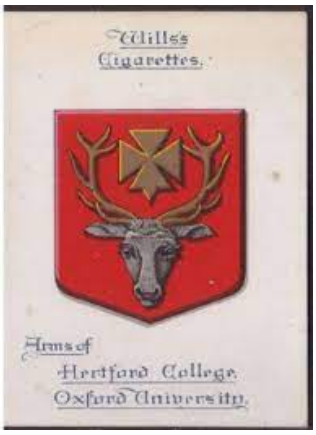


7. Hertford College



The first Hertford College began life as Hart Hall in the 1280s and became a college in 1780. It foundered, eventually ending up bereft of students, even after having graduated notables such as Williams Tyndale, John Donne, Thomas Hobbes and Jonathan Swift. It was reinstated in 1874 as Hertford College. Perhaps its most notable modern graduate in addition to a raft of politicians, such as Malta's prime minister, Dom Mintoff, ambassadors and such like was Evelyn Waugh. He immortalized his time at Hertford and Oxford in his novel *Brideshead Revisited* (1945). Since then it has flourished. It became one of the first co-educational Oxford colleges in 1975. Hertford has a long history of progressiveness. In 1907 it was the first college to admit an African-American Rhodes Scholar, Alan Leroy Locke, after he had been refused by several other colleges. He went on to become the "Dean" of the Harlem Renaissance. In 1965, Physics fellow Neil Tanner started a move to increase the number of Hertford students coming from State as

opposed to public schools. This resulted in a surge in the academic standards in the college. Since Principal Geoffrey Warnock's tenure 1971-1988 the College's leftist principals were well established.



I was at Hertford from 1975-1978. I had a memorable interaction with Sir Geoffrey. I was invited to dinner at High Table. For reasons that I cannot for the life of me remember I attended *sans* tie. This was an unforgivable solecism. However, this being an English College, my *faux pas* was politely ignored as we quaffed sherry in the senior common room prior to dinner. I ended up sitting opposite Sir Geoffrey. I was, perhaps, a little into my cups when Sir Geoffrey, seizing a lull in the conversation, leaned across the table, gazed into my eyes, and said, "Do you like cricket?" I was completely non-plussed. Why on earth did he ask me that I wondered? I proceeded to mumble that yes, of course I did. That I was a great fan of Lancashire County Cricket club etc. etc. At which he smiled, well, more smirked than smiled, and proceeded to talk to the person on his left. It was only later that it dawned on me that he was sarcastically referring to my open neck and that the only reason for this outrageous deshabille must be that I had just bounded in off the cricket field.

I later attended more such dinners, suitably attired. The next time we met, Sir Geoffrey seemed to have forgotten the incident and proceeded to ply me with, what I must say, was the most excellent college sherry and kept telling me that he envied me my forthcoming move to the States with Nancy, who also attended the dinner.



Geographically and architecturally Hertford is well known. It is located in Catte Street directly opposite the Bodleian Library. Its iconic "Bridge of Sighs" was designed by Thomas Graham Jackson who also designed my old high school. It was built in 1913 and connects two parts of Hertford over New College Lane.

I must digress here to speak briefly of New College Lane. At its Northern end, where it enters Catte Street, it is covered by the Bridge of Sighs As one heads south there is a narrow walk way in the wall which leads to the Turf Tavern. Its foundations as a drinking tavern date back to 1381. I used to spend time there when I was at school and also as a student. It was famous for its mynah bird, which, with sufficient encouragement, could be persuaded to swear quite eloquently. There are three turns in lane as it winds its way southwards to Queen's Lane. The high walls and



overhanging gargoyles give it a magical and timeless feel. One of my most vivd memories of my time in Oxford was cycling along New College Lane in 1977 with my new American girlfriend, Nancy. It must have been an early autumn evening. The sky was a powdered French blue and we may have had a drink or two. We were in love. The character of the old walls in the lane, the feeling of being alone in the world and in love was simply delicious.