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VARSITY

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The Freshers Issue



Written and produced by freshers

Calvin Harris



"THE VOICE DROWNS OUT
YOUR ACCOMPLISHMENTS
WITH THE SOUND OF
FAILURES. IT SINGS SWEETLY
IN YOUR EAR"

Millie Brierley on composing your
own soundtrack (p. 13)

MOVE BITCH!

Can hip-hop ever be feminist?
(p. 19)

"The experience is
real... but what they're
whispering in your ear
isn't true"

Mark Williams, creator of
Mindfulness (p. 12)

300

Libyan soldiers at Basingbourn
Barracks
(p. 8)

Cambridge, refreshed

As new undergrads will already have realised, there is no one “Cambridge experience”. Quite apart from the different interests and aspirations amongst the student population at any one time, the collegiate system makes it possible for almost every aspect of Cambridge life to differ between students. That’s no bad thing, but at some point one has to ask: what does it mean to be “at Cambridge” apart from the strange expectations and prejudices associated with the term?

That is where student journalism comes in. In a subtle way, the media defines what it means to be at Cambridge; it frames the parameters of our conversations. It is through the stories that the student newspapers tell, the investigations that they carry out, and the opinions they print that a shared

“Cambridge community” is built. Students engage with this body of stories and ideas on an ongoing basis – commenting, reading, writing and sharing student journalism.

Freshers are able to cast a fresh light on the odd world of student life at this university; and for that reason their contribution to student journalism is invaluable. Time moves quickly in Cambridge, and for the seasoned Tripos-ers, it can be easy to forget how bizarre everything seemed when we first arrived. As is evident in this issue, the diversity of perspectives that freshers can offer should not be underestimated. From unusual gap year experiences (page 22), to a lack of immunity to the weirdness of Cambridge traditions (page 14) – freshers are called ‘fresh’ for a reason. The influx of new writers represents a proliferation of new ideas and

perspectives in this community – this injection of life and interest is something to be welcomed.

On the flip side, student newspapers are the most direct way for freshers to engage with university life. The disparate structure of this huge establishment can sometimes make Cambridge seem discordant; a central university newspaper allows students to conceptualise and learn about the university as a whole. Varsity is not just a training ground for student journalists; it is a platform for us all.

And so, however daunting it might feel to get involved, there is for incoming writers an enormous realm of possibility and promise embodied in these pages. It is the promise of making Cambridge their own.

NEWS

Sex attack inquiry

The City Council has called for an independent inquiry into the recent spate of sexual assaults (*page 8*)



INTERVIEW

Mark Williams

Pioneer of Mindfulness Based Cognitive Therapy and best-selling author Mark Williams on stopping stress (*page 12*)



COMMENT

More than ‘tolerated’

Husna Rizvi thinks this word is indicative of hypocrisy in our society (*page 14*)



CULTURE

Rise of Clip Culture

Is the six-second video a valid art form or a sign of our ever-shorter attention spans? (*page 20*)



FASHION

Blank Canvas

Exploring colours and countours; the art of painting people (*page 24*)



THEATRE

The fresher plays

Fresher writers check out this year’s three CUADC fresher plays, all entirely staged by first years (*page 26*)



News meeting

VARSITY OFFICES, NEW MUSEUMS SITE

Want to see your name in print?

Come to the Varsity News meeting on Wednesday 19th November at 2pm

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Friday 3pm

This week: Mental health in Cambridge,
RAG and the last post

EDITOR Amy Hawkins EDITOR@VARSITY.CO.UK **ASSOCIATE EDITOR** Martha Elwell **DEPUTY EDITOR** Talia Zybutz DEPUTYEDITOR@VARSITY.CO.UK **BUSINESS MANAGER** Mark Curtis BUSINESS@VARSITY.CO.UK **PRODUCTION & DESIGN EDITORS** Daisy Schofield, Sareeka Linton, Sanjukta Sen, Pheobe Stone, Daniella Brisco-Peaple PRODUCTION@VARSITY.CO.UK **NEWS EDITORS** Sarah Sheard (Senior), Till Schöfer & Richard Nicholl (Deputy) NEWS@VARSITY.CO.UK **NEWS FEATURES & INVESTIGATIONS EDITOR** James Sutton NEWSFEATURES@VARSITY.CO.UK **COMMENT EDITORS** Charlie Chorley & Tom Freeman COMMENT@VARSITY.CO.UK **SCIENCE EDITOR** Harry Taylor SCIENCE@VARSITY.CO.UK **LIFESTYLE EDITOR** Anne O'Neill LIFESTYLE@VARSITY.CO.UK **CULTURE EDITORS** Will Hutton & Ciara Nugent CULTURE@VARSITY.CO.UK **THEATRE EDITOR** Marthe Ogg de Ferrer THEATRE@VARSITY.CO.UK **FASHION EDITOR** David Godwin FASHION@VARSITY.CO.UK **REVIEWS EDITOR** Lily Hollins REVIEWS@VARSITY.CO.UK **SPORT EDITORS** Louis Williams & George Ramsay (Deputy) SPORT@VARSITY.CO.UK **INTERVIEWS EDITOR** Elissa Foord INTERVIEWS@VARSITY.CO.UK **ONLINE EDITOR** James Taylor **VARSITY RADIO** Joe Marshall DIGITAL@VARSITY.CO.UK **CHIEF SUB EDITOR** Alex Izza **Photographers** Jess Franklin & Jonny Rowlands PHOTOS@VARSITY.CO.UK **Illustrators** Daisy Hessenberger & Hannah Taylor ILLUSTRATION@VARSITY.CO.UK **VARSITY BOARD** Dr Michael Franklin (Chairman), Prof. Peter Robinson, Dr Tim Harris, Chris Wright, Michael Derringer, Michael Curtis (VarSoc President), Chloe Stopa-Hunt (The Mays), Amy Hawkins



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On the barricades

Daniel Hepworth looks at Cambridge's history of protests and the art of protesting today

It's Friday 13th February, 1970. A picket line of 400 Cambridge students surrounds the Garden House Hotel in which a high profile dinner hosted by the Greek Tourist Board is taking place. Protesters are urging guests not to attend, in protest against the military junta ruling Greece. Reports come in that student protesters are drumming on windows and clambering onto the roof. Police take up position outside the dining room; chaos ensues.

Following the now notorious Garden House riot, the hotel claimed for £1,000 of damages for smashed windows and tables. A hotel employee was reported to have sprayed jets of cold water from an upstairs window in an effort to deter the protestors. Thirteen students were arrested and sent to trial after a University proctor was hospitalised having been hit over the head with a brick. Charges against four of the protesters were dropped, although the rest were found guilty of unlawful assembly and served sentences ranging from short periods in borstal to 18 months imprisonment. The sentence prompted an outcry from the then-President of the NUS, Jack Straw, who called the sentences an act of discrimination against students.

This was neither the first nor the last time that violence has erupted from a student protest in Cambridge. November 1967 saw the US Ambassador's visit to Churchill College prolonged when 300 protesters prevented his departure by hosting a sit-in on the road in a stand against the Vietnam War. Subsequent protests were held against the war during the late 60s, particularly against the American draft program, with anti-war slogans being painted on college walls across the city. In June 1965, a banner attacking American involvement in Vietnam was suspended from the spires

of King's College Chapel. Branches of Barclays Bank were regularly picketed throughout the 1950s due to their investment in South African assets, which many JCRs felt were indirectly supporting the Apartheid regime. One of the largest protests, aside from the Garden House riot, saw the Nursery Action Group (NAG) stage an occupation of Senate House in June 1975, the day before a degree ceremony, over the refusal of the University to provide nursery care for full time students. After a proctor was found to be listening in on their meeting, a vote for direct action was won 105-6 and the group ran down Trinity Street towards Senate House. Although police and proctors locked the doors, 1,600 students managed to occupy the building by climbing in through side windows.

But where does protest stand today? CUSU President Helen Hoogewerf-McComb believes that people still want change, but not always through direct protest: "People make change in a load of different ways: sometimes it is simply sitting down with the right people and having a conversation, sometimes there is power in shouting the loudest and making sure that you cannot be ignored."

She is adamant that student politics should protect this tradition. "While it shouldn't be our only tool, and it would rarely be the first or only response... CUSU will continue to support students' right to engage in peaceful protest."

The protests of the 60s and 70s are not isolated historic incidents. This term alone, two high-profile campaigns have been waged against external speakers at the University. A talk by UKIP leader Nigel Farage was swiftly cancelled last month as students threatened to stage a protest alongside non-student groups. Despite being booked into a formal hall at Corpus Christi by a fellow of the college, Farage's visit was called off just hours

before it was due to begin. Nevertheless, the protest, reduced in size, still took place.

A mere week later, the Cambridge University Palestine Society and sympathetic students picketed against the Israeli ambassador, Daniel Taub, who was speaking at the Union. Protesters called Taub's presence "deeply insensitive" amid ongoing conflict in the Gaza region. The speech came days after an open letter, signed by leading Cambridge academics condemning Israel's actions in the region, was released.

The Union, however, insisted that "The Cambridge Union Society does not take a side on political issues, and hosting a speaker does not equate to endorsement of them or their politics."

"We remain completely neutral on these issues and thus consider ourselves distinct from any other activism occurring around the academic world."

A few activists waging short-lived campaigns against Farage and Taub is hardly a match for the trashing of a high-end hotel, right? 2010 bucked the recent trend of smaller campaigns and saw the country – Cambridge included – engulfed by protests over tuition fees and the scrapping of EMA. Violent clashes ensued with the police as students once again attempted to occupy Senate House, and a handful of students were arrested. This was the largest event seen for many years – the question is, does it still have a place in university life today?

Amelia Horgan, the head of CUSU's Women's Campaign, believes that it does:

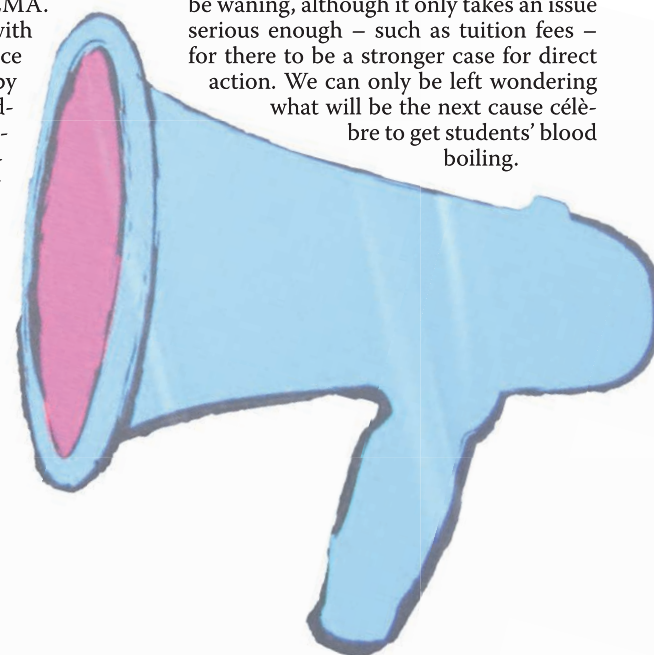
"There are, of course, other ways of drawing

attention to issues – whether through committee meetings or petitions – but the Women's Campaign see protest as a valid... and inherently positive way of trying to change our university."

However, not everyone is of the same opinion. The Proctors' Office – which has historically been the University's first line of defence against protests – insists that opposition should be expressed in other ways. A spokesperson for the Proctors' Office said that "the defence of freedom of speech... often comes to a head at protests, where defending the right to free speech must always be in the context of lawful and peaceful protest."

In the past, the Proctors' Office has sought to limit any radicalism in student unrest, so a more reserved approach to bringing about change is to be expected. Despite this opposition, the belief that the only effective mechanism for change is strong, cohesive, direct action still has significant support amongst students, and student groups are likely to carry on exercising their right to protest.

