Building the Future
Spring 2021
I hope it will soon be possible to invite you back to St Hilda’s to share at first hand the remarkable physical transformation of our College. Finally, the day has arrived when we can see our charming new College buildings in the round! Work now starts to prepare the gardens and the seasonal planting that will allow the Anniversary Building and Pavilion to settle properly into the site. We shall get used to pointing out St Hilda’s from many new vantage points across Oxford.

After a year in which the terrible pandemic has dominated all of our lives, this achievement by dedicated people, supported wholeheartedly by our College and alumnae community, feels little short of a miracle. For the 52 students who moved into the Anniversary Building in Michaelmas 2020, the beautifully appointed rooms have been a haven, doubly appreciated by those who were not able to return home for the vacations.

I am pleased to report that our Fellows and Lecturers have worked successfully to support the notable progress of our wonderful students. Our administrative and support teams have likewise been exceptionally creative in delivering their services effectively and safely under very difficult conditions.

While the College has grown agile in responding to the ever-changing circumstances, it is clear that the pandemic has taken a toll on College finances, and will continue to do so throughout Trinity term and the summer vacation. The reduction in projected income from student accommodation and catering and conference activities across the vacations has reduced our operating income significantly.

We simply cannot let the pandemic diminish our ambitions for our College or reduce the aspirations for our students and Fellows; momentum has not been lost, only tempered by the global misfortune of the pandemic. We are committed to advancing the next phase of our ambitious campaign, Building the Future.

Excellent opportunities are here for donors to make their mark and shape the College – including the naming of the riverside Pavilion, our wonderful new teaching space. For those whose favourite parts of the College include its lovely gardens, we invite donations to a fund to create uplifting surroundings and actively support sympathetic and sustainable plantings, trees, meadow flowers, and habitats in which wildlife can thrive.

The tutorial system is at the heart of an Oxford education. We are fortunate to have a talented group of Fellows to maintain the highest quality of teaching, even under difficult conditions when remote teaching has become the norm. With the College’s strategic development into medical and biomedical sciences, we now seek support to secure a vital early career post in Biomedical Sciences to ensure that we retain our critical teaching strength in this important field.

Above all, recent events have impressed upon us that we simply must provide rooms for all of our undergraduates for their entire time at St Hilda’s. These facilities, aligned with funding for those from financially disadvantaged families, will help us reduce the impact of the pandemic on our students and give them the best possible means of flourishing at Oxford. With this in mind, we will soon submit a planning application for three buildings to be located near the Jacqueline du Pré Music Building. The details of these elegant, energy-efficient and environmentally sustainable buildings are on the back cover.

My great hope, in my final year in post (alas), is that we can maintain the tremendous progress of this important campaign – in spite of all that has been happening across the world and the significant impact the pandemic has had on our College income. I therefore urge you to join alumnae and friends and make a commitment this year to fund a bright future for St Hilda’s!

Sir Gordon Duff, Principal
Celebrating success

As Phase I of our Building the Future campaign draws to a close, we look back over what has been achieved at the entrance to the College.

The Pavilion has superb social and academic spaces facing the river, and will be surrounded by sensitively planted new gardens.

The new Middle Common Room, when fitted out, will provide a centre for MCR activities and enable a more cohesive graduate community.

The tower observation room gives an unparalleled view of the Oxford skyline. We await the tower’s oak leaf crown later this year.

The seminar room in the Pavilion offers a light, airy and fully accessible space that can be used flexibly for larger group teaching and events.

The atrium gives access to all floors with a light-filled, open space at the very heart of the Anniversary Building.

Students fortunate enough to live in the new Anniversary Building’s rooms, looking over the fields towards the dreaming spires, are the envy of their counterparts across the University.
Making an entrance

Remaining priorities

Despite unexpected challenges on both a global scale and more domestic, our construction team has kept going and the magnificent new buildings are a testament to the dedication, ingenuity and adaptability of all involved. To reach our target for the first phase of this transformative building programme we seek your support for these remaining naming opportunities.

The Pavilion: Located in what has always been considered the most beautiful viewpoint on the College site, this building contains a seminar room, bar area and riverside terrace to enable all members of our community to enjoy what was once the domain of a lucky few. We seek a donor to name this unique building for £1,500,000.

