



OXFORD UNIVERSITY SOCIETY OF LUXEMBOURG

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OUSL Chairman's Report 2021/22

As we emerged from the pandemic, we can report on a programme which we have rarely matched. In putting together this programme we have employed the talents of our committee and the membership and worked together with other societies including our friends from the Cambridge Society in Luxembourg and the Oxford Belgian Society, as well as the British-Luxembourg Society, the Conference St Yves and the Stanford Society. Most recently we also worked with the Oxford and Cambridge Societies in Amsterdam and Dusseldorf in organising the Oxford and Cambridge Benelux and Rhineland Reunion here in Luxembourg.

Our Committee remained constant from the previous year which provided a firm base for an extraordinary year of events and growth in Membership. I want to pay an especial tribute to Mette Ahlefeldt-Laurvig who in the role of Membership Coordinator, maintained the emailing list and was responsible for circulating the membership on most of our activities. No Chair can have hoped for more able and enthusiastic assistance. Sadly, her academic work has obliged her to step down from the Committee with effect from this AGM. We hope very much to welcome her back in future years. Our Secretary Harriet Hansen, mother of two young children and expecting a further **two** is also stepping down from the Committee. We wish them both good fortune for the future.

I have benefitted from the continuity provided by our former Chairman Jan Koenighaus who has continued as Vice-Chairman and provided a connection with the British Luxembourg Society where he serves as a Vice-President.

Most of our activities are recorded on our excellent website curated by our other Vice-Chairman and webmaster Jos van Bommel. See <http://oxford.lu/index.php/events-2/>. It was Jos who kicked off our post-pandemic programme with a talk on Value Investing in the Stock Market. With the collapse in the stock market "value stocks" have performed less badly than "growth stocks" and Jos notes that "Buffet like" there are great opportunities herre. Needless to say, the usual caveats apply to such advice.

In May 2021 the Chancellor of Oxford University, Lord Patten of Barnes gave the Sir Winston Churchill Memorial Lecture spoke on-line on the subject of "China and the New Global Balance". A recording of the lecture and the Question and Answer session can be found on <https://b-l-s.lu/churchill-lectures/previous-lectures> The event was held jointly with the Bridge Forum Dialogue as well as our usual partners at the British Embassy, and La Fondation Nationale de la Résistance

(FONARES). The Oxford University Society of Luxembourg were naturally invited to co-host the event.

Summer brought outdoor activities conducted as usual with our friends and rivals at the Cambridge Society. An absence of cricketers meant that the cricket match morphed into a croquet event hosted as is customary at the Schuman Farm with our thanks to Fiona and Adrian Wykes. There is a probability that, this year, in order to put on a team of cricketers Oxford and Cambridge will have to combine in order to take on a non-Oxbridge ladies cricket team. O tempora o mores

September saw our annual freshers dinner with two first year undergraduates and a new MBA student sharing a meal with two current students and seven alumni. The meal was held at a new Italian pizza restaurant, Fama, whose excellent Italian cuisine was only slightly spoiled by poor¹acoustics. Thank you, Jos for organising this.

This brought us on to the much postponed and much heralded Tri-University Dinner with LSE alumni and CamSoc. This year it was our turn to organise the event which we did at the Chateau Bourglinster on 30th September. Organisation was helped by efficient co-operation from CamSoc and LSE but the burden fell mainly to your Chairman ably assisted by our Treasurer Agnieszka Walczak who handled payments from the three societies and by our Membership Coordinator Mette Ahlefeldt who handled the enormous influx of new members to the Society. Former Chair Andrew Hallan, contributed his table planning programme, which eased the organisation of the event. The dinner itself was a black-tie affair attended by 88 people and held in the Salle des Chevaliers with guest speaker Dr Hubertus von Morr, former German Ambassador to Luxembourg, who spoke on the recent German Elections. The British Ambassador HE Fleur Thomas and Finance Minister, Pierre Gramegna were the guests of honour. In addition to the splendid company we were well looked after by the excellent staff and superb cuisine of Chateau Bourglinster. Proceedings were launched with a Latin grace common to Oxford and Cambridge.

This was followed by a second O&C croquet competition, this time designed as such and played in a park in central Luxembourg. Passing Luxembourgers betrayed no interest in our activities following the principal of "let people be what they are". There was a star performance from the young son of Christopher Wajda, former UK ECJ Judge. He was not much taller than the mallet but wielded it with force and precision, much as his father might have delivered his judicial opinions.

Culture reasserted itself when Sir Michael Edwards the Anglo-French poet and a member of the Académie Française gave us a talk entitled "Thinking in Poetry". Held in the German Protestant Church the event was held in conjunction with CamSoc, the Conference St Yves and the British Luxembourg Society. Sir Michael at one stage seemed to say the message is in the medium (poetry), which inspired one attendee to ask if "McLuhan like" the medium is the message. The talk was preceded by a major of the Luxembourg Pipe Band and an introduction by André Prum, from the Institut Grand-Ducal.

An exclusive visit to the Kneip Art collection was arranged by Jan Koenighaus with OUSL member Enrique Sacau, the CEO of Kneip. We were guided by Bob Kneip himself who explained to us the process of bringing together the extraordinary collection of Pop Art, including works of César, Döring, Errò, Fifax, Haring, Huart, Strainchamps, Warhol and Wesselmann among others.

¹ Pierre Gramegna who has since stepped down from his position as Minister of Finance is a candidate to be President of the European Stability Mechanism in succession to Klaus Regling.