This is an issue that will continue to test the relationship between student body and University for decades to come. Generally, violence in protests seems to be waning, although it only takes an issue serious enough – such as tuition fees – for there to be a stronger case for direct action. We can only be left wondering what will be the next cause célèbre to get students' blood boiling.



NEWS IN

BRIEF



Cambridge graduate charged with double murder

A recent graduate of the University of Cambridge has been charged with the murder of two women in Hong Kong.

Rurik Jutting, 29, a Peterhouse alumnus and former Secretary for the History Society (CLIO), was remanded for psychiatric reports after his second appearance in court, with his next appearance scheduled for the 24th November.

Jutting, who graduated with a degree in History in 2008, was arrested after police discovered the body of 25-year-old Sumarti Ningsih in his apartment and another woman who is yet to be officially named.

Alison Humphreys, the current President of CLIO, said that the society "does not keep any information about its previous committee members and is therefore unable to comment on the matter."

Huppert: decriminalise drugs

Cambridge MP Julian Huppert calls for drugs to be decriminalised

Jack Lewis

News Correspondent

Cambridge MP Julian Huppert, Liberal Democrat, is pushing for the "decriminalisation of all drugs in the UK," following his claim last week that the "war on drugs has not worked."

The controversial statement comes after the first major Commons debate last Thursday on the issue of drug classification and criminalisation in almost forty years. Cross-party alliances between the Liberal Democrats and Greens on the issue emerged as Caroline Lucas MP, a key supporter of the 'Portuguese way', also called for an overhaul of the 1971 Misuse of Drugs Act.



STUDENTS WILL HAVE A SPLIFF IF THEY WANT

The 'Portuguese way' refers to the decriminalisation of the use of illicit drugs in Portugal almost a decade ago. Since then Portugal has seen a dramatic reduction in addiction rates,



Julian Huppert is the Liberal Democrat MP for Cambridge

giving Portugal amongst the lowest drug usage rates amongst EU member states.

Portugal stopped prosecuting drug users over ten years ago. Those caught in possession of drugs by the police on more than one occasion face a misdemeanour charge - the equivalent of a parking violation.

There were 2,000 drug-related deaths in England and Wales in 2013, whilst the number of deaths involving both legal and illegal drugs last year was at its highest level since 2001. Some MPs, such as Huppert, view this

as an indication that current policy on drugs is not working, and may even be making the situation worse.

Huppert argues that we need to be "smart on drugs" and that "the idea is to reduce the number of users, rather than looking at the harms the substances cause."

He has called for people to realise that there are methods other than criminalisation to deal with the harms created in society by drugs.

While such an overhaul may help deal with the issue of chronic drug addiction, some argue that

decriminalising drugs will only make drug use easier, and indeed encourage potential users such as students, to become involved with drugs.

When asked whether decriminalising drugs such as cannabis and MDMA might encourage students to use drugs more readily than they otherwise might, Huppert said that, regardless of the legal status of drugs, the reality is that "students will still have a spliff if they want," and that studies show that the decriminalization of drugs does not lead to an increase in social use.

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Diversity gives Cambridge competitive edge

Anti-immigration attitudes are 'to the long-term detriment of UK'

Eleanor Hegarty

News Correspondent

Cambridge Vice-Chancellor Sir Leszek Borysiewicz has condemned curbs on immigration, arguing that they are detrimental to Cambridge as a global university, both in the sense of its multiculturalism and its global competitiveness.

Speaking at Cambridge's annual race and equality lecture, Sir Leszek said that "a university such as Cambridge competes with Princeton, Harvard, Stanford, much more than other UK universities, and therefore anything that prevents us getting the very best students... would be to the long-term detriment of the United Kingdom."

The son of wartime Polish refugees, Sir Leszek describes how attitudes to immigration have "swung like a pendulum."

"Attitudes have changed with perceptions of threat and danger, interspersed with the almost warlike language of 'invasion' and 'being swamped'," he said.

His condemnation comes as a reaction to an increasingly anti-immigrant climate in Britain, demonstrated by growing support for UKIP.

International students are now classified as migrants in statistical calculations of net migration, meaning that they are subject to Conservative attempts to fulfil their pledge to cut net migration.

The discontinuation of the post-study work visa in April 2012 also discouraged international students from studying in the UK. Whilst international students were previously allowed an additional two-year visa extension in which to find permanent employment, they are now given a few



CAMBRIDGE COMPETES WITH PRINCETON, HARVARD, STANFORD, MUCH MORE THAN OTHER UK UNIVERSITIES

months to find employment before being deported.

The vice-chancellor of the University of Oxford, Andrew Hamilton, has also gone on the record to describe himself as "baffled" by the UK's "hostile" student visa system.

International students already face fees which can treble the amount paid by a home or EU student, with medical students facing tuition fees



Bonnie Greer gave the inaugural race and diversity lecture

of up to £36,459 if they study at a UK university.

It is unclear how much influence these reforms have had on the number of foreign students attending institutions in the UK. However, in 2013, for the first time in

29 years, the number of international students coming to study in the UK dropped.

Over the past three years, the number of students coming from Commonwealth countries, including India and Pakistan, has declined from 100,000 to 35,000.

Some international students cite

the complexity of the universities application system UCAS as a deterrent from applying to universities in the United Kingdom.

Cambridge Law student and Canadian national Richard Liu described his difficulties with UCAS: "I spent a lot of stressful nights trying to get UCAS to fit IB and Ontario grades."

"Furthermore, I only found out about the wonderful full-pay Blyth scholarship after the deadline had passed."

It is not the first time that Sir Leszek has taken an outspoken stance on the issue of immigration. In a June 2014 interview with the Guardian, Sir Leszek said that he was opposed to "crude" numerical limitations on migrants, as proposed by many leading politicians.

"We should be looking at the capacity of individuals to contribute to our society here rather than have a political ding-dong over 'we brought in 10,000 fewer than you did,'" Sir Leszek commented.

He also warned that this approach could help to create an image of Britain as an unwelcoming country for foreigners.

He said: "[W]hen I think of how my parents were welcomed to this country, I find that actually quite saddening."

"I do feel we are an open, democratic country and we should be setting the standards for the rest of the world, not hindering them."

Sir Leszek described immigration as "one of Britain's greatest strengths", especially because of the "way it has assimilated so many different communities... we are a very plural and open society."

Please don't scrap AS

AS levels are still a 'robust indicator' of academic talent, Cambridge insists

Rachel Bircher

News Correspondent

In light of the new reforms to the A-level education system, the University of Cambridge is urging teenagers to continue to take four AS levels.

From 2015, the modular system of AS levels will be scrapped and replaced by examinations which will take place at the end of the two year A-level course.

The Government claims that this new linear system, similar to what was in place before 2000, will allow for more lesson time that would previously have been lost preparing for AS level exams. This change will only happen in England, with Wales and Northern Ireland retaining the current system.

However, the AS level qualification will not disappear entirely. Candidates will still be able to sit an AS level in their chosen subject, but will have to re-learn and be re-tested on this information at the end of year 13.

In a letter to every school and college in the country, the University of Cambridge "strongly encourages" students to take AS levels, despite this not contributing to their overall grade. They claim that AS levels act as a "robust indicator" of a student's ability and even suggest that taking the AS levels will put students at an advantage when applying to Cambridge.

Dr Mike Sewell, the Head of Admissions for the University states in his letter that AS levels "provide us with a strong measure of applicants'

recent academic progress". He claims that as well as being useful to the university, sitting AS levels is also "of significant educational benefit", and gives students an indication of how likely it is that their application may be successful.

Due to the changes, a large number of schools and colleges were considering dropping the AS qualification altogether. Some have speculated that Dr Sewell's letter is likely to lead to schools keeping AS levels, especially those in the private sector that are under pressure to send more students to Oxbridge. For students, this may mean taking unnecessary exams so as not to jeopardise their applications.

This letter has met with backlash from head teachers and journalists. Andrew Halls in the Telegraph described Cambridge's move as demonstrating that they live in "cloud cuckoo land" when it comes to A-levels.

He described the advice as "impractical and unscholarly", as he believes there is no sense of academic growth or evolution in Cambridge's proposals.

Secondary school educators have suggested that Cambridge's stance on AS levels could end up pushing more applicants to its rival, the University of Oxford.

David Goodhew, head of Latymer Upper School in London, described Cambridge's intervention as a "deeply depressing signal from one of our major academic institutions" and said that "all of this must be music to the ears of the admissions team at Oxford."

This response from Cambridge is part of a wave of opposition the coalition government has faced over its educational reforms in the past two years. The new system of A-levels has been described as "rushed and incoherent," with Brian Lightman of the Association of School and College Leaders stating, "This is a classic case of fixing something that isn't broken."

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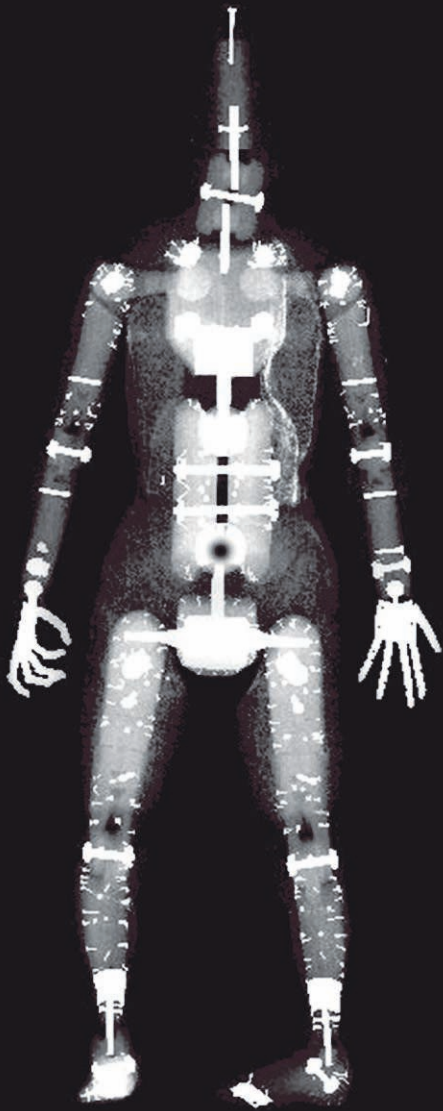
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Reconstruction of computed tomography imaging data of Child no.98
Image courtesy of the Department of Radiology, Cambridge University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust and Dr Tom Turmezei, Clinical Research Fellow, University of Cambridge.

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SHANELLE BLAIR, ANALYST

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City council call for sex attacks inquiry

Councillors demand independent inquiry into recent sex attacks

Ellie Olcott

News Correspondent

Cambridge City Council has demanded a full independent inquiry regarding the "worst spate of sexual attacks in our city in recent memory".

Councillor Lewis Herbert, the Leader of Cambridge City Council, wrote to the Prime Minister expressing a lack of "confidence that the internal review announced by the government... will be sufficiently thorough and transparent."

"We feel it will suffer from limited terms of reference and inadequate objectivity".

Five of a group of 300 Libyan soldiers who were being trained at Basingbourn Barracks, have been charged with sexual offences which occurred at the end of October.

Ibrahim Naji El Maarfi, 20, and Mohammed Abdalsalam, 27, appeared at Cambridge Magistrates' Court last week and admitted two counts of sexual assault. They are awaiting sentence.

Eighteen-year-old Khaled El Azibi has been charged with three counts of sexual assault linked to the same incident but has yet to enter a plea.

Earlier this week, Moktar Ali Saad Mahmoud, 33, and Ibrahim Abogutula, 22, appeared in court after being charged with the rape of a man in his



Jesus Green, where one of the alleged sexual assaults took place, will receive new lighting

20s on Christ's Pieces. They are due to enter a plea on the 23rd January.

Since the incidents, the Ministry of Defence (MoD) has suspended the programme.

After pressure from both the public and Andrew Lansley, the Conservative

MP for South Cambridgeshire, the MoD was forced to contact the Libyan government and bring the completion date of the programme significantly forward.