In addition, we invite donors to contribute to the Building Fund. For gifts at or above £5,000 we will include your name on the donor board in the colonnade at the entrance to the College.
Heritage projects and accessible spaces

As part of the comprehensive redevelopment of our site, it is crucial to maintain and upgrade our existing buildings to meet modern needs while respecting the history of our College.

Priorities for support:

The College wishes to undertake a comprehensive renovation of our Grade II Listed Garden Building, designed by Peter and Alison Smithson in the Brutalist style. We aim to upgrade the student rooms and improve the bathrooms, bringing all accommodation up to the required standard while preserving the distinctive features of this building. This project is likely to cost in the region of £1 million.

The timber ‘veil’ on the outside of the building is now at risk of collapse, and urgently needs replacing at an estimated cost of £250,000.

South Building, built in the 1870s without regard (as was typical of the period) for the needs of visitors with access requirements, must now be sensitively adapted to provide additional cloakrooms and a lift to the first floor. The ground floor rooms will become accessible teaching spaces, meeting places, and an office for our College Chaplain. Naming opportunities will become available from £20,000.

If you would like to support any of these projects, please get in touch using the details on the back cover.
Supporting our students

Student rooms and facilities

The opening of the new Anniversary Building is a significant milestone, but we must continue our efforts to provide the balance of the 125 new student rooms promised at the start of the Campaign. The events of 2020 have made it even clearer just how much difference living on site can make to our students. The additional expense of remote learning, combined with the lack of part-time jobs available over the summer – normally a vital source of additional money for many of our undergraduates – have left our students in a precarious financial position.

St Hilda’s is deeply committed to fulfilling our promise to allow all undergraduates the option of living in College accommodation for the duration of their studies. We look to Phase II of our building programme, which, when fully realised, will provide the 72 remaining student rooms. Further details are on the back cover. We invite support for the Building Fund to maintain progress towards this goal and we will release further information about naming opportunities in the coming months.

“Not only does a College room relieve the financial and administrative burden of renting privately, but it also means students remain in the heart of the St Hilda’s community – something that has been particularly important during the COVID-19 pandemic. Proximity to communal services like the Library, Hall and JCR make life that little bit simpler for students, as well as the added bonus of living in one area with your friends and peers. I believe that full accommodation for students would be a massive boost to the College’s attraction!”

James Bromfield, JCR President

The new MCR in the Anniversary Building will make all the difference to St Hilda’s graduate students. It will provide a place where we can relax and meet with friends, as well as be a forum where we can share ideas and grow as scholars. Above all, it will offer a sense of home for students coming from all over the world.”

Katarina Foss-Solbrekk, MCR President

Supporting Access

St Hilda’s contributes £5,000 per year towards the UNIQ summer school scheme, which gives young people from diverse backgrounds the chance to experience Oxford before applying. Gifts to our Access and Outreach Fund can help to cover this cost.
The Library Fund and COVID-19 Student Support Fund

St Hilda’s quickly launched its emergency COVID-19 Student Support Fund to relieve the financial pressures brought about by the pandemic. When Trinity term 2020 moved to remote teaching, St Hilda’s was able to provide financial and practical help to our students to ensure that they could still receive the exceptional education they deserve, albeit in a new way. Grants for essential IT requirements were made as needed to minimise disruption, and the Library set up a series of new services to aid its users.

With some students returning this academic year and others studying remotely, the Library has needed to provide on-site services safely while simultaneously arranging to send study materials to students’ homes. This has meant greater pressure on the Library budget to cover the need for extra copies of key texts and for new items such as easily sanitised keyboard covers.

We urgently seek support for the Library Fund as we prepare for more students to return when restrictions ease.

£100 to the Library Fund could provide additional books or computer keyboard covers and cleaning materials to make the Library a safer environment.

Scholarships and bursaries

As part of the College’s longstanding commitment to excellence and equality, St Hilda’s is dedicated to removing the financial barriers that can prevent outstanding young people from accessing the world-leading education Oxford provides. We need to act now to ensure that the most talented individuals continue to apply to St Hilda’s.

A named undergraduate bursary can be established with a commitment of £1,250 per year for three years.

“As someone from a low-income background, finances are often a worry for me. I hope to pursue a career in Law, and often find valuable work experience to be unpaid. This money will go a long way in supporting me in my studies, and reducing the burden of financial uncertainty. I am so proud to be a part of St Hilda’s community, and I count myself lucky to study here.”

