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## OXFORD UNIVERSITY SOCIETY OF LUXEMBOURG

### President's Report 2025-2016

Dear Members,

It is my pleasure, on behalf of the Committee, to present this year's report for the Oxford University Society of Luxembourg. We certainly got off to a flying start after last year's AGM 2025. At that stage, we could report that OUSL membership had grown from 72 (2024) to 84 paid-up members – a significant number for any Luxembourg alumni association. This year we have not only retained this level, but slightly surpassed it with 87 paid-up members, and, when we include our five student members, this total reaches an astonishing 92. To all these members, I owe my warm thanks for making this possible. Because without your enthusiasm and support of the various events we have organised, we would not be the thriving society we are today.

Over the past year, we have greatly expanded the programme of events in many different fields. One of our staple formats is the dinner-talk, and we are proud to say that we managed to present an array of distinguished guests from the worlds of politics, diplomacy, and academia. The most recent was only two weeks ago, when we were visited by *the* expert on Roman Britain, renowned Oxonian Professor Alan Bowman, who kept an audience of eighty persons spell-bound through his research into the so-called Vindolanda tablets. These offered insight into everything from soldiers needing socks, underpants – and beer – to military formations. Afterwards we joined him for a congenial dinner together.

When planning events, our hope is to strike the right balance between academic, cultural and social events of a high quality, while also strengthening our work on Outreach and freshers. The other goal is to keep the number of events balanced, whether OUSL-generated events, joint events, or third party events. There should be choice – but not over-saturation – and we may still need to work on getting that exactly right, not least to preserve the health of your committee members!

It is easy to view an event solely for what it is on the day it unfolds, but events are a long time in planning. They rely on old-fashioned hard work and the most precious of all commodities: time. In a voluntary organisation, that is not always self-evident, especially considering that besides organising events, we also meet up for monthly committee meetings and communicate often. There are thus minutes to be written, accounts to be kept, membership records to be nurtured and logged, student and freshers work to be maintained, networking to ensure good speakers and new members, social media accounts that must be constantly fed, research on venues to keep on top of attractive, but affordable options, and much, much more.

My first thanks go to our excellent and meticulous Treasurer of nearly six years, Agnieszka Walczak. Agnieszka has just had a second child, and although she meant to return to us following her maternity leave, the demands of a young family and work at Luxembourg University has sadly necessitated her resignation – though not before she produced this year’s impeccable accounts. We wistfully bid Agnieszka goodbye, offering her our warmest thanks and hoping we may see her back soon.

Like everyone, committee members are subject to life’s unpredictability. Beyond motherhood, several have navigated demanding personal circumstances, long-term IT issues, or intensive new jobs. Despite this, we delivered the most ambitious programme yet. We are, as ever, thankful to Jan Könighaus (VP), our linchpin and staunch supporter of the institution that is Oxford, and to David Clark for his input and ideas. Thanks are also due to Sam Vinandy-Lau (Membership), whose firm commitment to the Society transcends the demands of young fatherhood, professional obligations, and committee work beyond this association.

I also wish to thank our younger members, Bob Kieffer, in the trusted position of Secretary, and Lidiya Cherneva who helps with the newsletter and other tasks. Both have demanding jobs and are in their early career, yet they still manage to offer their time and friendship. That is very much appreciated. Dan Schmit is also a busy man and yet he, too steps up for events related to Outreach. Last but not least, I wish to thank our Honorary Auditor, Richard Goddard, for his vital work ensuring our accounts comply with all demands.

And now, I have the pleasure of welcoming a new member to your committee, namely David Eatough who will be our legal Council. In truth, he already has been as he has kindly assisted us on legal matters for some months now. So we know that we will be well advised by David whom I warmly welcome.

I must conclude this report – and before we turn to the rich list of events - by reiterating my thanks to our alumni community at large. Your active participation and steady support are the very things that make this society thrive.

