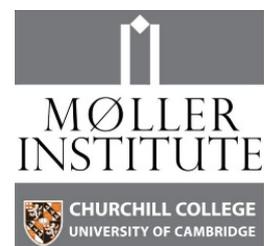

GEOPOLITICAL RISK

LEARNING FROM THE PAST
SHAPING THE FUTURE

**A Conference hosted by the Churchill Archives Centre
and the Møller Institute at Churchill College, Cambridge, UK**

9th – 11th March 2026

Marking 80 years since Winston Churchill's "Iron Curtain" Speech,
which he entitled *The Sinews of Peace*



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WELCOME



It is a great pleasure to welcome you to Cambridge, and to Churchill College, for this conference on Geopolitical Risk.

Churchill College was founded as the UK and Commonwealth memorial to Sir Winston Churchill, and today we are one of the largest colleges in Cambridge. Following Sir Winston's request, we have maintained a strong emphasis on science throughout our existence, with seventy percent of our students and academics studying science and technology. We are also most fortunate that the Churchill Archives Centre, which forms part of the College, houses the papers not only of Sir Winston himself but also of many other prominent figures of the twentieth century, including both politicians and scientists.

At a time of profound global uncertainty, bringing together historical insight, scientific expertise and policy experience is essential to understanding risk and strengthening resilience. I hope your time here encourages rigorous debate, fresh perspectives and meaningful collaboration.

Professor Sharon Peacock
Master of Churchill College



I am delighted to welcome you to the Geopolitical Risk Conference.

The Churchill Archives Centre is a world-leading collection of twentieth-century history. Our holdings include a wide range of documents created by more than six hundred political, military and scientific figures from the Churchill era and beyond. Housing, as we do, the papers of Sir Winston Churchill, Baroness Thatcher, and Sir John Major, we are sometimes described as a UK equivalent of a US presidential library. We are a significant centre for research and scholarship and regularly host visits from individual researchers and groups from around the world.

This conference marks a moment at which we are stepping up our external engagement and demonstrating the relevance of our collections to contemporary world affairs. The papers we hold reflect moments when leaders confronted uncertainty, crisis, and strategic choice – Churchill's "Iron Curtain" speech being a prime example. Engaging with this history helps us better understand how risks are perceived, managed and learned from, and I hope it enriches our discussions over the course of the conference.

Allen Packwood
Director, Churchill Archives Centre, & Conference Chair

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GEOPOLITICAL RISK 2026: THE CONFERENCE IN CONTEXT

At Westminster College, Fulton, Missouri on 5 March 1946, in an address entitled '**The Sinews of Peace**', Winston Churchill warned of an 'iron curtain' descending across the continent and called for a strengthening of the Western alliance against Soviet expansionism. His remarks, in one of his most celebrated speeches, were delivered at a time of heightened international tension, in the aftermath of the Second World War and in the shadow of the atomic bomb.



"Last time I saw it all coming and cried aloud to my own fellow-countrymen and the world, but no one paid any attention."

Winston Churchill
5 March 1946

Eighty years on, the global outlook seems equally challenging as the leaders of today grapple with the rise of totalitarianism, the resurgence of nationalism, the pace of new technology, and the risks posed by a rapidly changing world.

What can we learn from the past and how? What are the main geopolitical risks facing the world today, where do they come from and how are they best identified, prioritised and managed?

This conference is hosted at Churchill College, University of Cambridge, by the Churchill Archives Centre and the Møller Institute. It will be of interest to aspiring leaders, and it brings together historians with practitioners and analysts. It will provide context and create a better framework for understanding and harnessing the complex links between past, present and future. There will be an opportunity to tour the Churchill Archives Centre and view some of our most celebrated documents and artefacts, and the conference includes a formal dinner in the Dining Hall of Churchill College, hosted by the Master of Churchill College, Professor Sharon Peacock.