The MoD, in conjunction with the Libyan government, had planned to

train 2,000 soldiers in the UK. The cohort of 300 soldiers who have been staying in Cambridgeshire were the first installation of these troops.

Cameron was confronted during Prime Minister's Questions last week by Lansley about the lack of discipline

displayed by the soldiers.

The events were described as "completely unacceptable" by the Prime Minister.

Cambridge City Council, however, are not convinced that a central governmental inquiry will sufficiently answer how the soldiers were able to leave the barracks unsupervised.

Councillor Herbert said: "We urge the Prime Minister to agree to an independent inquiry. The victims of these nasty and savage attacks, and all Cambridge residents, deserve a full inquiry and a detailed public explanation of what happened."

He emphasised the normally low crime rates in Cambridge:

"[I]t is our view we were not adequately informed and prepared about the arrangements for these Libyan soldiers, and that there are lessons that need to be learnt."

The MP for Cambridge, Julian Huppert, confirmed that his priority was "the safety of the people in Cambridge". He emphasised that this takes precedence over the government's "genuine commitment to offer training to Libyan troops".

He also backed a petition led by the Cambridge Tab to install more lighting around Jesus Green, where one of the alleged attacks took place.

Cambridge City Council have since agreed to install temporary streetlights in response to the petition.

The temporary lighting will be replaced permanently by 'heritage-style' columns in the first weeks of December, in keeping with similar schemes across Cambridge.

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NEWS IN

BRIEF



Academic releases single to promote women in science

Tim Bussey, Professor of Behavioural Neuroscience at the University of Cambridge, has released a cover of Thomas Dolby's 1982 hit 'She Blinded Me With Science' with his band.

Proceeds will go to ScienceGrrl, an organisation which supports and celebrates the achievements of women in science.

"Clearly women are being put off science somewhere along the way," said Bussey, citing the small number of women in the field.

"We've released this cover...as a way of celebrating women in science and helping raise awareness of some of the issues they face."

Five 'ScienceGrrls' appear in the video, such as structural engineer Roma Agrawal, laser physicist Lia Ling Yi and epidemiologist Suzi Gage.

Oxford tops table for bike theft

Cambridge comes in second in table compiling bike theft statistics across the UK

James Sutton
Investigations Editor

Unusually, Cambridge students should be glad to hear that 'the Other Place' has been triumphant in a league table, as it has been revealed that Oxford is the UK's biggest hotspot for bicycle thefts.

Using data from 92,508 incidents across England and Wales from May 2013 and April this year, the founder of the website Check That Bike, John Moss, has ranked British postcodes according to the number of reported bike thefts during that period.

The central Oxford postcode OX1 comes top of the list with 846 bikes reported stolen, whilst Cambridge CB1 comes second with 781.

Third is the London postcode SE1, which includes boroughs such as Lambeth and Southwark, but both Cambridge and Oxford appear a second time in the top 10 list, with the CB2 and OX4 postcodes experiencing 564 and 572 thefts respectively.

The website Check That Bike was, according to Moss, founded with the intention of disrupting the process by which stolen bikes can be sold on.

Bike owners are encouraged to register their bike's frame number on the



Cambridge was dubbed the UK's bike theft capital in 2010

website, so that victims and potential buyers can cross-reference and identify whether a bike has been stolen.

Moss's new ranking appears to be an improvement on the figures put forward by Cambridgeshire County Council's Community Safety Partnership in January 2010. These findings dubbed Cambridge the UK's "bike theft capital" after it was discovered that one bicycle is stolen in Cambridge every three-and-a-half hours.

In October last year, Cambridge police staged and filmed a series of bike thefts in the city centre, which revealed

that citizens and students are turning a blind eye to the crime taking place on a daily basis.

In 2010, the Campaign for Better Transport named Cambridge the second-best city for cycling in Britain, having been beaten to the top spot by Nottingham.

Cycle lanes and bike storage facilities have made Cambridge one of the most cycle-friendly cities in the country, although these crime figures are likely to concern bike owners.

Following the success of British cycling in the 2012 Olympics and the Tour de France, which passed through

the city in July this year, Cambridge is home to greater numbers of cyclists than ever before.

THEFT BY AREA

OX1 (Oxford) - 846
CBI (Cambridge) - 781
SE1 (London) - 734
EI (London) - 557
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VARSITY

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See website for full details.

17th November
Lent Editor

Deadlines

24th November

Section Editors



Senate House Protest: Cambridge Defend Education members protested on Wednesday for free education in the run up to national demonstrations

Hit and run murder

A man has been charged over a hit-and-run murder investigation in Cambridge

Richard Nicholl
Deputy News Editor

A man arrested in connection with the death of Alex Jeffery, who died earlier this week after being hit by a car, was charged with murder on Monday. Jack Mulcahy, 24, from Huntingdon, was arrested in relation to the incident occurring on Saturday 1st November.

Mulcahy appeared in Cambridge Magistrates Court the next day, although the investigation is ongoing.

Jeffery, 21, died at Addenbrooke's Hospital on Saturday, a week after he was involved in an altercation in the street outside the Cambridge City Hotel on Downing Street, taking place at approximately 3.40am.

Jeffery was subsequently struck by a vehicle, sustaining serious injuries.

The police are seeking any information that people who may have witnessed the incident can offer to assist in their investigation.

DCI Jerome Kent said: "I believe there are still people out there who witnessed this incident but still haven't been in touch with police and I would urge those people to pick up the phone and call in."

"In particular I am keen to speak to the two security guards who came to Alex's aid. I would also urge anyone who may have been travelling in the car involved in this incident or knows who the driver is to come forward.

"We are viewing CCTV from the area so it is only a matter of time before they are identified.

"This is a devastating and traumatic time for the family and it is vital we catch the person responsible."

Jeffery lived on Orchard Road, Melbourn, near



Alex Jeffery, who died on Saturday

Royston.

In a statement, his family said: "Alex was a fun-loving, kind and caring son, grandson and brother. He is so missed by us all."

A post mortem examination will take place later this week.

Anyone with information is asked to contact the police on 101 for the Major Crime Unit for Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Hertfordshire. Crimestoppers can be contacted anonymously on 0800 555 111.

STUDENT MOVES

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The Interview: Mark Williams

MIND YOUR HEAD



Mark Williams, the pioneer of Mindfulness Based Cognitive Therapy talks mental health and Week Five with **Posey Mehta**

In 2011, Professor Mark Williams of Oxford University and journalist Dr Danny Penman published their best-selling book, *Mindfulness: A Practical Guide to Finding Peace in a Frantic World*. The guide brought to public attention the overwhelming scientific evidence that suggests that mindfulness can quantifiably improve mental health. The book was the product of nearly two decades of research, and is based around the Mindfulness Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT) that Williams pioneered in conjunction with Dr Zindel Segal and Dr John Teasdale in a 2002 book.

Williams describes how he and his colleagues were drawn to mindfulness “out of a clinical need” when, in 1993, they sought advice from Dr Jon Kabat-Zinn, who “had already started to use mindfulness in a clinical setting” for those with chronic pain or stress, in situations “where the doctors couldn’t do anything more for them.” Williams, alongside Segal and Teasdale, built on the foundations laid by Kabat-Zinn’s Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction programme to formulate an effective, clinically-tested intervention to prevent depression, based around the same traditions of mindfulness meditation.

Yet, despite being a term that is increasingly becoming part of the popular lexicon, mindfulness as a concept is often misunderstood; it is for this reason that I was particularly keen to hear how Williams would define the word. He directs me first

to the ancient Pali word from which it is translated. ‘Sati’, which means ‘awareness’, can be translated as ‘lucid awareness’ or ‘appreciative awareness’. The distinction between lucid and appreciative is intriguing; he explains that lucid refers “to the sense of clarity”, whilst appreciative refers to “a welcoming attitude towards whatever the object of awareness is; whatever you are paying attention to, looking at, investigating”. He sums up the word by describing it as “an awareness that is discerning without being harshly judgemental”, referring to the act of “seeing clearly what is going on in the inside world and the outside world moment by moment”.

Indeed, he is keen to dispel the myths surrounding mindfulness, explaining that it is less “about clearing the mind, but seeing its pattern. The stillness of which we speak in mindfulness meditation is not the stillness of a quiet mind; it is the stillness of allowing things to be just as they are now, whilst trying to make things different all the time.”

In 2009, the use of MBCT for depression was granted ‘key priority’ status within National Institute of Clinical Excellence (NICE) guidelines, and yet, in many areas of the country, it isn’t possible to access the therapy through the NHS at all. When I ask whether this lack of availability concerns Williams, he explains that “nothing different really needs to happen” other than the clinical trials which continue to validate MBCT

as an effective approach to depression. Indeed, he emphasises the need to “stay within the evidence of what works,” explaining that “if it’s going to change from just being a fad to being available to people on a permanent basis then it has got to be evidence based.”

He goes on to explain that MBCT has seen particular success as a

“THE EXPERIENCE IS REAL BUT THE CONTENT OF WHAT THEY’RE WHISPERING ISN’T TRUE,

preventative approach for those who have had three or more episodes of severe depression. When I ask why this might be, he speculates that “what mindfulness teaches is a way of bringing non-judgmental awareness to bear on experience, a sense of compassion to the self” which is particularly effective against those types of depression that stem from “a sort of self-hatred and a self-denigration which is very adhesive and compelling.” That is to say, those that suffer from this sort of depression “need that compassion most because the pattern of their depression is so self-destructive.”

When I ask, then, whether mindfulness could help students, he is quick to cite the success of mindfulness sessions at Oxford University, where Chris Cullen – who also runs the mindfulness sessions in the Houses of Parliament – leads a series of meditation sessions during lunchtimes based on those detailed within *Mindfulness: A Practical Guide to Finding Peace in a Frantic World*. He places emphasis on what he terms as “the universality of mindfulness practice”, explaining that it can be adopted by “people of all faiths and none.” For Williams, mindfulness is completely detached from any form of religious experience, being instead the act of “cultivating the art of being still; there’s nothing more religious about it than that.”

Speaking on the concept of the ‘Week 5 Blues’, he is keen to avoid trivialising them; he explains that “although you might have been warned about them, when they come, they come with their own unique pattern for you and so it feels much more compelling. It often may reactivate old stresses and old memories. So you won’t think of them as being the ‘Week 5 Blues’, you’ll just think ‘I’m useless, I can’t do this, it isn’t for me. What on earth do I think I’m doing here? Everybody must know I’m not up to it; I can’t keep up with this, it’s all too hard.’ If you could see them for what they are, which is a pattern of what happens during that time, then that already would be helpful.”

Recognising them is one thing, but

how to deal with the blues? “If it’s possible, to be very gentle with yourself, realising, in a sense that you’re ‘under attack’ from this destructive force,” says Williams. “It will pass. You can’t have much control over the fact that these thoughts come, but if it’s possible, see clearly the way that you react to them. If you’re feeling low, you’ll assume they are telling the truth about you. If you are able to see them as ‘thoughts and memories’, then it prevents the sort of reactivity cascade which entangles us all in the very thought that we’d rather not have.”

He emphasises that to push them away, or deny that they are there is not helpful, but that it is better to distinguish reality from truth; acknowledge that “the experience is real, so there is a reality there, but the content of what they’re whispering in your ear isn’t true.”

What Williams leaves me with is a sense that mindfulness meditation must be experienced to be fully understood. He tells me that, since that initial investigation of the concept in 1993, he has been practicing mindfulness meditation on a more or less daily basis, explaining that it would be impossible to teach mindfulness without personal experience. Indeed, Williams describes it as “like having lots of books on cycling without having ever sat on a bike: you won’t really know what cycling is until you get on a bike. Similarly, you won’t really know what mindfulness is until you have done some practice.”