Yours truly,

Mette Ahlefeldt-Laurvig  
President, Oxford University Society of Luxembourg, asbl



## OUSL EVENTS SUMMARY 2025-2026



- ❖ OUSL generated events
- ❖ Joint events with sister organisations
- ❖ Third Party events announced by OUSL

*From the AGM 20 May 2025 with members of the outgoing OUSL*

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### Spring 2025:

- **1 February 2025**, we had a well-attended concert-dinner with our member, Alexander Gebhard (tenor) and Grégoire Baumberger (piano) for a beautiful rendition of Schubert's *Winterreise*. This concert was followed by dinner.
- **25 March 2025**: dinner-talk at Cercle Münster with Oxonian Jens Tholstrup who spoke on the Hanseatic League to an engaged audience. Followed by drinks and dinner.
- **3 April 2025**, OUSL teamed up with the Johanniter for the OUSL Chair, Mette Ahlefeldt-Laurvig, to give a talk on her research topic of the Churching of Women in the Lutheran Church. The talk was followed by dinner.
- **12 April 2025**: our large group of Oxonians, families included, had a sunlit day at the historic Villeroy & Boch Headquarters in Mettlach and the nearby V & B Museum and Outlet which was followed by a festive lunch at Schloß Saareck. ‘
- **6 May 2025**: OUSL organised its first New Members Welcome drink at the former Café des Capucins. New and old members mingled and the format proved a success to be repeated on an annual basis.
- **20 May 2025**: OUSL held its AGM at the Kirchberg Campus of the Luxembourg University. The AGM was followed by blind tastings of cremant, cheeses and sausages which gave a festive ending to this annual milestone

## Highlights from OUSL EVENTS AGM (2025) to the AGM (2026)

**19 June 2025;** we started the new OUSL calendar cycle with aplomb as it was our turn to organise the Tripartite Dinner for Cambridge, LSE and ourselves. Held at the Golf Club Grand Ducal, the number of attendees swelled to 85 guests. Blessed with glorious weather, sparkling company – including the newly appointed UK Ambassador, and a pre-dinner taster of the acclaimed Duo Natalia, made the evening a true highlight of the year.



**13 September 2025**, all those good dinners had to be offset, so we arranged a walk in Müllerthal with Andrew Hallan leading us expertly to the famous waterfall and through the narrow path of Eulenberg towards the top with its stunning view. The walk offered that rare and precious commodity: time to talk and get to know each other in a fun and relaxed way. Afterwards we repaired to the Heringer Millen and had a congenial lunch.



**7 October 2025:** By October it was time for Exclusive dinner-talk with the former Attorney General Dominic Grieve. Guest numbers were restricted to 22 with a view to creating an intimate and engaged conversation which worked impeccably. Flanked by their excellencies, the UK Ambassador Joanne Olivier, and the Ambassador for Ireland, Jean McDonald, Dominic Grieve spoke on *“The Role of the Attorney General and the Fate of the Rules-Based International Order.”* The talk was followed by a Q&A session around our one long table, creating a rare and enriching conversation.



## OUSL OUTREACH WORK

**On 16 September 2025** OUSL held its annual Freshers Dinner at Chiche! We had fewer freshers this year, but two out of three came and were joined by committee members as well as mock interviewers. This congenial annual event is extremely fruitful for creating and maintaining a close connection with future Oxonians.



**On 30-31 October 2025**, the OUSL manned a stand at the Annual Student Fair in Belval, with committee volunteers and alumni engaging prospective students throughout, contributing to ongoing efforts to support University of Oxford and strengthen links with education in Luxembourg. Next year the fair will move back to Luxembourg ville.





**6 November 2025:** Dinner-Talk with the Swiss Ambassador Benno Laggner at the Golf Club Grand Ducal. Ambassador Benno gave a captivating - and very thought-provoking - speech on the topic of: 'Current security challenges for Europe and Switzerland's role.'

The talk was followed by Q & A with an engaged audience and Ambassador Laggner answered with clarity and insight while also offering a serious forewarning that Europe is in uncharted territory.



**4 December 2025:** for the second time, we held our annual Christmas Gala Dinner at Cercle Münster. The Annual Christmas dinner is our most important social event in the year, because that is where we look more inwards than outwards allowing ourselves to celebrate our vibrant society.



The evening began with crémant and a live jazz duo.

H.E. the UK Ambassador Joanne Olivier joining in the Christmas spirit





As something new, your Chair arranged a Christmas quiz and much fun was had.



We enjoyed a delicious dinner where toast were said and carols sung.

**14 December 2025:** we rounded off the year with Oxford arranging our Oxbridge visit to the Christmas Fair. Hotel Cravat has become too expensive, so we met at Cafe SpoT and followed it up with Glühwein at the very busy Christmas Market!