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CONFERENCE PROGRAMME

SUNDAY 8 MARCH

from 14:30 **Check-in** for residential delegates (Møller Institute)

CONFERENCE DAY 1: MONDAY 9 MARCH

from 07:00 Breakfast for residential delegates (Møller Institute)

12:00 Welcome desk opens (Møller Institute Study Centre)

12:30 Opening Luncheon (Møller Institute Study Centre)

(afternoon sessions follow in Suite 2 of the Møller Institute Study Centre)

13:30 **Welcome Address: Rupert Soames OBE**

RUPERT SOAMES is Chair of Smith+Nephew plc, a global medical-technology company listed on the FTSE 100, having been appointed an Independent Non-Executive Director in April 2023 and Chair in September 2023. He has extensive global leadership experience from senior executive and board roles, including serving as Group Chief Executive of Serco Group plc and as Chief Executive of Aggreko plc. He completed his two-year term as Chair of the Confederation of British Industry in December 2025. He is a grandson of the former Prime Minister, Sir Winston Churchill.

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14:00 Panel 1: How do we learn from History?



Panel Chair: Professor David Reynolds is Emeritus Professor of International History at the University of Cambridge and a Fellow of the British Academy. His fourteen books include *In Command of History: Churchill Fighting and Writing the Second World War* (Wolfson Prize) and *The Long Shadow: The Great War and the 20th Century* (Hessell-Tiltman Prize).



Professor Beatrice Heuser is an historian and political scientist, whose research interests are centred on war. Her expertise lies mainly in Europe and the “West”, especially Britain, France, Germany, and the USA, but also touches on Russia. She held the chair of International Relations at the University of Glasgow until Autumn 2024, and is now Distinguished Professor at the Centre for Security, Diplomacy and Strategy at the Free University Brussels.



Professor Chandrika Kaul is Professor of Modern History at the University of St Andrews, Scotland. Her research interests focus on British imperialism and decolonisation, the monarchy, media, and popular culture. She has published widely in these areas as well as being passionate about public history contributing frequently to national and international media. Her new monograph is on the *BBC and India* (OUP, 2026, forthcoming).



Professor Patrick Salmon is an historian of diplomatic history with a focus on Scandinavia. He is Chief Historian at the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office and a visiting professor at Newcastle University. In 2001, he was a fellow at the Norwegian Nobel Institute. He is a member of the Norwegian Academy of Science and Letters.

15:30

Break

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GEOPOLITICAL RISKS & CHALLENGES TODAY

16:00

Panel 2A: Geopolitical Risks & Challenges Today (Defence & Security)



Panel Chair: **Secretary Michael Chertoff** is an attorney and federal prosecutor, who served as United States Assistant Attorney General in charge of the Criminal Division of the U.S. Department of Justice during and after the September 11th attack. He later served as U.S. Secretary of Homeland Security under President George W. Bush. Afterwards, he co-founded the Chertoff Group, a risk-management and security consulting company.



General Lord Dannatt is a retired senior British Army officer and member of the House of Lords. He was Chief of the General Staff (professional head of the British Army) from 2006 to 2009.



Admiral Michael McConnell is an intelligence, national-and-cyber security executive and former Director of US National Intelligence. He spent more than 29 years in the US Navy and subsequently served as Director of the US National Security Agency.



Rear Admiral Dr Christopher Parry was an aviator and warfare officer in the Royal Navy. As a senior officer, he held four policy, operational effectiveness, and future concept development appointments. Nowadays he runs his own strategic forecasting company advising governments, commercial companies, and banks about strategic issues, high-level leadership, and systemic risk. He helps blue chip companies generate competitive advantage through the forecasting of future geopolitical developments, emerging trends and investment opportunities.

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17:00 **Panel 2B: Geopolitical Risks & Challenges Today**
(Politics, Diplomacy & Climate)



Panel Chair: **Charles Clarke** is a UK Labour Party politician who served as Chief of Staff to Neil Kinnock before becoming an MP and cabinet minister. He was appointed Secretary of State for Education in 2002 and later served as Secretary of State for the Home Department from 2004 to 2006. Since leaving Parliament at the 2010 General Election, he has held visiting professorships at the University of East Anglia and the University of Lancaster.



