



OXFORD UNIVERSITY SCIENTIFIC SOCIETY

EST. 1882

One of the oldest student-run societies for sciences in the English-speaking world



Information booklet



Our Heritage - A century long aspiration



The Oxford University Scientific Society (then the Junior Scientific Club) counts amongst its long lineage of very able Presidents, prominent scientific names such as Nevil Sidgwick (bottom left in the picture), Fredrick Soddy (front row, second to the right), Henry Moseley, Julian Huxley, and J B S Haldane (not in the picture) during their undergraduate years. (Image: *Photo of the Oxford University Junior Scientific Club's steering committee, 1898.* Source: Museum of the History of Science, Oxford.)

The Oxford University Scientific Society was founded in 1882 as the Oxford University Junior Scientific Club by a group of undergraduates which included D. H. Nagel, Edward Poulton, and Halford Mackinder among its ranks. The objective of the Club was to bring together undergraduate and graduate members of the University for discussion of contemporary scientific matters.

The University of Oxford had only just started to formally award degrees for the study of the natural sciences in the latter half of the nineteenth century, and throughout the early introductory years the teaching had much room for improvement. The creation of the Junior Scientific Club was the epitome of Oxonian proactivity in terms of participation in the teaching process - within a year of its founding the Club had already managed to assimilate 80% of the University's science undergraduates into its membership, and thereon organised activities aimed at stimulating research and scientific discussions amongst its members.

The Club organised 'ordinary meetings' once a fortnight for members to present papers on their own research work or share their reviews of recent developments elsewhere.



'Special meetings' were hosted where established scientists could speak to the members of the Club about the subjects of their expertise. Additionally, the series of annually organized 'Boyle Lectures' allowed members to hear from the most eminent scientific personalities based outside Oxford. Henry Acland, William Ramsay, and Lord Kelvin have all addressed the Club before as guest speakers at the Boyle Lecture series.

Through biennial *conversazioni*, the Club was instrumental in publicising science in Oxford from the late 1800s to the early 1900s. These *conversazioni*, massive jamborees centred on the Pitts River Museum and attended by over 1000 people from the university and the city featured a plethora of lectures on interesting scientific topics as well as exciting demonstrations ranging from "the properties of gyroscopes" to "blood circulation in a tadpole's tail".

The Club also published its own termly journal, *Transactions of the Oxford University Junior Scientific Club* (initially the *Journal of the OUJSC*), from 1887 to 1938. Articles published in *Transactions* mostly comprised of papers authored by members of the Club and presented during the fortnightly ordinary meetings, written in the same format as adopted by mainstream academic journals.





Our Today - Upholding the vision

The Oxford University Scientific Society committee 2015-2016



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(Treasurer)



Since the University's widespread adoption of a more accepting stance towards the sciences in the post-World War I years, many of the Society's original roles in the Oxonian scientific community have been (rightfully so) taken over by the various university departments. With the establishment of formal postgraduate research degrees and departmental colloquia, undergraduates and graduates no longer needed to rely on the Club as the sole platform for presentation and discussion of research findings. The biennial *conversazioni* are also no longer economically viable, given that general inflation has now rendered impossible their funding solely using the Club's subscription earnings. The role once played by the *conversazioni* is now filled largely by the publicly-funded Oxfordshire Science Festival. What we did retain, however, is the "special meetings"-style of inviting scientists to give lectures on their research work or more generally about their field of interest. Every Wednesday evening during term, the Scientific Society convenes for a lecture on a topic of general scientific interest (given the ever-increasing prevalence of specialisation in the modern scientific scene, we have since had to tone the level of technicality of our lectures down to a more qualitative, interest-driven level) by a speaker that is from either within or outside of Oxford.

In the past 8 years, we have hosted over 160 expert speakers in the fields of mathematics, physics, chemistry, biology, medicine, computer science, engineering, and science communication, 18 of which were Nobel Prize winners. Our most popular talks in recent times were "Old Solvents: New Solutions?" by Sir Martyn Poliakoff, "Are we Seeing Signals from before the Big Bang?" by Sir Roger Penrose, and "The Secret of Cell Division" by Sir Tim Hunt, all of which had more than 80 attendees. On top of that, we organised two high profile debates in the Sheldonian Theatre in the years 2012 and 2013, titled "This House Wants to Defeat Ageing Entirely" and "This House Believes Hormones, not Calories, Makes us Fat" respectively, as well as a panel discussion titled "The Geek Manifesto - Why Science Matters". On occasions, we also organise visits to research facilities such as the Joint European Torus, the Rutherford Appleton Laboratory, and the Royal Observatory. The full record of things that we have done, including video recordings of our talks can be found at our website, www.ouscisoc.org.

It is perhaps also worth noting that we maintain a Facebook page, on which we regularly post about our events and share multimedia content about the latest breakthroughs in science and technology or fun scientific facts that are simply and interestingly expressed. Our page just broke 32,000 likes very recently, and we expect the follower count to grow even more in the days to come.