## 2026

**On 8 January 2026:** we opened the OUSL New Year with a tour of the EIB Art Collection led by Delphine Munro, Head of EIB Arts & Culture. The EIB collection is vast, with only the tip of the iceberg on public display. The exhibition centred on new works by artists that either hailed from an EU country as well as artists from non-EU citizens who currently work or study within the EU. Afterwards a group of around twenty went for an informal dinner together.



**On 15 and 16 January 2025**, OUSL had two member-driven events. The first was a literary evening at the Café des Capucins arranged with our member, James Leader, whose book, 'Into Bable' entered the Luxembourg bestseller list as no. 1. The second was a charity concert arranged by our member Peter Carter and his wife.



**On 29 January 2026**, we enjoyed an exclusive 'on-stage' tour of the Philharmonie, led by Alik Zachariadis, followed by a reception and, for many, Haydn's *The Seasons* at special OUSL-reduced prices. Taken on-stage, and seated at the musicians' desks, we were given insight into the Philharmonie's ambitions, including its strong emphasis on Outreach and social inclusion. The tour also took us behind the scenes through the labyrinth of backstage rooms and onto the chamber music stage. Afterwards, our group of twenty enjoyed amuse-bouches and crémant in the foyer before the concert.



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**24 March 2026:** We followed up on last year's success of introducing a New Members Welcome Drink, meeting on the 1st. floor of Atmos Bar. We had a great show up of new members who covered all sorts of fields – from law to languages. Over a glass of bubbly and with lots of amuse-bouches there was lively chatting across different jobs and ages. Thank you new members for coming and thank you 'old' members for joining up to make this a truly convivial meet-up.



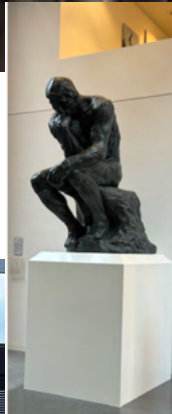
**4 April 2026:** Once again we were fortunate to be invited to watch the Boat Races together with Camsoc in front of the multiplex home cinema at the home of Laurent and Cathy Frideres. There was a good group from both Oxford and Cambridge cheering on the women's team as it won the race!! Sadly, the dark blue men will have to do a few more push-ups before the next race, but we are still proud of them!



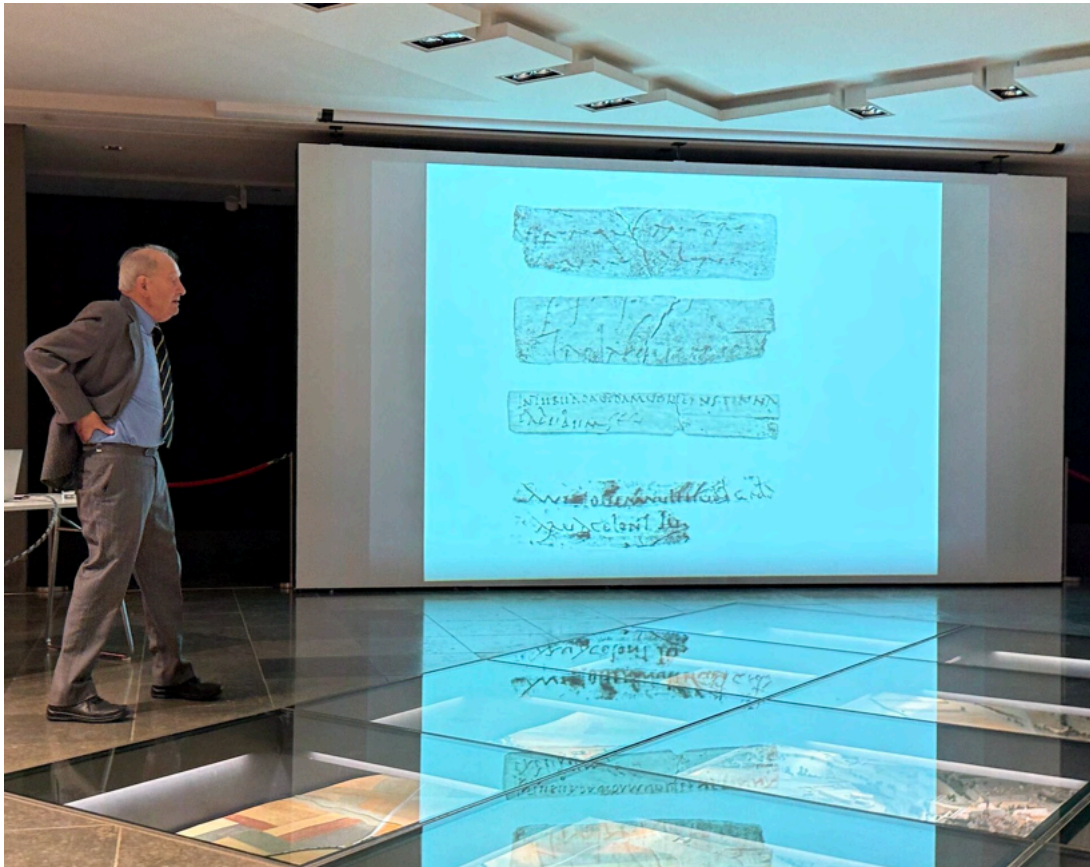
**18 April 2026:** Birds & Buffalo at Menster Brill Nature Reserve. We had a great group for the guided nature tour organised across Oxbridge with our member Philip Birget and Louise Benjamin (Cambridge) in the lead. Philip explained about the careful work of monitoring and recording local birdlife including bird ringing. Later, the visit continued to the nearby buffalo hide in Mensdorf and ended with a welll-deserved lunch kindly provided by Louise in her home.