Underheard at Cambridge

Resident news hound Peter Lloyd-Williams sniffs out the tales no other rag will publish

Lawyer's sense of social justice remains intact

The Cambridge Faculty of Law has today announced success in its campaign to find a law student whose sense of social justice remains intact.

Danielle Bleddel, a second year undergraduate, has so far indicated no intention to join a city law firm tinkering with the complex financial instruments of the corporate world. Instead, she intends to use her privileged understanding of the legal system to do something called 'helping other people'.

"They say everyone has a price, but not me," Bleddel revealed in an exclusive interview with Varsity.

"I mean, sure, some of these firms are offering a starting salary greater than anything you'd get elsewhere after decades of service, but is my contribution to the world really going to be in the footnotes of a multi-jurisdictional derivative swap? Do I really value money above all else? Even my own happiness?"

Other lawyers have described Bleddel's priorities as "misguided."

Michael Anthony, a third year lawyer at Tit Hall, questioned whether Bleddel's claims were genuine.

"Any Cambridge lawyer who says they don't enjoy spending endless hours in the library examining points of minute technical detail is a liar. A lawyer is just a well paid masochist."

Stash riot leaves hundreds injured

Cambridge police are urging calm after a stash riot broke out on Midsummer Common last night.

The disturbance reportedly began when rumours began circulating amongst the college boathouses that insufficient stash had been ordered for the coming year.

According to eyewitnesses, violence broke out almost immediately, as boaties attempted to secure any available stash. Several boats are reported to have been destroyed.

Addenbrooke's Hospital has reported a 400 per cent increase in the number of people being admitted with symptoms consistent with "frenzied and vicious paddling."

CUCBC leaders have disputed this claim, insisting that all injuries were inflicted by blades.

It is unclear why the riot started. Stash is widely available in Cambridge and easy to obtain.

Experts suggest, however, that due to a boatie's limited wardrobe, a stash drought would have embarrassing consequences.

"The boatie's clothing choices are naturally limited," said Professor Andrew McNeil, deputy head of the Oxford Department of Stash Research.

"If the stash runs out, the boatie doesn't have many options. It's really down to pyjamas or nothing."

"Why do you think they always wear stash?"

Second year gets drinking society internship

After months of trying, relieved Corpus student Brian Kerr (Varsity #783) has finally managed to secure an internship.

"I was really worried it wasn't going to happen," said Kerr in a telephone interview last night.

"Once my interviewer heard about my drinking society experience though, things started looking up.

"Drinking soc admin really gets you used to working under pressure and when you're not feeling at your best. These are qualities recruiters are looking for.

"If it weren't for all those evenings inducing liver cirrhosis in Life, I don't know what I'd do, much like the day after Life, when I wouldn't know what I'd done."

Do you have the best sphincter in Cambridge?

Varsity is proud to announce the return of the annual best sphincter in Cambridge competition.

The rules are simple. Simply take a creative picture of your sphincter and send it to Varsity! Extra points will be awarded for daring, quality of photography and the composition of sphincter!

Careful though! Exposing your sphincter

in public can get you into trouble, so you best be sneaky when presenting in the UL.

Prolapse or fistula might have knocked your confidence, but Varsity considers all sphincters equally!

This is a competition about body confidence after all! Louix XIV's anal fistula didn't stop him being a damn good king and it doesn't stop you having a damn good sphincter.

Previous winners have trespassed on to the roof of King's Chapel, traumatised young children and violated the

sanctity of the laundry room, but we think you can do better! Get your sphincters out Cambridge and be proud! Entries need to be in by the 1st December, so get snapping!



MILLIE BRIERLEY

On composing your own soundtrack

Music is a wonderful thing: it is one of those rare – but precious – phenomena in life which seems to exist purely for no reason other than its own intrinsic beauty; like art, poetry, or the Great British Bake Off. It is a rare moment during the day that I am not plugged into headphones: in the shower, while I work, on the way to lectures. My life – like countless others, I'm sure – has an ever-present soundtrack, deftly woven through virtually every aspect of my day, and scored by all the artists I like enough not to skip.

There is no real need for us humans to like music. Our penchant for strings of notes, each one carefully calculated to follow what comes before, is the payment of no evolutionary dues, the satisfaction of no chemical precondition. We talk to communicate; we walk to get places; but perhaps we listen to music simply to feel things. Indeed, despite its apparent superfluity to our human biology, music has managed to find a way of climbing inside us and never leaving. It is staging a peaceful protest against the wearying, monotonous assaults of daily life. Music is the fortress we build for our mind, to protect it from the bad things on the outside.

But sometimes the fortress isn't strong enough: cracks appear and the structure begins to crumble. The CD is scratched, the track jumps and the soundtrack is corrupted. All of a sudden, a foreign voice is scoring your life, and you don't know how to assert yourself and tell it no.

The Voice drowns out all your accomplishments with the sound of your failures. It sings sweetly in your ear – songs comparing you to your neighbour, to your sibling, or just to undiluted, unattainable perfection – until the melody fills

your ears and makes you forget all the other songs you knew before. You repeat the lyrics listlessly back – *I am not good enough; I don't belong here* – because it is infinitely easier than writing your own song.

The Voice tells you that you don't look right – you have too much of this bit, not enough of that bit, and that other bit is just plain wrong. It tells you to show more of one thing, less of another, and to do everything possible to hide something else. It draws angry red circles around everything it deems 'flaws', and simply shouts louder every time you try to answer back.

The Voice watches what you eat so you don't have to, but it watches too closely and loses all perspective. It tells you to avoid this food – that you don't deserve that food, that perhaps you shouldn't eat at all – but you follow its advice, because you assume that, because The Voice is inside your head, you must have given it keys at some point.

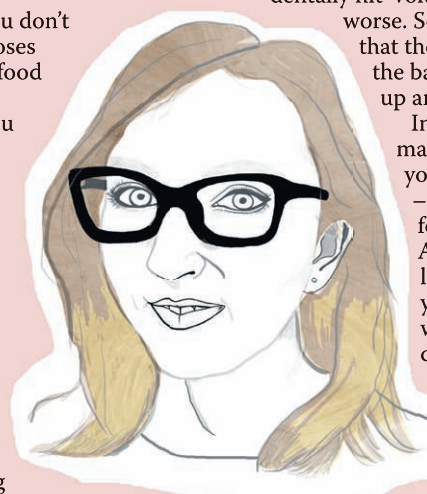
It waves its baton and you play along blindly, because the orchestra always does as the conductor instructs: you think what The Voice tells you to think, even though, deep down, part of you knows it is out of key; you do what it tells you to do, even when this puts you out of time with the rest of the band; you fear what it tells you to fear, even if it is as painfully simple as leaving

the house.

Soon enough, you start to believe this alien voice inside your head – a groaning chorus of society, the media and personal insecurities – and you adopt its monotonous ostinato as your own. You convince yourself that you, and you alone, are composing this poisonous accompaniment – because it is true and necessary – and you forget all about the starring role played by The Voice.

When this happens, finding the stop button can seem like an impossible task. Sometimes, in your blindness, you accidentally hit 'volume up', and everything seems immeasurably worse. Sometimes, you simply mute it, fully aware that the same toxic refrain is still there, lurking in the background, waiting spitefully for you to slip up and give it the limelight once again.

In times like these, the only solution is to take matters into your own hands and compose your own soundtrack. You start with the basics – the bass line, which lays the foundation for all kinds of rich harmonies over the top. And then – perhaps by yourself, but more likely with the help and support of those you trust enough to share the closing credits with – you create a texture so gloriously lush and full that The Voice is left simply to knock dumbly and never be heard. Note by note, beat by beat, you rebuild your musical fortress, in the hopes that it will be stronger and more secure than it was before.



Comment



Husna Rizvi

Is the word 'tolerance' indicative of hypocrisy in our society?

I want to be more than tolerated

Your matriculation is meant to be the moment when you realise you have entered into one of the greatest, and oldest, intellectual institutions in the world. Mine was almost perfect. Almost. Of course, there was the fancy food, the wine and the choir that managed to make even Josh Groban songs sound semi-bearable; there were also those quintessential “the rest of your life begins today” speeches. And then, for me at least, there was this jarring feeling.

A senior member of my college gushed proudly about the level of tolerance at King's College. Tolerance for people of different backgrounds, sexual orientations and schools of thought. Part of me felt proud, because I understood the sentiment: here, the only thing that matters is your aptitude for learning. But I still couldn't help feeling deeply uncomfortable at the thought that I should be “tolerated” per se, especially for something as arbitrary as having brown skin. Despite my Asian heritage, I've never seriously questioned how well I belong in a white-dominated society. That was until I got that jarring feeling.

I thought it might be therapeutic to unpack the word and assure myself

I was being silly. This made it worse. Linguistically, “tolerance” is for the person with freshers' flu whose cough echoes throughout a lecture room of 200 people; or for that baby whose wails – though coming from the furthest seat away from you on the plane – sound like they have been converted to high quality mp3 and manoeuvred their way into your earphones. “Tolerance”, as I find it, is an act of relenting against those who can't help but be annoying, or those who don't really know any better. “Tolerance” isn't, and shouldn't be, for your friends who just happen to come from a different background. So why doesn't our language reflect this?

There are a couple of options here. The word “tolerance” could be arbitrary. There could be nothing about the common use of the word that indicates I should take offence on behalf of all minority groups. I've attempted to retreat to this position a number of times in my life. But it's something that feels increasingly inappropriate and difficult to do. I attended a debate a couple of weeks ago about the value of faith schools in society, and an audience member asked the speaker (an advocate for “tolerance” of minorities

and LGBTQ+ communities) “What if I don't want to be tolerated? You tolerate diseases and infections. You shouldn't have to tolerate gay people.” To which, the speaker replied awkwardly, “Okay, I really don't know what to say to that.” This, I think, is demonstrative of the second option: there is a severe lack of consciousness in our racial, and cultural, rhetoric today. Which is an obnoxious way of saying: we aren't thinking before we speak – discarding the heavy implications of our words. And of course, the third option: “tolerance” is absolutely the word that should account for current race relations in Cambridge.

If it isn't obvious already, I'm making a case for the second option. The word “tolerate” is, I think, indicative of an imperfect rhetoric in our society. So it isn't just annoying for a minority like myself when speeches about tolerance are applauded, but it's hurtful too. They're a sign that we, as a society, believe that institutional “tolerance” platforms aren't hurtful, aren't even arbitrary, but are the best version of things that we could have.

This is deluded. Not only does the word disrespect anyone from a different background, but it also

misrepresents our lives. Because I am not tolerated here at Cambridge. I am welcomed. I feel at home. This is an important feeling when you're immersed into possibly one of the most intense academic structures ever. I do not think this should be taken away from me because of an imperfect word.

Perhaps, you might say I've gotten the wrong end of the stick. Obviously it's no secret that language is a convenient, albeit inaccurate, mode of communication. Meaning gets distorted all the time. Yet, still I managed to grasp the sentiment of inclusiveness at King's despite the awkwardness that came with being “tolerated”. My main qualm is with how the word fits into our racial rhetoric. It's not so much meaning but the construction of a better narrative – creating the best version of things. “Tolerance” is not it.

It is, in my view a dignity-reducing term. It does not respect, nor preserve, the dignity of any group. Not even for those who must do the “tolerating”. It's a sign of grudgeful acceptance that continues to misrepresent the experience of so many minorities. So if a confused word such as “tolerate” can do such damage, why tolerate it any longer?



Cam Hill

Remembrance practices propagate the myth of glory of national sacrifice

Forgetting to remember all our loss

Remembrance Day marks an irrefutably important day in the national psyche. It is the pivotal moment in our nation's calendar at which partisan lines are forgotten and people band together in an attempt to commemorate those who gave their lives for the country and the Commonwealth, from WWI to the present day. Services are held, speeches given and monuments erected or hung with wreaths.

