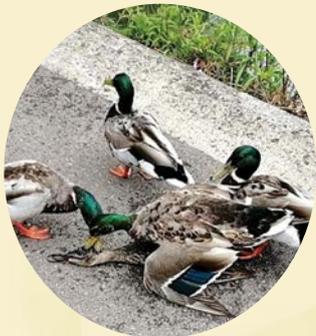
Rafe and Marie brought me this wonderful birdbox - reminiscent of the Swedish landscape and the little chalet I occupied for many years in the forest



Garden furniture gets a makeover before winter



The fruit trees blossomed and cropped profusely this year



A brutal and disturbing anatine gang-rape just outside the house.



We had mallard for dinner so maybe should not expostulate too vocally about the behaviour of live ducks

STOP PRESS: We have just received a firm cash offer for the farm in Chiang Rai. The deal is far from completion, but it's terrific news after years of unsuccessful marketing. The final end of my Thai era, maybe.



Messy graduation hi-jinks below our balcony

LAST MINUTE NOTES FROM THE TOWPATH

Just getting my breath back from the fortnight in Italy and sending off the last text and pics to Mr Neung. First day back was the funeral of Nicholas Gendle (p. 5) – at which I was ambushed by a full Catholic mass in the cemetery chapel. The occasion was managed by a trio of low-key monks and a quartet of lugubrious, Dickensian pall-bearers. The only liturgical response I could silently muster was, ‘Oh Lord, get me out of here.’ I missed my reading group that evening as right foot tendonitis had flared up getting to and from the burial, so I had to send some notes (we were reading *The Secret Scripture* by Sebastian Barry – remarkable too). We’ve heard that a planning application by our neighbour directly opposite - for a monstrous third storey addition – has been withdrawn after lots of local objections and a likely rejection by the Council. A few of us will be having a discreet party to celebrate.

It's a lot cooler than Italy and we'll have to be making careful decisions about heating from now on. I wish we had the independence of solid-fuel Agas and open fires that rural life once offered us, though even then we had to sleep fully clothed (with woolly hats) during deep winter. Things are going to change, aren't they? They must. Everything is so much more fragile than we have been seduced into believing. Ah, but who will take us into a safer future? If only there were great leaders to get a grip and save us and the planet. A popular revolution might start the process, but who is there to carry it forward justly and intelligently?

Raymond will be spending his Christmas in the embrace of his family and friends in the tropical colours of Ghana before we enter, when he returns, the terrible (and costly) labyrinth of applying for leave to remain in the UK for another thirty months. Then, at some point, his driving test and our cautious entry into the secondhand car market.

It's time for a G&T before a review of all these ramblings in the morning. I hope you've been amused by it all, here and there.

GREETINGS AND BEST WISHES TO YOU AND YOUR LOVED ONES.

Bruce

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