Dr Ed Bryan is a senior analyst at RAND Europe, where he is the deputy lead of the Defence, Security and Justice research team's Russia and Eurasia portfolio. He has a PhD in Geopolitics and Political Geography from the University of Cambridge and previously held a visiting research fellowship at the Freie Universität Berlin's John F. Kennedy Institute for North American Studies.



Suzanne Raine is Master of Selwyn College, University of Cambridge. She served for 24 years in the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office on foreign policy and national security issues, including postings in Poland, Iraq and Pakistan. She was Head of the Joint Terrorism Analysis Centre from 2015 to 2017 and Director of Counterterrorism from 2017 to 2019.

Since leaving the Civil Service in 2019 she has engaged with academia through the Centre for Geopolitics in Cambridge and as a Visiting Professor at Kings College London. She writes and lectures on risk analysis, anticipation and warning.



Emily Shuckburgh is a mathematician, climate scientist and the inaugural Director of Cambridge Zero, the University of Cambridge's major climate change initiative. She is also Professor of Environmental Data Science at the Department of Computer Science and Technology, University of Cambridge. In November 2025 she was appointed Chief

Scientific Adviser to the UK Government's Department for Energy Security and Net Zero.

18:00 **Break**

18:30 **Drinks Reception** (Tower Lounge Bar, Møller Institute)

19:30 **Dinner** (Møller Institute)

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CONFERENCE DAY 2: TUESDAY 10 MARCH

from 07:00 Breakfast for residential delegates (Møller Institute)

09:30-11:00 **Tours of the Churchill Archives Centre**

Please arrive at the Archives Centre at either **0930** or **1000**

from 10:45 Tea/Coffee available in Møller Institute Study Centre;

The following sessions then take place in Study Centre Suite 2:

**11:15 Understanding Russia:
A Case Study in History, Strategy, and Statecraft**

Professor Brendan Simms (Professor of the History of International Relations, University of Cambridge) will host a conversation on Russia with **Professor Beatrice Heuser** (Distinguished Professor at the Centre for Security, Diplomacy and Strategy at the Free University Brussels), and **Sir Laurie Bristow** (former UK Ambassador to Russia).

12:00 Presentation: The Centre for Geopolitics



Professor Brendan Simms is Professor of the History of International Relations in the Department of Politics and International Studies at the University of Cambridge, where he is also founder and Director of the Centre for Geopolitics.

In conversation with **Allen Packwood**, Director of the Churchill Archives Centre.

12:30 Luncheon (Møller Institute Study Centre)

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13:30

Panel 3: Anticipating Future Risks and Challenges



Panel Chair: **Alex Krook** leads policy and engagement for the AI & Geopolitics Project (AlxGEO) at the University of Cambridge's Bennett School of Public Policy. She is an Associate at technology consultancy, Formation Advisory. Her cross-sector experience includes roles within the Public Policy Programme of the UK's national research institute for data science, artificial intelligence, international NGOs, and third sector organisations. She is a Visiting Researcher with the community data trust initiative, Prospect Brixham.



Dame Diane Coyle is a British economist whose research focuses on productivity, the digital economy and AI policy, and economic measurement. She is the Bennett Professor of Public Policy at the University of Cambridge, where she is also the Research Director at the Bennett School of Public Policy.



Mr Christopher Ling is a senior tech and cybersecurity leader, and government contractor. He is CEO of Ericsson Federal Technologies Group, a new entity dedicated to delivering 5G-driven digital transformation across multiple agencies in the U.S. federal government, created by the Swedish multinational company, Ericsson.



Mr. Ofir Zigelman is Director of Product Management, Expansion Strategy at Amazon Web Services (AWS), Amazon's cloud and AI unit, and a Visiting Scholar at the Centre for Geopolitics, University of Cambridge, where he researches AI and world order. He previously served as a Senior Intelligence Officer in the Israeli Prime Minister's Office.

14:45

Break

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15:15

Panel 4: Analysing, Managing and Quantifying Risk



Panel Chair: **Professor Sharon Peacock** is a British microbiologist who is Professor of Public Health and Microbiology in the Department of Medicine at the University of Cambridge, and Master of Churchill College, Cambridge. In 2020, she led the development of the COG-UK consortium, which provided genomic sequencing of the SARS-CoV-2 virus during the pandemic response.