Our Future - Adapting and Achieving

The main thrust of the Society's efforts this year will be to increase engagement with the student population right here in Oxford. University life demands a whole lot more out of students today in terms of energy and time than it did 130 years ago, and on top of that information and news about the latest science can now be readily accessed by each and every student with a few strokes on the screen. There is much less incentive for overly-swamped science students today to subscribe to our traditional one-talk-per-week modus operandi - indeed one does not even require performance analytics more sophisticated than casual observation to realise that Oxford's famous "lecture-hunting populace" is far from being as active as one would hope for.

The steering committee of the Society recognises this issue and will be implementing the following reforms to remedy the situation:

- **Introduction of society-wide social events at the start of each term**

The Society, for years, has generally shied away from having social events in the name of upholding the principle that a learned society needs to focus its endeavours only on learned activities. Our dwindling attendance numbers have shown us that this may not necessarily be true - the creation of familiarity and rapport amongst our membership through food and drinks is just as important towards the facilitation of scientific discourse as ensuring the provision of high-quality lectures. Among other things, each of these social occasions would also be marked by moderated open conversations on one hand-picked or voted-for scientific topic in a stimulating and relaxed atmosphere.

- **Introduction of career events, especially those involving non-mainstream pathways**

Today, the most obvious career choices for fresh graduates with science degrees are i) the pursuit of a further degree to withhold the need to make that choice, and ii) the taking up of a "city job" such as banking or management consulting. While there is absolutely nothing wrong with either of the choices above, we believe that there are many career paths out there which are less obvious but have the potential to be very rewarding for someone holding a science degree.



Science journalism, science policy, and technopreneurship are a few such career choices we wish to help give our members greater exposure to.

- **Rebranding of the Society for increased professionalism and desirability**

This year, the steering committee will be giving the Society a virtual and organisational makeover to increase its marketability. The Society's new home page, www.ouscisoc.org, which is live and 80% complete in development, will be launched alongside a brand new logo that will be designed in due course. On top of aesthetic improvements, the Society is also moving towards the adoption of a more structured marketing approach and rigorous bookkeeping measures to better facilitate membership engagement.





Support Us

The running of the Society, be it in terms of organising speaker events or networking socials, is a fairly costly affair. There is only so much we can do if we operate solely on the limited inflow of membership subscriptions. Any amount of financial support will go a long way in helping us bring in prominent guest speakers based far away from Oxford, bring down the entry costs for our socials and discourses, and organize a larger variety of engaging events for our members.

For the sake of flexibility, we propose the following ways in which you can extend support to our society:

- **Event Sponsorship**

Event sponsorship constitutes the engagement of a one-time partnership with our society with respect to one specific event. The sponsorship of an event in our society can happen through one of two ways:

- You find that one specific event (whatever type it may be - lecture, social/networking event, careers event, etc) scheduled in our term card matches the objectives of your organisation well and you wish to support that event
- You wish to propose for our society to organise an event of a specific nature and financially support its planning and organisation

As an estimate, the sponsorship of an event with our society generally requires £200. In return for your generous support, we will display your organisation's logo prominently on all online and printed publicity media specifically produced for the event which you are sponsoring, as well as have your status as Event Sponsor announced at the start of the event.

Seeing as to how we as a society are seeking to bring a wider variety of events to our members, we will of course be more than happy to tailor a bespoke sponsorship package for you if some aspects of your desired event falls outside of our society's normal operating parameters.



- Society Sponsorship

Sponsorship of our society as a whole entails a long-term partnership with the organisation, and may be undertaken via any one of the tiers offered below:

Privileges	Bronze (£400/yr)	Silver (£700/yr)	Gold (£1200/yr)	Platinum (£1500/yr)
Prominent display of your organisation's logo on our website's 'Sponsorship' page	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Prominent display of your organisation's logo on our Term Card (online and printed)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Prominent display of your organisation's logo in our weekly newsletter (online)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Display of your organisation's banner at our events	No	No	Yes	Yes
Distribution of your organisation's merchandise at our events	No	No	Yes	Yes
Prominent display of your organisation's logo in the footer of all official e-mails sent out by the Society	No	No	Yes	Yes
Circulation of advertisement of your organisation's choice during our events (printed)	No	No	Once per term	Once per term
Display of your organisation's logo at the bottom navigation bar on our website	No	No	No	Yes
Prominent display of your organisation's logo in our society banner	No	No	No	Yes
Announcement of your company's status as the Society's sponsor at the start and end of each event	No	No	No	Yes
Bespoke lecture/networking social event* tailored to your organisation's needs	No	No	Up to one bespoke event per year	Up to two bespoke events per year
Free priority entry for a member of your staff to our exclusive pre-lecture dinners/networking socials	No	One event per term	Two events per term	Three events per term

*Alternative bespoke event format also up for discussion if needed



At the Oxford University Scientific Society, we are very serious about the development of long-term partnerships with our generous sponsors. This partnership not only promises to provide a set of tangible benefits as listed above but a sincere adjustment (wherever possible) of Society's agenda to align with the organization's higher social commitments and responsibilities.