Dr Mette Ahlefeldt-Laurvig gave us a lecture on the historical practice of “churching” which was how married women were cleansed after childbirth and to be readmitted to Church. This practice was drawn from biblical traditions and the persisted even into the 20th century in some places. It was common in both the Catholic and Lutheran churches. The well attended talk was based on her DPhil thesis and was followed by a convivial dinner in the Cercle Munster.

Our next set piece event was a conference held with Tom Fletcher, Principal of Hertford College. A former British Ambassador to the Lebanon and author of two books on modern diplomacy in the modern age, he spoke on “Diplomacy in the Technological Age”. He was joined by two discussants Arlette Conzemius, former Luxembourg Ambassador to Belgium and NATO and Urban Gillström Founder and CEO of Greenworlder (Luxembourg). We arranged the event together with the Bridge Forum Dialogue who provided the Chair. Thanks to the Bridge Forum we obtained the use of the Chamber of Commerce as the forum which accommodated a substantial audience including Luxembourg’s former European Commissioner, Vivianne Reding, and a number of other diplomats including the Deputy Secretary General of the Luxembourg Foreign Ministry. The event is recorded on <http://oxford.lu/index.php/events-2/>

The event was recorded live on YouTube and was available to view thereafter. Representatives of the host Societies and the speakers attended a dinner afterwards at the Cercle Munster.

On April 25th we enjoyed a guided visit to the “Rashpëtzer”, the Luxembourgish name for the world’s largest Roman *Qanat*. We saw how the erstwhile tunneling construction pits had been sinking over time, and how the Qanat was discovered in 1914, then explored by the *Walferdange Syndicat d’Initiative*, our host for the afternoon. In the 2nd century A.D., the Qanat was an underground aquaduct that brought water from an aquifer in the woods to a Roman settlement with army barracks in the Alzette Valley. From the guide we learned that the Romans were very particular about their drinking water and avoided rivers at all costs, for danger of poisoning. They imported a Persian tunneling technique and employed it in current day Luxembourg to source sandstone filtered water. Our thanks to Mata Roberti for organising this event which was followed by lunch.

Together with the Cambridge University Society in Luxembourg we organised a successful Reunion Weekend in Luxembourg for alumni of the Universities in the Benelux and Rhineland where there are active alumni societies for the two Universities.

Events kicked off on the evening of Friday 6th May with a wildly successful Brazilian party at Maria Bonita in the Rives de Clausen. The following morning a somewhat more sober conference on the EU Luxembourg-based institutions was held at the Cercle Cité. Speakers included Ian Forrester, former Judge of the General Court, Geoffrey Simpson, Director of Audit Quality and Audit Methodology at the European Court of Auditors and Francis Carpenter, former Secretary-General of the European Investment Bank and CEO of the European Investment Fund. All speakers were informative and entertaining and provided exceptional insight into their respective institutions. The conference was sponsored by Clifford Chance.

Tours were arranged around the historic centre of Luxembourg and its fortifications as well as to the Mudam and Dräi Eechelen museums. There was a marvellous exhibition of paintings by black British artist Lynette Yiadom Boakye which runs till September. Dr Dan Schmit (MPhil, Oxon) a staffer at the Luxembourg Chamber of Deputies gave a tour of the Chamber and a talk on the Luxembourg political institutions. Professor Alan Wirth gave a superb concert of baroque organ music at the Church of St Michel. The ancient cities of Oxford and Cambridge would have been hard-pressed to match the beauty and serenity of the surroundings and the music.

The day ended with a black-tie Gala Dinner for 88 people at the Cercle Munster which was opened by a Latin grace spoken by Oxford graduate David Weis. Special guest Martine Reicherts, president of Luxembourg's Fonds National de Recherche, gave an address on Innovation in Luxembourg. We were also honoured by the presence of the Deputy Ambassador of the United States, Casey Mace and his wife Anne. Mr Mace proposed a toast to the Transatlantic Alliance and spoke briefly of how the Ukrainian crisis has reinforced the need for transatlantic friendship. David Clark, Chair of the Oxford Society proposed a toast to His Royal Highness the Grand Duke and to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. Martin Curwen, President of the Cambridge Society toasted the two Universities. All guests enjoyed an exceptionally convivial evening laid on by the Cercle Munster's superb staff.

The weekend was rounded off with a tour of one of Luxembourg's premier vineyards, Château Pauqué, understandably limited to 30 participants. Cambridge Secretary and oenophile, John Speed, rated the event one of the very best he has attended. In conclusion, the Oxford and Cambridge Luxembourg Societies have achieved their objectives of promoting friendship amongst the alumni of the two universities and displaying the best that Luxembourg can provide.

Almost all the Committee were involved in organising events. Andrew Hallan, former Chair, was very active in helping with the logistics for the event.

Several events during the year had to be postponed and I have not had space to record the Oxford and Cambridge Interview training which we traditionally conduct. The Boat Race Event and the Quiz organised by the Oxford Society in Belgium. Online events with other Societies were appreciated including one organised by the Stanford Society with Stanford Academic Anna Liebke.

I was particularly impressed by a virtual book launch introduced by former Committee member, Lisa Francis-Jennings – "Reclaiming Populism; How Economic Fairness Can Win Back Disenchanted Voters" by Eric Protzer, Research Fellow at Harvard University's Growth Lab and Paul Summerville, Adjunct Professor at the University of Victoria's Gustavson School of Business. Bob Rae, Canadian Ambassador to the United Nations and Ian Goldin, Professor at Oxford University acted as panelists. Marcus Fedder (Development Finance & Author) chaired the event.

This is my final Chairman's Letter and I wish to thank all the Committee and Members of the Society for helping to produce a fulfilling series of events in addition to their friendship and good company.

David Clark
Chair, OUSL
16.6.2022