It is this degree of ceremony which undermines the point behind Remembrance. You can't learn anything of the nature of war through ceremony; it's merely painting the death of millions in gold plate and wreaths. This aestheticised memory of war does nothing but perpetuate the original problem, a glorification of war and a muting of individual tragedy. By making the gargantuan losses of the First World War into ceremony and splendour, no matter how poignant it may be, genuine human loss is made into the abstract. It is robbed of any sincere link to war itself.

Ceremony and processions are formulaic small talk at a funeral whilst everybody skirts around the actual loss. Rather than painting those who died as heroes we should be lamenting the futility of that which they were sent to their deaths for. I hold the most sincere respect possible for

anybody who is willing to risk their lives for their country, but you should never let this view slide into a blind fetishising of national service. The servicemen and women who gave their lives in WWI weren't martyrs to an ideological cause or a sincere attempt to improve the world. They were sons, mums and dads who were thrown into a maelstrom of misery in order to satisfy the imperial ambitions of Europe's upper echelons. We



CEREMONY AND PROCESSIONS ARE FORMULAIC SMALL TALK

can't lose sight of this in relation to modern conflict as well: our wars in Iraq and Afghanistan were characterised far more by PTSD and roadside bombs than poppies and uniforms.

Whilst this desire for a more romanticised and less harsh form of memory is strewn across much of Remembrance Day, this year saw its fruition with the Blood Swept Lands and Seas of Red memorial at the Tower of London. If any of you didn't have the pleasure of seeing this, it was an outburst of 888, 246 ceramic

poppies surrounding the Tower, pretty majestically representing all the soldiers from the UK and the Commonwealth who gave their lives in the First World War. No one can doubt that the monument was exceptionally impressive but I question the thought behind it. As Jonathan Jones argued in the Guardian last month, it is without any connection to the reality of WWI. It is without the bite or any of the brutality of war which remembrance is intended to prevent. There is none of the futile pain, trenches, broken homes or sobbing widows.

In scale and beauty you lose the pain and further perpetuate this idea of the nobility of war. It is the ultimate symbol of our national remembrance. It neither provokes thought nor discourages further suffering, but merely propagates the myth of the glory of national sacrifice.

It's this nationalisation of grief which further ruins Remembrance Day. There should be 19.5 million poppies in that moat, not just one for each of those who swore allegiance to the King. Nationalism started the First World War, so it seems strange that every year we single out our dead to exclusively grieve for. Why should the loss of the boy from Brighton be any more tragic than that of the one from Berlin? November 11th bears witness to a continent in mourning

and reflection; it seems perverse to propagate Farage-style ideas of “them” and “us”.

The Remembrance Day we have now may be a nicer, more easily palatable depiction of war but it offers us nothing for the modern day or our future. The services that happen across the country can't merely make people remember, they need to make them think. If this national service is meant to hold any true meaning it must encompass all of war in its recognition; the brutality as well as the sacrifice, ISIS as well as the Victoria Cross. Dignified memory has its place but such a momentous occasion should set its sights higher. Remembering 888, 246 dead soldiers on ‘our’ side stands as an empty gesture unless we use that memory to try and ensure there is never cause to mourn 19.5 million again.

Have any views on this week's comment pieces?
Tweet us @
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2014: The Year of the Woman



Amy Clark

It's the media, not the Women's Campaign, that needs rebranding

Before starting Cambridge, there were so many things I was excited about. I was looking forward to starting education again, to going to such a beautiful college, and to be living in a place where, seemingly, feminism was so accepted. I knew that my college had a women's officer, that there was an

official Women's Campaign as well as a feminist society, and I couldn't wait to get involved.

The first Women's Campaign meeting I went to only made me more sure I was right to have been excited. They took care to make sure people were comfortable, gave everyone the chance to speak and made the meeting feel like a safe space for the women there. There was also a real sense that everyone there wanted to make change in the Cambridge community, and that they would fight for this change.

However, not everyone in Cambridge shares this view. More than any other campaign or group, the Women's Campaign receives an inordinate amount of backlash both from the students and, in particular, from the student media.

I don't think anyone would ever say that the Women's Campaign is perfect – it suffers from many of the same problems that any campaign does. But when people argue that it needs to rebrand itself, we have to ask ourselves why. If some women find the campaign alienating, then this is something that should be

listened and responded to.

For the most part, however, media criticism doesn't seem to come from women unable to engage with the campaign, but from male writers eager to blast the campaign as "loud and aggressive" or "vociferous". Scrolling through articles and comments, the amount of disparagement and hate directed against the Women's Campaign is unlike that for any other organisation in the university – they are "thugs", "vermin", a "shitstain on human history". Most, if not all, of these comments are not aimed at the content of the protests but at the protesters themselves.

When it is not what they fight for, but how they do it, that comes under attack, it begs the question: what exactly does the Campaign do that is so aggressive? Since I have been at Cambridge, they have put up trigger warnings, held (peaceful) protests, performed candlelit vigils, spoken to the press, and written open letters. None of this screams aggressive behaviour, but it is important to remember that there is a history of women being branded as hostile when they speak out. To raise your

voice, to disagree and to call people out is to offend the general stereotype of passivity that for so long has been intertwined with the concepts of being feminine and ladylike. With aggressiveness and assertiveness being perceived for a long time as 'masculine' traits, society reacts when women speak up and take action, because even if we are a more progressive society, we are still an unequal one that values and listens to some voices more than others.

For most people who complain about feminist activism in Cambridge, the problem is not the possible inaccessibility of the campaigns; it's the fact that they are not silent and are willing to fight for what they believe in. When they do what they are set up to do – campaign – and this results in backlash and vitriol, I can't help but wonder if the way the student media reacts is simply a manifestation of sexism both in general society and in Cambridge itself.

This isn't to say that people in Cambridge don't believe in gender equality. Rather, it is acceptable to be low-key about your feminism,

to believe in gender equality and simultaneously allow people to make sexist jokes, allow the disparity between genders in different subjects to continue, allow women to be groped and harassed both within the university and on nights out.

It's not required to be an activist: voices in support of feminism and women are powerful in themselves. But it is important that we support those who fight for equality instead of asking them to reign themselves in.

Student media in Cambridge is an amazing platform for discussion and debate, but when it perpetuates the idea that women shouldn't be loud, shouldn't argue, shouldn't fight, it allows pervasive and damaging inequality to remain in our university, and serves to silence the voices that need to be speaking out.

Discussion and constructive criticism should always be facilitated, but when we see having a voice as being vociferous and simply protesting as being aggressive, we are not improving anything, just making it increasingly difficult for the women within Cambridge to have their say.



Tess Davidson

Cambridge's gender imbalance needs to change

Number 1 in the Guardian, Times and Complete University Guide 2014. One of the top five universities targeted by Britain's leading graduate employers. 92 per cent student satisfaction. Yet beneath this glittering façade, lies a deeply entrenched, gender-regressive psyche in Cambridge.

The former are the attributes being extolled in the current student

prospectus. The latter is an issue which is largely denied across the university, but is one that, if placed alongside these statistics, should alter the globally-renowned image of Cambridge as it currently stands.

Coming to Cambridge wearing rose tinted glasses is an inevitable side effect of being a fresher. Having taken a gap year, I had built up an idealistic image of Cambridge in my mind, glorifying it to such an extent that my daydreams began to slowly crumble as I questioned whether it could ever match my impossibly high expectations. In many respects, it has exceeded them. Yet despite the many positives, there is a sense of discomfort about gender inequality.

I first became aware of this issue during Freshers' Week, in both the upper echelons of Cambridge and amongst the students themselves. At King's College, the fact that we currently have a female Senior Tutor, Dr. Pervez Mody, created both pride and discomfort amongst the freshers, especially upon the realisation that this was a rarity in Cambridge.

The undertones of patriarchy were becoming apparent.

Cambridge was a university made for men, by men. Even Newnham, founded in 1871, didn't award degrees to women until 1948. Cambridge only officially became a mixed university in 1972. This legacy of gender inequality persists.

There is a significant gender imbalance in students studying Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) subjects. For applicants in 2012, 346 men and 48 women applied for computer sciences. Of those offered places, 73 were men and 11 were women. This is 86.9 per cent men versus 13.1 per cent women. The ingrained societal attitudes towards what subjects and careers are more suitable for women and men are diluting the academic purity of the application system. The lack of females across the university studying more traditional, 'male' orientated subjects belies an inherent insecurity. Women feel restricted by their gender and by such anachronistic attitudes.

As an applicant assessing their chances in higher education, how are statistics such as these going to motivate a woman to apply for a subject which, according to the numbers, gives her very little chance of success? Cambridge may not directly be creating these gender confines, yet there appears to be very little effort to correct them.

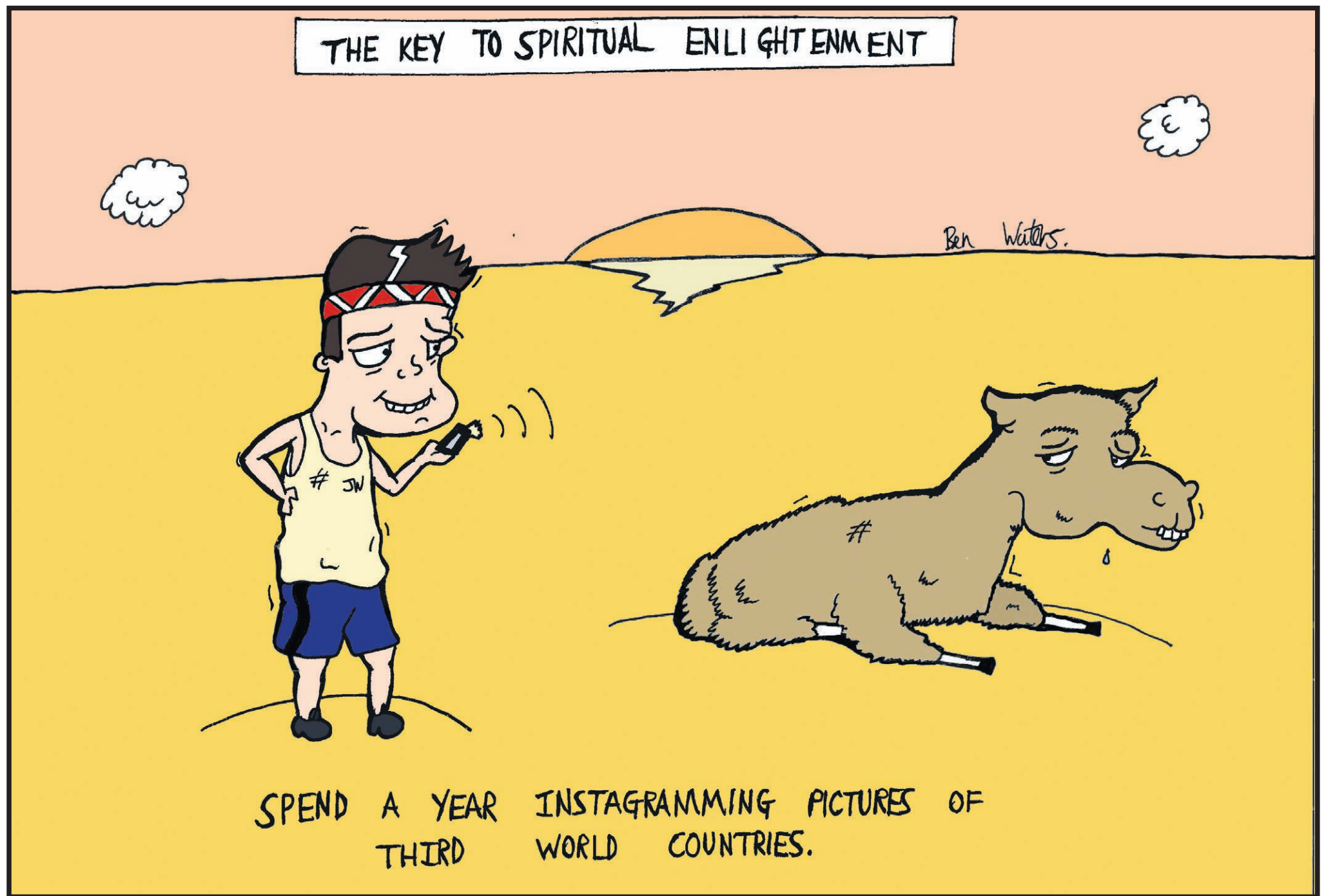
The patriarchal origins of Cambridge mean that while the university may appear to be inclusive, the reality is very different. As the Interim Report from the Senior Tutors' Sub-Committee on Women Students and Examination Results notes, "an institution which has been exclusively male for many centuries... is not necessarily transformed by the arrival of a handful of women."

