



Keble  
College

# The William Pollard Tutorial Fellowship in English

*Securing the future of world-leading  
humanities teaching at Keble College Oxford*



# Introduction

In these uncertain times, understanding where we have come from is more important than ever. Oxford's cutting-edge scientific research developed in response to the Covid-19 pandemic has been recognized throughout the world, but it wasn't just scientists helping us navigate the global crisis. Historians provided valuable insights into responses to pandemics from earliest history, from the Black Death of 1348 to the 1918 'Spanish' flu, and many Oxford colleagues in the humanities have been engaged in crucial ethical and policy discussions. In unprecedented circumstances reviewing fascinating historical research, revisiting novels with a contemporary relevance, and watching innovative new plays provided comfort and guidance and provoked thought. Despite steadily decreasing funding for the humanities, we are reminded of how much we need them to make sense of the world we live in.

As many of you will know, Keble suffered substantial financial losses due to the virus. In the initial stages of the aftermath, we are committed to ensuring we continue to offer future generations of students the same unapparelled opportunities afforded to so many before them. Endowing Academic Fellowships serves the double purpose of securing the future of Oxford's unique tutorial system, and immediately relieving pressure on College finances (the finances are explained further below) whilst income from conferences remains unstable. Thanks to an incredibly generous gift, we are close to endowing a Fellowship in English at Keble in perpetuity. With the new £150m Stephen A. Schwarzman Centre for the Humanities due to open (possibly by 2024) next to Keble in the Radcliffe Observatory Quarter, Keble will become a natural destination for talented humanities students. We hope this message will resonate with you, and that you will consider helping us over the finishing line of this important and timely appeal.

*Michael Jacobs*

**Dr Sir Mike Jacobs,  
Warden**

# English at Oxford

Oxford's English Faculty is the largest in Britain, with roughly 1,000 students studying in the faculty and 300 at graduate level. Established in 1894, it is one of the most illustrious Schools of English in the world. It's staff have included some of the most important critics and scholars in the field, including Hermione Lee, CS Lewis and JRR Tolkien. Graduates include writers such as Caryl Churchill and Hari Kunzru, journalists Lynn Barber and Reeta Chakrabarti, actors Sam West and Emilia Fox, and activists Stuart Hall and Naseem Khan. As a subject at undergraduate level it is highly valued by employers as students develop a range of desirable skills.

Today, as in your day, students can study any period of English literature, from the Anglo-Saxon period to the present day, along with language studies. More recently research areas have expanded to include world literature and film studies.

The English Faculty aims to provide opportunities to nurture new and creative thinking and is keen to promote research which is valuable to those outside the university, whether that is the public, the third sector, business or government. Researchers are currently working on a number of innovation projects including the creation of literary apps and games, the use of Digital Humanities to delve deeper into texts, and the exploration of creative responses to literature through film, drama and music.



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# Professor Diane Purkiss

## Tutorial Fellow in English at Keble College

Professor Purkiss has been inspiring students at Keble for the past 21 years. After receiving a BA with first class Honours from the University of Queensland and DPhil from Merton College, Oxford, she began her academic career as a lecturer in English at the University of East Anglia in 1991, followed by a position at the University of Reading in 1993. In 1998 she became Professor of English at Exeter University, before taking up her current post at Keble College in 2000.

Professor Purkiss's diverse areas of interest include the English Civil War, Milton, and Marvell; Marvell in manuscript culture; the supernatural, especially witchcraft; the dissolution of the monasteries and its tragic consequences; food and food history; children's literature; folklore and folktale/fairytale, and the writing process.

Current projects near completion include *English Food: A People's History – A history of English food and recipes designed for the general reader*, arguing that food history as document in literary writings is a crucial neglected source for social history. Further ahead, her next large project will be on writer's block and the writing process, from Homer to David Foster Wallace.

### *Professor Diana Purkiss on her recent students:*

*"I have greatly enjoyed working with Shona, who did English and Italian, and who spent hours talking to me about Milton's reading of Dante and his linguistic debts to Italian. I was also inspired by Dorothy McDowell, who is devoted to intelligent analysis and argument, and Millie Tupper, who is almost the opposite, a gentle observer of small details, or Emma Chaplin, who became fascinated by the links between literature and social history. What I love about Keble English is its unexpectedness. Each student finds his or her own path and his or her own interests."*

# Why endow a Tutorial Fellowship?

There are multiple short-term and long-term, financial and intellectual benefits to endowing the post of Tutorial Fellow in English at Keble:

*Securing the future of teaching provision and excellence in core humanities subjects:*

- *One of the strongest subjects at Keble at undergraduate level, English accepts eight undergraduate students per intake from varied backgrounds. In 2020, in almost unimaginably difficult circumstances, four of the eight students who sat finals obtained first-class results.*
- *English academics research and teach a vast range of topics covering all periods since the Anglo-Saxon period. Undergraduates can choose papers that deal with such diverse subjects as Victorian Literature, Romanticism, Literature and revolution, Postcolonial literature, Writing lives, Old Norse, Tragedy, and Film criticism. The interdisciplinary nature of undergraduate and graduate research in English enriches the College community for everyone*
- *Humanities students represent 27% of undergraduates, but only 9% at graduate level at Keble. This is a reflection of the reduction in available funding. Funding opportunities can be skewed to science, technology, engineering and maths subjects (STEM) in a progressively technological society, but the critical thinking and cultural knowledge demonstrated by humanities graduates ensures they are prepared for the future labour market. Indeed Keble's pool of English graduates boasts an impressive array of leaders in the fields of non-profit management, finance and education*
- *Keble does not currently have sufficient staff teaching English, so every year the teaching of a number of key papers is outsourced to casual teaching staff. This may result in the possible reduction of undergraduate English students from eight to six from 2022*