Lindsay Hooper is CEO of the Cambridge Institute for Sustainability Leadership (CISL) at the University of Cambridge. She has over twenty years' experience at the forefront of business and sustainability, working with senior leaders from multinational companies, financial institutions, and other influential organisations to accelerate the transition to a sustainable global economy. She has played a key role in CISL's growth and evolution into an internationally-respected institute, leading major initiatives that strengthen its impact. In 2025, she was named Leader of the Year at the BusinessGreen UK Green Business Awards for her contributions to advancing sustainability and shaping organisational responses to global environmental challenges.



Professor Sir David Spiegelhalter is a British statistician and a Fellow of Churchill College, Cambridge. From 2007 to 2018 he was Winton Professor of the Public Understanding of Risk in the Statistical Laboratory at the University of Cambridge.

Laurie Thraves is the Head of the Cabinet Office's National Situation Centre. He has worked in domestic and national security analysis, policy, and operational roles in government. He has also worked for public service thinktanks, national charities, and a technology start-up. He was educated at St. Hugh's College, Oxford, SOAS, the University of Kuwait, and British Institute in East Africa.

16:30

Break

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17:00 **Keynote Speaker: His Excellency Anders Fogh Rasmussen**

ANDERS FOGH RASMUSSEN has been at the centre of European and global politics for more than three decades—as Secretary General of NATO, Prime Minister of Denmark, Danish Minister of Economic Affairs, and a leading Danish parliamentarian. He is the Founding Chairman of Rasmussen Global, where he advises companies and democratic governments around the world.



Anders began his political career in 1978, becoming Denmark’s youngest member of parliament at the age of 25. He was named Minister of Economic Affairs in 1990 and became Prime Minister of Denmark in 2001. In 2009, Anders was appointed Secretary General of NATO, the world’s preeminent military alliance.

In June 2022, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy asked Anders to co-chair an international taskforce on security guarantees for Ukraine. The resulting Kyiv Security Compact, co-authored with President Zelenskyy’s Chief of Staff Andriy Yermak, became the basis for a web of security guarantees negotiated between Ukraine and NATO allies that was formalised in a new Ukraine Compact at the 2024 NATO Summit in Washington. In May 2024, the Rasmussen-Yermak taskforce released a report which outlined a series of recommendations on Ukraine’s path to NATO membership.

18:30 **Drinks Reception in the Jock Colville Hall**

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19:30 **Conference Dinner in the Hall of Churchill College**
Hosted by the Master, Professor Sharon Peacock

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CONFERENCE DAY 3: WEDNESDAY 11 MARCH

from 07:00 Breakfast for residential delegates (Møller Institute)
(Please note that check-out is by 10:30)

In the Møller Institute Study Centre, Suite 2:

09:00 Futures & Foresight Forum

This session is held in partnership with RAND Europe

- **Overview of Foresight Studies**, by **Erik Silfversten** (Director of the Centre for Futures & Foresights Studies, RAND Europe) including insight into how a foresight challenge can be practically tackled and how RAND has used foresight to support allied governments focused on a range of futures risks.
- **Reflections from senior RAND analysts** on practical use of foresight methods in research to support allied policy making.
- **Interactive Q&A session** in which conference delegates will be invited to share their own reflections as well as consider other leading geopolitical challenges to which these tools could be applied.

10:30 Tea/Coffee

11:00 **Keynote Speaker: The Rt Hon The Lord Roberts of Belgravia**

ANDREW ROBERTS is an English historian and journalist. He is the Bonnie and Tom McCloskey Distinguished Visiting Fellow at the Hoover Institution at Stanford University and a Lehrman Institute Distinguished Lecturer at the New York Historical Society. He is also a Trustee of the Margaret Thatcher Archive Trust.



12:30 Luncheon and departures

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THE CHURCHILL ARCHIVES CENTRE



The existing Churchill Archives Centre was purpose-built in 1973 to house the papers of Sir Winston Churchill: over 2,000 boxes of letters and documents ranging from his earliest childhood correspondence, through his great wartime speeches, to the writings that earned him the Nobel Prize for Literature. Together, they form an incomparable documentary treasure trove.