Nowhere is this more apparent than on Trinity College's website, where the fellows are listed according to different categories. If one clicks on a list based on seniority, it is not until the fourth page that the first female name appears. 20 names

per page. Over 60 men before one even reaches the first female name.

Furthermore, out of 31 colleges, there are only nine female Masters. Considering that three of these are at women's colleges, this means that only six mixed colleges have a female head. Upon what basis are these decisions made? A large influence is tradition. Go into any dining hall of an older college and there are more male portraits than female, if any female at all. This is a damaging attitude, and irrespective of whether it is deliberate, it is deterring Cambridge from progressing.

Cambridge retains its innate traditional outlook on gender in academia and subconsciously confers this belief upon its students. It is no coincidence that many drinking societies still display sexist attitudes. If any female is to place confidence in the university, this patriarchal mindset must be adjusted, and it can be. We just need to face these facts and confront them. Women are perceived as a novelty, but we are here to stay.



In defence of gap yahs? Or any interesting tales from your travels? Send us a pitch at comment@varsity.co.uk

Listen to words, not accents



Miranda Gabbott

Does Cambridge's status as an elite university accentuate class prejudices?

My home is in Kent and does not pronounce its Ts. Being from the nice end of town, I never got a proper grasp of the regional vernacular, so I spent my school years fighting not to sound too posh, with varying degrees of success. It struck me hard as a teenager when I began to notice how much more difficult it is to relate to somebody when you have a very different way of speaking to them. You mutually and unconsciously judge each other as having different value systems and life experiences, as if the literal sound denotes the fact that you are operating on different frequencies. Talking like a newsreader is unnecessarily alienating when you've got a Saturday job at Tesco. Ironically, by the time I had finally got my head around dropping some consonants and sounding approximately normal for home, I wound up moving to a place which is arguably the poshness capital of the UK, and now my voice is a different kind of different.

Before my first lecture, the professor gestured to a pile of papers by the door and instructed me to "Take a hain daut" and for a few moments I had no idea what he had said. He had said "take a hand-out", but in the most comically, cartoonishly upper class

way that anybody has ever said anything anywhere. In that first lecture I was struggling against my prejudice not to hate that professor based solely on the fact that his voice dripped with privilege. The ability to give sentences automatic credence by making them from the sounds associated with power is a gift that is unfairly allocated. To my mind, the lecturer's accent exuded an air of intelligence and superiority; it was an oral hangover from an archaic Cambridge to which I could never have belonged – and I judged him for that.

The meaning you perceive from hearing someone talk is never based exclusively on the words. Without trying – or even without noticing – we project characteristics onto the stresses and rhythms of speech which fundamentally change how we relate to the speaker. It feels instinctive to relate voices to stereotypes and read naivety into the Welsh accent, or harshness into the Glaswegian accent and so on. It is easy to make light of the regional stereotypes that drive so much of voice-based discrimination. Often the media portrays them as harmless and inconsequential – of course Cheryl Cole sounds silly, she's a Geordie! Bizarrely, accent discrimination is a socially acceptable form

of prejudice to admit to. The said, most people accept that all accents are equally valid, and that we should not be susceptible to such an obvious prejudice. But treating people differently based on how they talk is an unconscious form of judgment, as easy to slip into as crossing the road when you see someone who looks threatening.

We are all guilty of using accents to gauge social status, education and intelligence, basing our opinions on the connotations of the place associated with an accent. Perhaps this is a symptom of the British obsession with class, another method we use to mark out divisions in society. Indeed, Neria Aylward's Varsity online article 'The Poshness Problem' mentioned how no such class connotations exist in regional American accents, despite the country being much larger than the UK. I disagree with her on this: I believe accent discrimination is a far wider problem that we might realise. Worryingly, a 2013 ITV survey found that eight in ten British employers admitted to making discriminating decisions based upon regional accents. Accent prejudice stifles social mobility, creating a cycle which is hard to break – our socio-economic status defines how we talk, but how

we talk defines our socio-economic status.

I spent my first two weeks at Cambridge resenting the fact that I felt my accent did not sound as articulate as those of my peers from public schools. My feelings that my voice marked me out as different, however, were probably nowhere near as justified or extreme as those of some students whose voices betray the fact that they are from Essex or Birmingham or places outside of the UK. They also caused me to unfairly resent people with upper-class accents who had done nothing wrong.

It is so easy to assume that someone has certain characteristics based upon their accent that it is difficult to see how the reality of voice-based discrimination could be changed. Perhaps the government should pull a Mussolini and try to standardise the national vernacular. Or perhaps the only solution to this problem is an obvious and imperfect one: we all need to make an effort to listen to each other's words and try to be aware of how their pronunciation might make us less or more inclined to agree with them, in order to avoid this insidious form of classism that has no place in as diverse a community as a world-class university.

Vulture



Freshers' Plays

Jacqueline Wilson

**Hip Hop and
Feminism**

Release your inner child

Lana Crowe on an evening with
Jacqueline Wilson

It was a bright cold day in November, and the clocks were striking 'Jacqueline Wilson'. Having scamped across college into the literary realms of Corpus Christi's Pelican Poets and Writers, the arrival of the quietly-spoken, unimposing and affable writer was simultaneously very fitting and utterly bizarre. I mentally recalled the Nick Sharratt image of the white-haired woman with all the rings... it's definitely her. I felt as if I knew her a little already, through all of our mutual friends: Tracy Beaker, Lottie, Em, The Suitcase Kid, to name but a few. When empathising with her characters as a child, never did it strike me that they weren't real, let alone that someone created them and that I would one day be mingling with her in some sort of Agatha-Christie-meets-Dead-Poets-Society style soirée.

In the Master's Lodge, I felt like a toy in the most elaborate doll's house I had ever seen: sitting under the magnificent chandelier, drinking raspberry tea and contemplating Hodgson Burnett's *The Secret Garden*. It was as if I had stepped into the imaginary world of children's literature that we were about to discuss. And I had: the vividly multi-coloured fantasy of Cambridge that pulled me through my greyscale East London education was finally realised. For my peers, the thought of a Cambridge University poetry society would be as extraordinary and fantastical as Narnia – or, perhaps, as repellent as an Orwellian dystopia.

Dame Jacqueline Wilson is a powerhouse in children's literature, with a career spanning more than 40 years. The former British Children's Laureate is known for exploring gritty issues: she carefully introduces children to the harsh realities of life with sensitivity and a

friend-like familiarity. Her books have also been successfully adapted for both stage and screen, from the BAFTA nominated TV series *The Story of Tracy Beaker* to this year's stage adaptation of *Hetty Feather*. Last month, she celebrated the release of her 100th book, *Opal Plumstead*: set in 1914, it examines alienation and change by drawing on both the First World War and Suffragette movement. This coincided with Wilson's appointment as the new Chancellor of Roehampton University in London, where she has been a Professorial Fellow since 2008.

Discussing children's literature may seem simpler, more innocent, more buoyant, than the usual scope of a Pelican Poets evening – in the first session of term, we journeyed through everything from Ovid and Dante to Angela Carter and Florence + the Machine. But Jacqueline Wilson is not an author who shies away from sensitive subjects: her body of work addresses themes such as adoption, social care, divorce and loss. Just as her books synthesise entertainment with serious social education, the evening's discussion was complex, political and insightful.

The first extract she read, from her novel *Midnight*, explored the difficulties of adolescence through the love-hate sibling relationship of the protagonist Violet. Once the hurdle of discussing Wilson's writing in front of her was overcome – her first appeal for “any comments?” yielded nothing but an awkward laugh – a variety of reflections concerning family, privacy and even gender roles were unearthed. She also read an extract from *Hetty Feather*, which she wrote in cohesion with the Foundling Museum in London. The fact that a

commercially successful children's book can be centred on 19th century poverty, and successfully introduce children to the complexities of identity is a credit to both Wilson's writing and her ambition.

The discussion moved on to other children's texts: a wide range from Susan Coolidge's 1872 novel *What Katy Did* to Karen McCombie's *Ally's World Series*. It sparked a plethora of responses – commentary and fond memory. The portrayal of disability in children's literature was considered, for example, why literature plays an important role in showing children the differences and, most importantly, the similarities between those with and without impairment. The necessity for children's writing – including Wilson's own – to develop in accordance with a contemporary audience was a key issue raised. Wilson admitted that it was sometimes easier to write about children in the past than in the present, as a true reflection of today would involve far more Facebook and Twitter than makes for an interesting story. The representation of ethnic minorities in kids' books was identified as a key way to move forward, with the current inequality described as purporting a skewed view of self and society that childhood should be free from.

The evening brought together students present and past, freshers and fellows, readers and writers, through revisiting the moments of childhood wonder that stories provided. By discussing literature about childhood as well as books personally associated with our own childhoods, I began to recognise a sense of childhood's context-transcending magic. Literature is a way of reconnecting with memories, and it's for this reason that writers like Jacqueline Wilson earn such special distinction.

Frances Myatt revisits her favourite childhood characters

Illustration: Ben Waters

Do you remember that age, far back in the mists of time, when you used to be able to read for fun? When going to the library was accompanied by a feeling of excitement and discovery, rather than a sense of mounting panic, because your essay is due tomorrow and you haven't opened a single book yet?

If you do not look back on those heady days with wistful nostalgia, I am afraid you and I will have to part company for the rest of this article. For the rest of us though, only one question remains – how to recapture our lost childhood in the face of encroaching age? The answer is, “elementary, my dear Watson.”

There are few pleasures greater in life than snuggling up with your favourite children's book on a chilly winter's evening. The *Paddington Bear* books, with their gorgeous illustrations by Peggy Fortnum, are a personal favourite of mine, so imagine my delight when I heard that a new *Paddington* book is being published in November.

This volume of letters from *Paddington* to his Aunt Lucy should definitely be on any cultured person's Christmas list, as should the *Rupert Bear* annuals, with their charmingly

old fashioned drawings. Last year was the first that I didn't receive a *Rupert Bear* annual for Christmas. The level of my disappointment was beyond belief. To fill this *Rupert*-shaped Christmas void, I had to cheer myself up by reading some other childhood favourites, namely *Katie Morag* by Mairi Hedderwick and Aileen Paterson's *Maisie* books.