### *The immediate and lasting impact on College finances:*

- *Our core objectives of teaching, learning, and research, present ongoing financial challenges which have been made more acute in the past year by the global pandemic and the associated reduction in conference business and student rental income*
- *Although the College has significantly increased its endowment in recent years it is still well below the median for Oxford colleges. As in most colleges, undergraduate student fee income at Keble only covers around half of the cost to the College of providing the teaching and maintaining the facilities: therefore, every year there is a significant shortfall. In recent decades the College has sought to compensate by generating revenue through conference activity (c£1–1.5m profit pa) and through actively fundraising*
- *During the global pandemic, conference income has been eliminated and student rental income has also been significantly reduced. The College will have incurred Covid-related losses of £3.5m from March 20 – July 2021, even after furlough and redundancy savings*
- *Fully-funded Tutorial Fellowships enable the College to plan with confidence, and invest in fundraising for undergraduate Bursaries and graduate Scholarships. When teaching is secured, we can focus on ensuring the brightest students, regardless of background, can benefit from this unique teaching model*

### *Did you know?*

The *Poets at Keble* series has served to consolidate Keble's reputation in recent years as a major centre for poetry and poetics. The last Oxford Professor of Poetry (Geoffrey Hill) had a key connection with the College, and Professor of English Matthew Bevis has also arranged events with the current Professor of Poetry (Alice Oswald) and runs *The Poet's Essay* series with psychoanalyst Adam Phillips. Many of Keble's humanities applicants talk about being attracted to the focus on poetry.

# Alumni stories



## Caroline Criado-Perez OBE

**BA English 2009**

**Writer and broadcaster**

Caroline arrived at Keble in her mid-20s and became politicised after studying gender in literature.

She campaigned to stop the Bank of England from removing the only woman (other than the Queen) from British banknotes resulting in Jane Austen appearing on

the new £10 note. It unleashed a torrent of abuse on social media, leading Caroline to spearhead an online petition calling on Twitter to introduce a button to enable site users to report abuse. She was awarded the Liberty Human Rights Campaigner of the Year Award 2013 and later bestowed an OBE for services to equality and diversity.

She has written two books, *Do It Like a Woman* (2015) and *Invisible Women: Exposing Data Bias in a World Designed for Men* (2019). Using data and case studies it clearly illustrates the hidden ways in which women are forgotten and the impact that can have on their health. It spent 14 weeks in the Sunday Times bestseller list and Nicola Sturgeon described it as “revelatory and should be required reading for policy and decision makers everywhere.”

### *Did you know?*

The Oxford tutorial system is of fundamental importance to the success of the students, the Colleges and the University. The intensity of teaching and learning is what sets Oxford apart; but providing that quality is expensive. Each year Keble spends £400,000 more on teaching costs than it receives from central University funding, the current endowment and past philanthropy combined. The shortfall is currently covered by the revenue from vacation conference business, but this income is no longer guaranteed.

# Alumni stories



## Ell Potter

**BA English Language and Literature 2014  
Actor and Writer**

Ell Potter is an actor, writer, and award-winning narrator. Best known as co-founder of critically acclaimed theatre collective Hotter Project, Ell's work is outrageous, irreverent, and unashamedly queer.

Ell began interviewing people for her verbatim theatre projects in a Keble basement in 2017. She has since featured the experiences of over 100 men, women, and non-binary people in her genre-bending, iconoclastic shows HOTTIER and FITTER. Both productions secured a cult-hit following and sold out multiple runs at Soho Theatre, before a Guardian feature billing them 'hilarious, sincere, sexy and brutal' catapulted the project into the mainstream.

Ell has since taken Hotter Project into classrooms, leading workshops on sex education and personal expression through theatre; she also discusses these topics on radio and podcasts, including BBC Radio 4's Woman's Hour. Continuing her fixation with all things sex-related, Ell's latest work is the British Podcast Award-nominated series Life of Bi: a slippery history of bisexuality.

While completing her postgraduate degree in Acting at LAMDA, Ell was named Audible's 'Breakout Star', and her debut audiobook performance received an Audie nomination.



## *Did you know?*

With 55% of alumni having given at some point, Keble has one of the highest participation rates for alumni giving of any Oxford College – a wonderful testament to the strength of the Keble community.

# Why now?

To endow the Fellowship will cost the College £2.1m. We are delighted to announce that alumnus Professor William Pollard has generously donated just over £1,500,000 towards the appeal. This transformational gift presents a rare opportunity for us to endow the Fellowship in perpetuity. The donation supports 71% of the annual cost to the College. This would present a considerable saving in a subject which is core to the teaching and learning at the University and at the College.

We aim to secure the outstanding £600,000 funding by autumn 2024.

# How you can help

With the value of gift aid to the College and the tax relief claimed by donors paying UK Tax the actual collective cost could be just £480,000 to raise the outstanding £600,000.

*For example: a gift of £10,000 spread over five years would contribute £12,500 to The Career Development Fellowship campaign and cost UK additional rate tax payers, after tax relief, £6,250. That's £1,250 per year. On completion of the pledge it would also render the donor a Friend of Keble.*

# Recognising your support

Keble was established by philanthropy and we depend upon the visionary support of our benefactors. All donors are listed in annual College publications. Members of giving groups\* will receive invitations to special College events throughout the year as well as, once at the cumulative £250,000 level, to University events and ceremonies.

*\* Donors are recognised as having membership of a specific group once cumulative gifts to the College at each level have been received, regardless of whether or not gifts are given as instalments, or in one lump sum.*

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# Thank You