The Churchill Papers were both the inspiration and the starting point for a much larger endeavour: the creation of a wide-ranging archive of the Churchill era and beyond, covering those fields of public life in which Churchill played a personal role or took a close interest. Today, the Centre holds the papers of more than six hundred significant figures, and the collection continues to grow. The papers of Churchill's contemporaries, including friends and family, sit alongside major political, military and scientific figures such as Baroness Thatcher, Ernest Bevin, Sir John Major, Neil Kinnock, Admiral Ramsay, Field Marshal Slim, Sir Frank Whittle, and Rosalind Franklin.

The Archives Centre is situated within the grounds of Churchill College, itself the national and Commonwealth Memorial to Churchill. It includes a reading room, a secure strongroom with sophisticated security systems, a conservation laboratory, and a sorting room in which raw history is put into order. The mission of the Centre is to preserve these unique materials and to make them accessible to researchers and the wider public.

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The Centre was built thanks to the generosity of distinguished U.S. citizens, whose names are proudly displayed in bronze lettering in the Jock Colville Hall. Its work is supported by income from the Churchill College Archives Trust, the Winston Churchill Foundation of the United States, the Heritage Lottery Fund, and by the sponsorship of Churchill College and other distinguished benefactors. Owing to its success in attracting major collections, the Centre eventually ran out of space: an extension was funded with the support of Baroness Thatcher, and was opened by her in 2002.

In 2025, the College's Governing Body approved a new strategy for the Churchill Archives Centre, setting out a long-term vision for its future. The strategy recognises that additional space will be required, while also acknowledging that future accessions will increasingly be digital rather than physical. It identifies the need for more passive, energy-efficient strongroom space; fully accessible reading rooms and workshop areas; improved facilities for processing both physical and digital materials; and dedicated space for access and engagement. In January 2026, the Governing Body voted to approve plans to build a new Churchill Archives Centre within the grounds of the College, subject to funding being secured and agreement on its location.

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We are most grateful to our partners and sponsors, including

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We are also immensely grateful for the support, encouragement and dedication of our US Advisory Committee:

Mr Kenneth Adelman · Mr Scott Campbell · Secretary Michael Chertoff
Mr Douglas Daft · Mr Mark Gerencser · Mr Andreas Kramvis · Mrs Sherri Parker Lee
Mr Christopher Ling · Admiral Michael McConnell · Mr Clifton “Chip” Rodgers
Mr Max Schapiro · Mr Shanin Specter