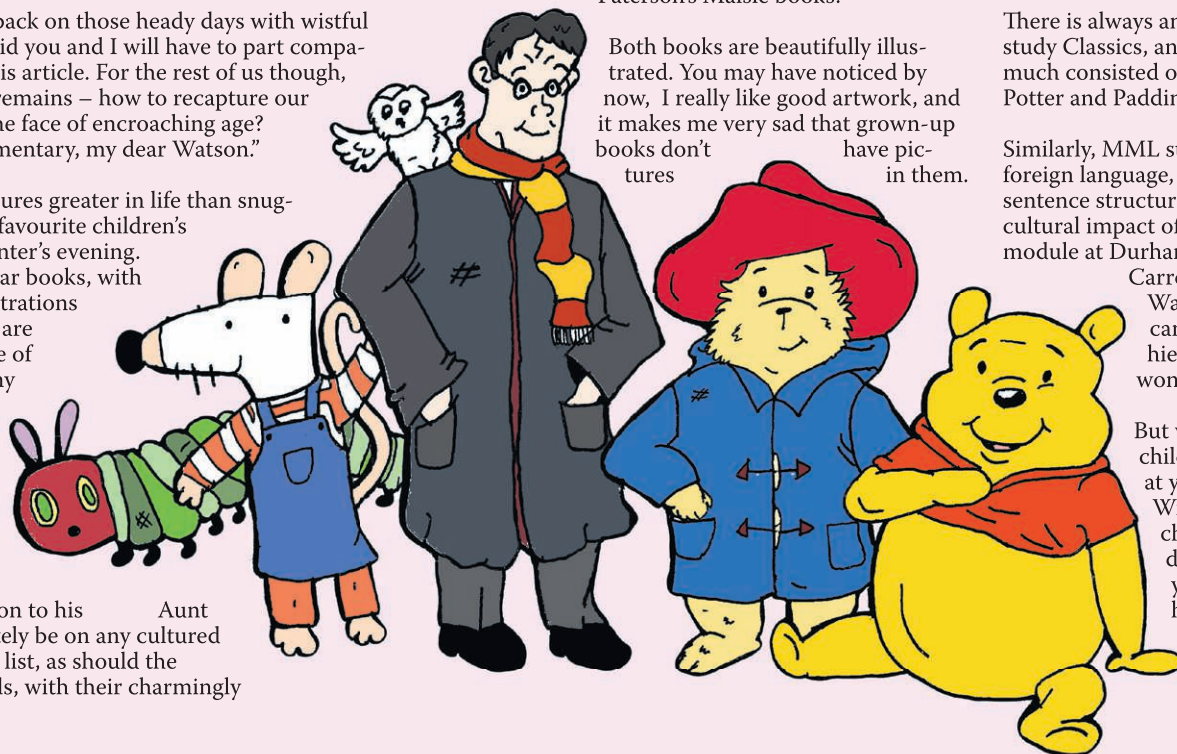
Both books are beautifully illustrated. You may have noticed by now, I really like good artwork, and it makes me very sad that grown-up books don't have pictures in them.

Even my beloved *Harry Potter* books have an acute lack of pictures, which is a shame, because they are otherwise perfect in every way. However, I must admit that I haven't actually read the *Harry Potter* books since they first came out – because who would read them when you can listen to Stephen Fry do it for you?

There is always an excuse for reading children's books. I study Classics, and my ‘work’ during the summer pretty much consisted of reading *Winnie the Pooh*, *Harry Potter* and *Paddington Bear* in Latin.

Similarly, MML students can read kids' books in a foreign language, English students can analyse their sentence structure, Education students can study the cultural impact of *Harry Potter* (which is genuinely a module at Durham), and theologians can critique Lewis Carroll's *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*. For Archaeology students, you can even get *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* in hieroglyphics, which might be the most wonderful thing I have ever seen.

But who really needs an excuse to read children's books? If anyone looks askance at you when you're re-reading *The Worst Witch* for the eighteenth time, lift your chin and simply ignore them. I have no doubt that *Paddington* would say it is your solemn duty to give them a very hard stare.



for or against? THE RISE OF Clip Culture

Millie Paine and Hana Gudelis discuss the pros and cons of the six-second video

Clip culture is a valid form of the screen

There's something about clip culture that has got this generation hooked. The technological revolution, and the rise of social media, has led to an entirely new platform for creative expression. Websites like YouTube and Vimeo and apps like Vine mean that just about anybody with an internet connection and some initiative can make their work – using the term fairly loosely in some cases – available to an extensive global audience. There is something undeniably appealing about having easy access to short, watchable and often pretty amazing material that fits right into your study breaks. This is true whether we're talking a creative and skilfully made short film or four seconds of a panda sneezing. Inevitably, the popularity of clip-based websites has lead many

to worry about what exactly our increasing dependence on the internet and technology is doing to art. Is it really possible to communicate anything meaningful or worthwhile in a few minutes or even seconds? We'd better hope so because many of us have given up on the idea of sitting down to digest a long-form film. But I think worrying about this misses the point.

Surely even the attempt to entertain or to convey a more serious point in such a short and accessible form in fact stimulates some to explore new avenues of creativity that we haven't seen before in long-form films and traditional media. Granted, remixes of Tish's infamous 'in my Mum's car' video to the tune of Harry Potter can hardly be deemed artistic brilliance, but

the sheer popularity of viral videos and vines alike seems to prove that something need not be more than six seconds long to serve a purpose and gain recognition.

What's more, it's not all piano playing cats and laughing babies – there are some pretty brilliant and creative YouTube videos out there, including short films and amateur music videos (just watch anything from the Future Shorts channel). These can be attributed to the democratisation of media stimulated by the ease of making and sharing videos with the internet. Clip culture, contrary to popular opinion, has actually paved the way to a new wave of creative thought, which is no less valuable than previous trends in art and cinema.

Millie Paine

We don't take film seriously

Clip culture is an example of the wider denigration of screen media from high-art to mindless entertainment.

In an environment where we barely have time to go to the gym – that's my excuse anyway – the thought of reserving two-and-something hours to appreciate a film is becoming harder. Unless it is to turn off our minds and enjoy a plethora of special effects and previously anticipated plot twists (à la Breaking Bad and Homeland), YouTube and its culture of short clips of cats prevail as the surest method of squandering away our free time.

It seems odd that we can easily while away two hours on YouTube and Vine, attempting to avoid that dreaded essay, and yet we don't seem to be able to sit down and appreciate film in the same way

that we do literature. We studied English in school, giving it an academic credibility that is not always associated with cinema. Perhaps this is because film is a relatively new art form. But this should not mean that we take literature more seriously. In my opinion, Fight Club was better as a film than a book. And there is plenty of innovation outside of mainstream cinema; just look at the films at the Palme D'Or at the Cannes Film Festival each year.

Then again, maybe it comes down to what we're looking for when we seek out entertainment in our down time. As students, maybe we are tired of thinking. We just want to watch Mean Girls, or binge on Netflix and epic fail montages.

Yet it seems that our attention spans are continuously diminishing,

to the point where watching The Godfather seems like an unbearable task we'd rather not confront (speaking from experience). Tarantino might have his fair share of violence, action and catchy music – things we would consider surefire ingredients to grab audiences' attention – but even his work requires the thought and attention that simply isn't necessary when watching a vlogger's mindless ramblings on a Sunday afternoon.

It's not that I'm coming at you from a higher intellectual pedestal. Not at all, my favourite film is Ali G and I'm not immune to the attraction of four second videos of pandas sneezing. I just wonder whether YouTube, Vine and 'clip culture' have altered the way we appreciate film, and whether this should be reconsidered.

Hana Gudelis



Move bitch!

Can hip-hop ever be feminist?

by Gabrielle McGuinness



Like many in Cambridge, I proudly define myself as a feminist and probably (to some of my peers' dismay) bring this topic into conversation on a daily basis. But I have an ostensibly un-feminist confession to make: I love rap and hip-hop. This is no trivial 'guilty pleasure' that I can laugh off, but an insatiable addiction and genuine artistic appreciation for the genre. Some would say that the misogynistic elements of rap should put me off, at least until it cleans up its act; but I cannot help but be enticed by the rebellious spirit of rap.

My second confession is that I've gotten into the habit of intentionally playing Ludacris's 'Move Bitch' as I cycle around Cambridge, as an attempt to temper my bubbling frustration at the ever-lingering tourists. My normal attitude towards the word 'bitch' is one of fervent disapproval because it is routinely used to dehumanise women and to strengthen male power. So why do I suddenly find it acceptable where music is concerned?

Don't get me wrong, I acknowledge that rap music is partially responsible for intensifying sexist 'lad culture' by making derogatory phrases commonplace and acceptable. I'm also disgusted by the portrayal of women in rap music videos – an invariable arrangement of scantily clad women who are the (often literal) objects of sexual desire for the pleasure of one man.

However, if you approach rap and hip hop considering its origins and sustained importance as a black art form, it can be viewed as a symbol of rebellion against oppression and discrimination. This subliminal sentiment is one with which women can associate, if we hang on through the immediate and abrasive chauvinism of the lyrics. It could just be that I am Cambridge's worst feminist; but, there is something empowering about the passionate determination of the rap mentality.

If we momentarily ignore the misogyny and illicit behaviour associated with rap's bad reputation, there's a lot to be said for its social value. For all its aggression, it is a heartfelt and honest form of expression. Through his wryly debauched lyrics, Eminem welcomes us into the depths of his neurosis; Jay-Z opens up his painful 'rags to riches' story telling us, "I'm from the school of hard knocks"; Notorious dedicates his album to the "teachers that said I'd never amount to nothin'". Good rappers speak about their personal experience of overcoming human suffering in a shockingly honest and direct way, which creates a profound intimacy between listener and rapper.

At the same time, rap can offer an important critique of our society. Kendrick Lamar denounces the way our culture glamorises alcoholism – the mindless obsession that many people have with drinking "a pool full of liquor". Wu-Tang Clan lament the way "cash rules everything around me," conveying a sense of disillusionment with the corruption in society.

We could even say, if we're being generous, that the sexism found in hip-hop reflects and parodies the attitudes of our patriarchal society. Maybe I am trying to find socially responsible reasons for my obsession in order to quell my feminist guilt, but the fact remains that hip-hop is more than just a bit of fun; the genre cannot be denounced as wholly sexist. There is emotional and philosophical depth behind its offensive language.

Admittedly, hip-hop and rap do suffer from being incredibly testosterone-fuelled fields. They seem to me to be comprised mainly of men trying to boost their own egos in order to overcompensate for deep insecurities about their masculinity, which has some pretty problematic results. And even where we do find a few women in this industry, like Nicki Minaj and Iggy Azalea, the content of their songs and music videos, which both

focus on their physical appearance, encourages us to take them less seriously as artists. Then again, consumers also have a patronising tendency to view female rap artists as malleable marionettes controlled by the music industry, rather than skilled artists with creative freedom. This hinders the artists' careers further.

Rather than dismissing rap as an irredeemable loss for the feminist cause, we need to encourage more abundant and more favourable female representation in rap music. It is a largely untapped platform for feminist discourse, but it could be a great one. For this women must be able to use rap music to candidly express their own emotions and social comments in the way men do and male rappers must be deterred from writing lyrics that degrade women.

The music industry is a powerful one. If misogynist attitudes that rap regularly dishes were tempered, it could alter the perceptions of gender amongst a generation thanks to rap's current monopoly over popular culture and thus over social attitudes, particularly amongst the impressionable young.

Undeniably, a massive reason behind my obsession with rap is its revolutionary, 'Fuck the police', anti-establishment spirit, which will always appeal to the unfairly underrepresented of any generation, and this includes women.

Granted, it is often disgustingly violent and repressive towards women in ways one cannot ignore. Rap was never meant to slot into that neat space in your Dad's record collection right next to Simon & Garfunkel; it was meant to be offensive and controversial. Rap speaks its mind frankly and then it gets right back up on its feet when it's criticised for 'fighting the power'. These are powerful, and familiar, tactics. There may be more of a feminist streak in rap than meets the eye.

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There's no place like home

Elsa Maishman ponders homesickness in Cambridge

There's an old Irish proverb, *Níl aon tinteán mar do thinteán féin*. Literally this translates as "there's no hearth like your own hearth," or, more commonly, as "there's no place like home." I must confess that I don't speak Irish fluently, but after 12 years of compulsory lessons I'm fond enough of the language to miss having people to practice it with. As anyone living on my staircase will tell you, I have a YouTube playlist of songs translated into Irish which I tend to blast out whenever I'm feeling particularly homesick.

When new friends ask where I'm from, the easiest answer is "Dublin". In truth, I live just south of the capital in a small village most people have never heard of. Actually, it's more of a collection of houses, lacking the amenities that would earn it the title of "village".

Its main claim to fame is that it is charmingly situated next to the N11, the giant motorway running from the outskirts of Dublin all the way down the south coast to County Wexford. In this way, I suppose, we get the "best of both worlds" – as we get the trees and open spaces of the countryside, while still being within reach of the centre of Dublin city in half an hour.