**20 April 2026:** we had a tour and talk at the European Court of Justice, followed by lunch at the exclusive judges restaurant on the 27th floor with Judge Elisabeth Tichy-Fisslberger. We toured the gallery and long corridors, leaning about the scale of the institution, including Europe's largest legal library and around 900 cases annually. Afterwards, C. Mac Eochaidh gave an insightful talk on the workings of the Court before we had lunch overlooking Luxembourg from the 27th floor.



**On 6 May 2026:** We had a brilliant talk by Prof. Alan Bowman at Muesum Dräi Eechelen before an 80 people strong audience, followed by a congenial dinner at the cosy De Feierwon where we had the whole restaurant to ourselves. The event came about through the cooperation between our member David Weis from INRA, and OUSL. Our speaker made Roman Britain come alive from extant tablets, covering everything from soldiers needing socks, underpants - and beer - to military reports on the 'wretched Britains'. The conference was covered by [chronicle.lu](https://lnkd.in/d9s7j4D9): <https://lnkd.in/d9s7j4D9>





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In addition to all these OUSL-generated events we also posted invitations to joint and third party events throughout the year, too numerous to be listed in their entirety.

**Monthly Drinks:** Most importantly we have our monthly Oxbridge Drinks which we introduced a few years ago and which have prove highly successful. We are trying out new events, but so far La Reserve has proven quite a hit. As with nearly all our events, partners and friends are very welcome.



Camsoc-organised events in the late summer such as :

- **The annual Fish Dinner at Schueberfour**, which John Speed usually organises.
- **The annual Croquet in the City & pizza**, for Oxbridge members and their partners as well as Oxbridge freshers.



**Camsoc and LSE:** In addition we are often invited to Cambridge and LSE-generated Dinner-talks, just as they are often invited to ours. An example is the conference 26 February 2026 with Prime Minister Luc Frieden, HE Ambassador Joanne Olivier, and Chancellor of the university of Cambridge, Lord Smith of Finsbury, arranged by Camsoc together with A&O Sheerman.



**Third parties:** We also pass on selected events from third parties such Insead, St Gallen, Imperial and Conférence St Yves, or from selected charity events.

**International invitations:** We occasionally also transmit invitations from Brussels, Amsterdam, or Düsseldorf, and now also from Paris. Thus OUSL was invited to the New Year Gala Dinner for OUS Paris. We were warmly greeted by the Charlie Tatham and other members of the OUS Paris committee.



**Meeting Minds:** Finally, I should mention the annual alumni weekend in Oxford each September, to which all alumni and partners have a standing invitation. In 2025 (19–21 September), the programme ranged from lectures and concerts to tours of the Ashmolean and Rhodes House, much of it at little or no cost.

The weekend opened at the Weston Library with a talk by William Hague, followed by discussion and a reception.



Only your Chair and Vice Chair represented OUSL this year, but with our large alumni society, we could easily be many more. So do mark your diaries for 18–20 September 2026 — the next Meeting Minds in Oxford.

OUSL Chair and Vice Chair enjoying a moment with our OUS Paris counterparts: Howard Norman (Chair) and Lena Schreiner (Secretary) following the Chancellor's excellent talk.





Oxford September 2025