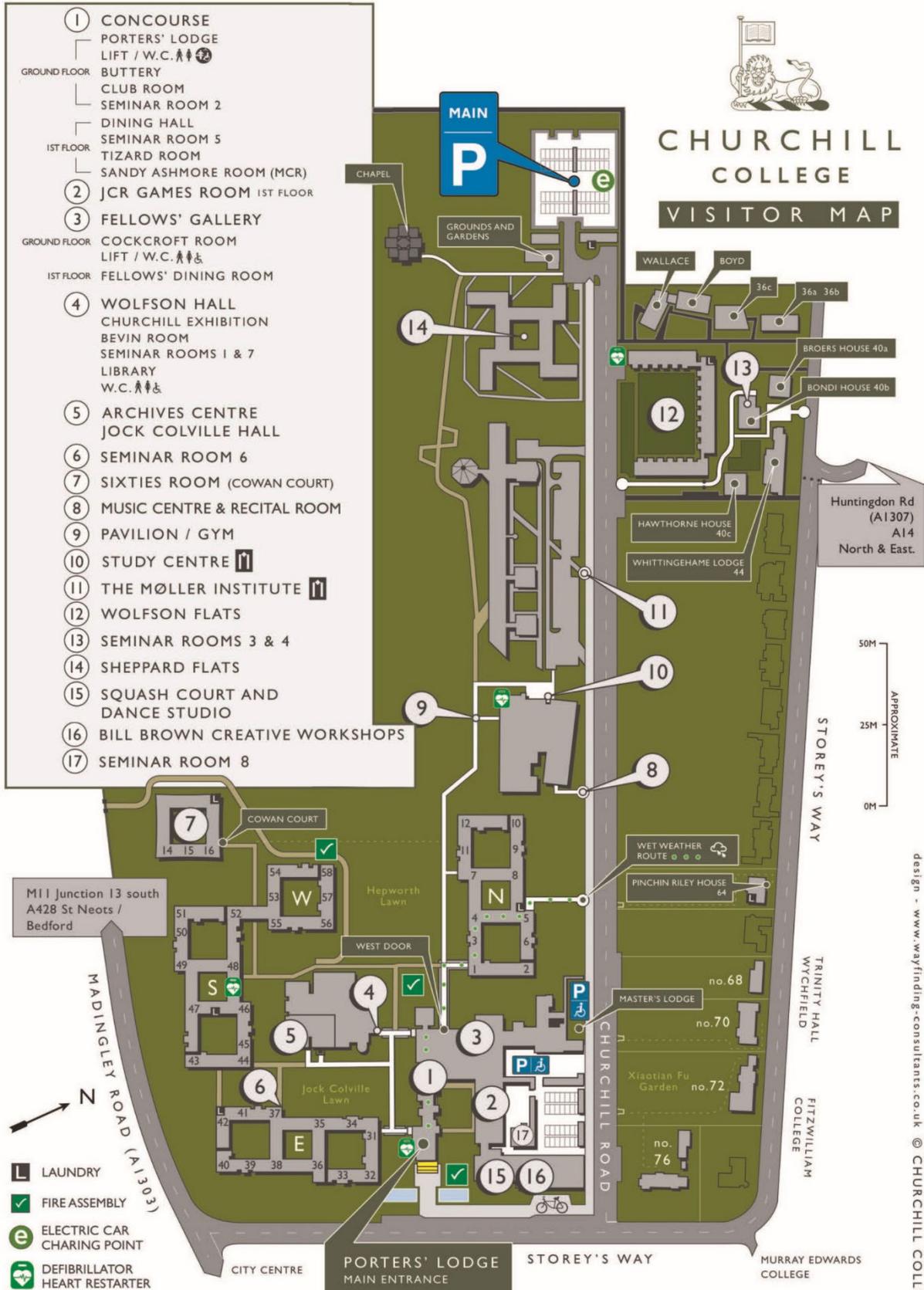
And also for the support and encouragement of:

Greg Knight · Mr Ted Lodge · Dr Anthony H. Wild

Programme correct at time of going to press, but may be subject to amendments

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- ① CONCOURSE
PORTERS' LODGE
LIFT / W.C. ♿
- GROUND FLOOR
BUTTERY
CLUB ROOM
SEMINAR ROOM 2
- 1ST FLOOR
DINING HALL
SEMINAR ROOM 5
TIZARD ROOM
SANDY ASHMORE ROOM (MCR)
- ② JCR GAMES ROOM 1ST FLOOR
- ③ FELLOWS' GALLERY
GROUND FLOOR
COCKCROFT ROOM
LIFT / W.C. ♿
- 1ST FLOOR
FELLOWS' DINING ROOM
- ④ WOLFSON HALL
CHURCHILL EXHIBITION
BEVIN ROOM
SEMINAR ROOMS 1 & 7
LIBRARY
W.C. ♿
- ⑤ ARCHIVES CENTRE
JOCK COLVILLE HALL
- ⑥ SEMINAR ROOM 6
- ⑦ SIXTIES ROOM (COWAN COURT)
- ⑧ MUSIC CENTRE & RECITAL ROOM
- ⑨ PAVILION / GYM
- ⑩ STUDY CENTRE II
- ⑪ THE MØLLER INSTITUTE II
- ⑫ WOLFSON FLATS
- ⑬ SEMINAR ROOMS 3 & 4
- ⑭ SHEPPARD FLATS
- ⑮ SQUASH COURT AND DANCE STUDIO
- ⑯ BILL BROWN CREATIVE WORKSHOPS
- ⑰ SEMINAR ROOM 8