2nd year Law student

Graduate students are also facing financial pressures more than ever as a result of the pandemic. Often their courses are only partially funded, so graduate scholarships can help to make up the shortfall and ensure that St Hilda’s is a destination of choice for graduate students.

A named graduate scholarship can be established with a minimum commitment of £8,000 per year for at least two years.
Making space for nature

Our stunning setting is a source of great pride to all in the St Hilda’s community, and right from the beginning of the Phase I design process it was very clear that this was something to preserve and enhance. The new buildings open up the whole College site and provide a tranquil riverside walk that leads all the way from Hall lawn to the rockeries in front of South Building.

We seek support for the development of the garden spaces through gifts to our Garden Fund. Recent garden projects include developing new borders, removing temporary buildings and decades of debris from quiet corners of our grounds, clearing overgrown brambles and large self-seeded trees from the riverbank, and generally reducing years of over-growth of shrubs and trees in garden borders so that their beauty can be fully appreciated. To continue this critical work, gifts to the Garden Fund will help to repair a hole in the river wall caused by a self-seeded tree, and to finish the new fence that restricts access from the river while providing a safe maintenance path. We are working with the Environment Agency to enhance biodiversity of the riverbank with hessian rolls that will support growth of plants and provide riverine habitats.

Thanks to the careful preparatory work on our garden strategy, we also have several new areas to develop. The heritage work on Hall garden will recentre the path to connect to the Lady Brodie Room steps and balance the garden, while providing a new, mid-lawn seating space. We are planting six trees in the entrance courtyard and around the new buildings, chosen to reflect the long history of blossom and fruit trees on site. As we write to you, the detailed plans for the preparation and planting of the beds are being made. The new plantings will provide colour and texture throughout the year as they become fully established.

In addition to improving the College’s aesthetic appeal, the Garden Fund assists us to implement our environmental agenda. Not only will plants be chosen to benefit local fauna, but we will also be placing bee, bird and bat houses around the College to encourage further biodiversity on a site already thriving with wildlife. We also intend to replace the petrol lawnmower with a greener battery lawnmower that will better manage the moss and compaction in the lawns while reducing emissions and allowing the birdsong and bees to be heard.

We seek support for these initiatives through donations to the Garden Fund. There are a variety of projects underway, ranging across restoration, new area plantings and ecology work. If you would like to get involved, please visit our website or make contact using the details on the back cover.

How your gift can help

The six blossom trees planned for the new entrance courtyard cost approximately £800 each. Your gift to the Garden Fund will help us to create this defining feature of the College site.
The garden outside the Sanctuary, our new multi-faith room, will provide an aromatic and sensory backdrop.

The Pavilion sits slightly back from the river, allowing a tranquil waterside walk along its terrace.

The Phase II buildings are being designed with careful consideration of the rare flora we have in College, such as the fritillaries in our meadow.
Securing the future for the tutorial system

Drawn from the best in the world, our tutorial fellows not only provide the highest quality of undergraduate teaching and graduate supervision, but they undertake the leading research that contributes to Oxford's place at the top of the world rankings. They ensure that all our students receive the support and mentoring that helps them to flourish at Oxford: the hallmark of a St Hilda's education.

Endowed posts, supported by the income from reserved funds, ensure that the College can attract and retain outstanding tutors, who provide continuity and leadership in their subjects. For many years St Hilda's had a relatively low number of endowed posts, which meant we had to draw heavily on our own resources to cover the costs of tutorial teaching. We have been able to increase the number of endowed posts, including two fully-endowed fellowships in Law and English in recent times, but we cannot rest there.

We seek your support for the tutorial system, not only to consolidate funding for the arts, humanities and social sciences but to develop our plans for subject clusters in emerging areas.

Biomedical Sciences

The Biomedical Sciences cluster is an example of the way in which we are building on the College’s achievements in pre-clinical and clinical medicine. St Hilda’s began to admit for the new subject of Biomedical Sciences in 2016 and it has attracted strong applications from the start.

The success of this new subject can be seen from both the high percentage of Firsts amongst its graduates and the feedback from our students who go on to careers and graduate studies in this field. Over time we have established a supportive environment for students across these subjects, complementing our offerings in Biochemistry, which was established at St Hilda’s in the 1950s by our pioneering alumna and Fellow, Dr Muriel Tomlinson.

We must now build from this foundation and seek funding to secure the future of tutorial teaching in this important cluster of subjects, in particular for Biomedical Sciences, which is now a four year degree. Ultimately, this will require endowment with an investment of £1.5 million to create a new post, which can be named for the donor.

As an immediate priority, to ensure continuity of teaching, we seek £200,000 to establish a Career Development Fellowship in Biomedical Sciences for a minimum five year period.

Elective grants for Clinical Medicine

The College admits up to six students for Clinical Medicine each year and we are pleased that so many of our pre-clinical graduates opt to stay at St Hilda’s to continue their studies. Our clinical students undertake electives in their final year allowing them to broaden their experience. Some choose to carry out their elective in other countries, where healthcare resources may be limited.

Thanks to a generous legacy gift, the College has been able to establish an elective grant programme. Given the success of the grants, this source of funding has been exhausted and we urgently seek new support in order to maintain this important element of the Clinical Medicine programme.

An elective grant of £800 – £1,000 will enable a student in Clinical Medicine to gain useful practical experience in other healthcare settings. These can be named for the donor.

“Elective grants enable our talented young medics to gain valuable skills in new settings, while contributing to their host organisations.”

Dr Catherine Swales, Fellow in Clinical Medicine
Career exploration and internship grants

The pandemic has affected the lives and opportunities of our students in many ways. In addition to the range of support for our students during their course, we have established a programme of grants to assist them to explore future career pathways. We seek financial support to help to bridge the gap from College to career and help our students to find their paths beyond Oxford.

“A gift of £500 will fund travel and other costs for our students to participate in internships and work placements.

“I spent my medical elective in Thimphu, Bhutan. This was a truly unique clinical experience, where I had one to one teaching in intensive care in a relatively low resource environment from the fantastic Bhutanese and visiting international doctors. It also gave me the opportunity to visit a beautiful, culturally rich, and fantastically friendly country that is usually very difficult to access.”

James Aylward (far left of picture; far right Saumya George, both St Hilda’s 2012)

Visiting Fellowships

The College is known for its research strengths in a number of fields – including most recently the establishment of a Centre for Therapeutic Innovation at St Hilda’s. Other programmes such as DANSOX (Dance Scholarship Oxford) have established wide international networks across subject boundaries.

To support collaboration across disciplines and across research institutions, we seek funding to establish short-term Visiting Fellowships. These allow College Fellows to bring distinguished academics and practitioners in their fields to St Hilda’s for an extended visit where the Visiting Fellows in turn contribute to the intellectual life of the College, through lectures and conferences that provide a wider education for our students.

Rachel Brandenburger
St Hilda’s Visiting Law Fellow

“Rachel has fired the imagination of our students, by sharing her own unique experiences at the forefront of legal policy formulation. As a Visiting Fellow, Rachel has generously shared insights on how legal institutions work, the channels through which international policy formulation takes place, and the interpersonal skills that will prove invaluable for our students in the future. These conversations have emboldened our student community to consider a broader range of career choices. Rachel has also mentored early career colleagues seeking to publish in her field of expertise and interacted with colleagues in College and across the University from a range of disciplines.

These are just some of the advantages that a Visiting Fellow brings to our community at St Hilda’s.”

Professor Dev Gangjee, Fellow in Law

A named Visiting Fellowship may be established with a gift of £8,000 to create a spend-down fund to cover travel and living costs for a short-term appointment.
Looking ahead

To fulfil our promise to undergraduate students to offer College accommodation for the duration of their studies, we must provide a further 72 rooms. We will submit plans for the second phase of our building programme which, when fully realised, will include the required rooms, alongside other facilities such as a permanent gym for the whole College community. The buildings will be sensitively designed to fit with the existing variety of architectural styles on site. We aspire to do this in a truly sustainable way, seeking to meet the ‘Passivhaus’ standard in energy efficiency and supporting a zero carbon future. Plans are in the early stages, but our architects are exploring options including heat recovery systems and low-carbon construction methods. We look forward to sharing more details as the designs progress.

For more information about our fundraising priorities, please visit www.st-hildas.ox.ac.uk/fundraising-priorities

To make a gift, please visit www.st-hildas.ox.ac.uk/donate

If you would like to discuss naming a space or item, please contact Bronwyn Travers, Development Director and Fellow:
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