I've never lived in a city before (yes, to me Cambridge is a city), so I'm delighted to be within walking distance of shops, clubs and other people my age. On the flip side, I miss the oddly therapeutic drive to and from school every day. The problem with

living in a city is that there are people everywhere – at home I could go for an hour-long walk and not see a soul. Emmanuel College has an impressive wildlife population, from ducks and squirrels to surprisingly large fish, but nothing can quite make up for the lack of birdsong and clean morning air.

Living beside a farm at home, I was also used to hearing the sounds of livestock. In fact, I became so accustomed to it that, for the first three weeks of living here, I would occasionally hear the lowing of cows from my room at Emma, only to eventually realise that it was the sound of a door swinging shut, rather than that of cattle on St. Andrew's Street. I must admit that on more than one occasion I have searched YouTube for 'cows mooing' and nearly cried at the bittersweet homesickness that the noise provokes.

It would be terribly clichéd of me to mention the 'friendliness' of Irish people. It's one of the most oft-cited characteristics of the locals, and something everyone from Ireland always claims to miss. But clichés develop for a reason. A few days ago I was cycling alone at night when a man approached me – it felt like the beginning of a horror story. But when he asked me for directions in a thick Limerick accent I couldn't help feeling an illogical sense of relief. We chatted about Ireland for a while, and when I cycled past him on my way home later that week, he remembered me and stopped to say hello. Maybe I'm biased in my homesickness, but English people really don't



seem as eager to talk to strangers.

When an English friend and I stopped at an ATM late one night, I wandered over to talk to the man giving out flyers for a nightclub while she was busy getting cash. It seemed like a boring job and he was happy to chat for a while. At home in Ireland, we tend to talk to everyone and

anyone, making a string of temporary 'friends' that we may or may not see ever again. And yet, over here, my English friend was astounded that I would be so 'forward' as to approach a stranger for a chat.

I love being in Cambridge. The shock of having made it here still hasn't worn off, and I often find myself

wandering around my college musing over how lucky I am. I wouldn't wish to be anywhere else, but that doesn't stop me missing home – the people, the language, the countryside, the buses, the trains, even the dodgy combination of dairy milk chocolate with Tayto cheese and onion crisps, which no-one here seems to understand.

Cooking up a storm

Lucy Roxburgh on her alternative gap year



"So you didn't 'find yourself' on a beach in Thailand?"

This is one of the most common questions asked when I reveal that, before starting my History degree, I spent my gap year training to be a chef at Leiths School of Food and Wine in London – a world nearly as unique as Cambridge and just as much of a bubble.

The first week of cookery school was a baptism of fire (not literally, although I certainly had my fair share of kitchen calamities over the year) as we donned our chefs whites straight away and began cooking. Chefs whites – checked trousers, neckties, hats and all – are a tricky look for anybody to pull off (but surprisingly comfy) and wearing them proved to be quite the bonding experience, as we all mourned the disappearance of the old, glamorous versions of ourselves, which we wouldn't be seeing again until graduation ten months later.

Lesson one involved learning how to hold a knife. A basic, but fundamental lesson, that proves vital when handling a shiny set of new, and incredibly sharp, blades. Throughout the months, my fellow trainees and I increased in skill level, moving from cooking family food in the first term, to gastropub food, and finally, to Michelin star-standard cooking.

While at cookery school, you become totally immersed in the world of food – if you're not making it, you're watching someone else do so; if you're not eating it, you're waiting for the plate to reach you.

Days were divided into demonstrations and practical sessions, but no two lessons were the same. Sometimes, I'd wind up having deep fried brains for breakfast. Sometimes, a morning wine lecture meant I'd have tried six different glasses of champagne before midday. I became perfectly accustomed to eating five different soufflés in a

morning demonstration, a two-course lunch cooked by another class, a causal 4pm snack of veal steak and potato rosti – and then, of course, dinner as usual.

I also quickly learnt to ignore the confused stares of other public transport passengers when they could smell a Thai marinated mackerel, or golden syrup steamed pudding, on their journey home. They were used to it (and me) by the end of the year. Among the plethora of useful (and some less useful) skills I mastered at Leiths, I learned how to gut fish, pluck pheasants, artistically plate endless salads, roll pasta from scratch, make nine types of pastry, four types of ice cream and three types of meringue.

When my time at Leiths was over, I was sorry for it. Arriving in Cambridge was terrifying – the longest exam question I'd faced in the past year was 'give six points on the perfect cheese soufflé', and now I needed to write a 2,500-word essay every

week! Plus, when word spreads that you are a trained chef, people expect a lot more than pasta when they pop by for dinner. Living in halls, where my kitchen has no oven and there is just enough space for two people, (provided you know each other pretty well) the amount of time I spend cooking has dramatically diminished. My electric whisk remains in its packaging and Fitzbillies has temporarily replaced my homemade baking.

Nevertheless, I'm struck by the similarities between the worlds of Leiths and Cambridge. In both places, you become completely absorbed in what you are learning and experiencing, to the exclusion of almost everything outside that sphere. You are pushed to excel and constantly improve yourself. And you have the opportunity to make lifelong friends and ride on an unique emotional rollercoaster. In some ways, my year at Leiths prepared me for Cambridge, although no-one's asked me for my Béarnaise recipe just yet...

Drinking Britain Dry

Lucy Morgan compares the drinking culture in the UK to her home country of Singapore

At university, we're supposed to go a little crazy, right? Because when you're old you won't remember the nights you stayed in and went to bed early. But for all the warnings I'd been given about English drinking culture, I was not prepared.

In Singapore, going out on a Sunday or Wednesday was practically unheard of. People were too concerned about waking up early for school, or catching one of the last buses home. And while Cambridge might not be a high school, or even big enough to warrant catching a bus, the consistency with which students here choose clubbing over their courses would have been unheard of back home.

It's not only the attitudes – high taxes on alcohol in Singapore means that getting drunk on a budget is seriously challenging. Even in the weeks of post-exam celebration, my friends and I didn't come close to drinking as much as some of my Cambridge friends seem to do on a weekly basis.

Leaving aside the potentially skewed representation of Cambridge swaps and drinking societies, British drinking culture is overwhelmingly different to anything else I have experienced. Maybe it is just university life, but I get the impression that my friends in Canada and Asia are not going out nearly as often.

I expected that in Cambridge, much like Singapore, people would put academics before everything else. But no one bats an eyelid when 9am lectures and impending deadlines are brushed aside, as students down their drinks and order another. At first glance, I thought this was indicative of a complete disregard for the future, but upon closer inspection I have

realised that it's a deep-seated cultural phenomenon.

I won't assume to fully understand British drinking, but one reason for its ubiquity seems quite simple – cost. From an international perspective, alcohol here is cheap, which makes consumption substantially easier. Binge drinking is obviously made feasible by low prices too. It seems to be the norm to end up drunk and in search of a club in the early hours of the morning, even while knowing that waking up the next day will be torture.

Contrary to the popular trope, however, it's not just binge drinking – there are a plethora of options for socialising which centre around alcohol. People have become inured to the idea of drinking at every event. Watching football or even sitting at dinner, I've gotten more than one strange look when I ask for something non-alcoholic. Is it possible that people in Britain enjoy the taste of cheap wine and beer more than any other country? Personally, I think that's an absurd suggestion. But people in Britain, much like in the rest of Europe, have grown up drinking sips of alcohol at the dinner table with their parents. Getting hammered is almost a rite of passage. This idea is unheard of in Singaporean culture, where getting drunk is something for the immature, the western visitors and the

lower class.

Yet, Cantabrigians aren't just in search of inebriation. In the perpetual insularity of Cambridge, I've quickly realised that clubs are one of, if not the only, hot-bed for romantic relations, meaning almost every night there are people drawn to them, in search of a good time, a little company, and the type of fun they won't remember the next day. It would be easy to mindlessly follow these crowds, which is what many new students seem to enjoy doing. However, in doing so, it becomes

clear - getting drunk in Britain is about so much more than just drinking, it is the centre of most students' social, romantic and college lives.

My transition from one societal norm to this one has been a complicated experience. Fear of missing out has pushed me to overindulge: a decision which has generated somewhat mixed results. While a few of my favourite nights out have ended mere hours before the sun rises, if every evening and subsequent morning follows this same drunk and hungover pattern, other things will certainly go amiss. Such as my degree. Somehow, I'll have to find the balance between these alien drinking cultures... wish me luck.





Blank Canvas

Direction: David Godwin / Models: Jules Pars, Alys Williams, Isabel Adomakoh-Young / Photos: Barney Couch / Makeup by Olivia Galvin



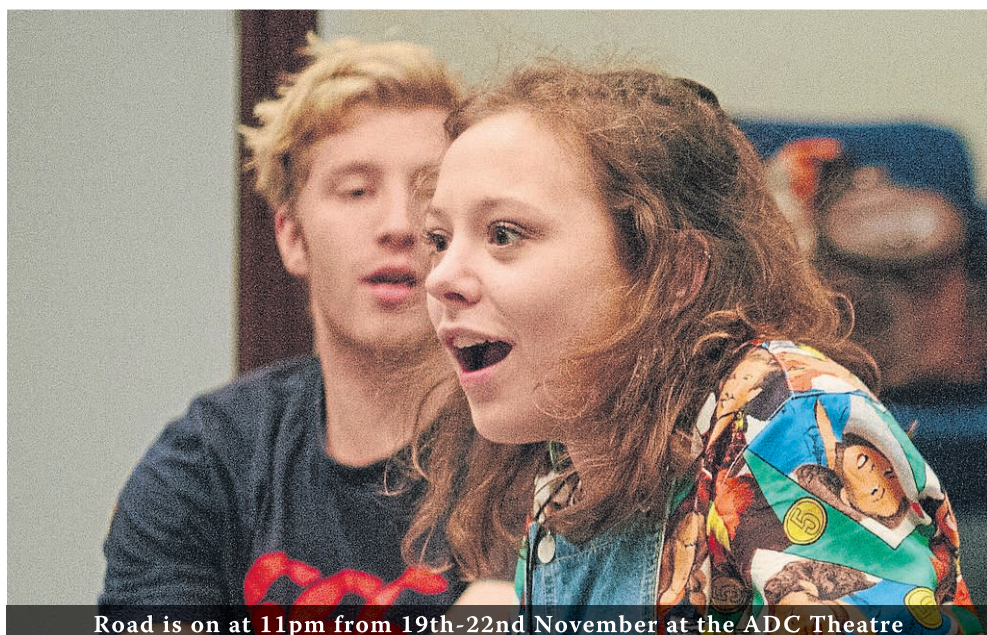
THE FRESHERS' SHOWS

Every year CUADC puts on three shows, entirely staged by freshers – this year Varsity has sent its newest writers to check out this fresh dramatic talent

Road

by Jim Carwright

Isabel Lowe-Zinola previews this tragic, raw, and gritty production



Road is on at 11pm from 19th-22nd November at the ADC Theatre

Even in a production as collaborative as this, there seems to be disagreement amongst the cast, crew and directors about how best to describe the concept and events in *Road*. However, they all agree that it is “a state of the nation piece”. Set on Lancashire Street in 1980s northern England, the play leads its audience along the road, presenting “snapshots” of its inhabitants’ lives.

The characters are described by co-director Kaiti Soultana (alongside Lucy Moss) as “the victims” of their society. “They are the very scum who are suffering the most. That’s what they’re symbolic of.” The cast see the characters as “rejected” and “ignored”, as they wrestle with dissatisfaction at the way their lives have turned out and their powerlessness to change them.

Given the obvious juxtaposition of depicting working class poverty within the “high privilege” of Cambridge, the directors believe it is “a brave play to put on here, for this type of audience.” However, whatever audience reactions may be, they aren’t looking for sympathy. Their aim is to show what “was and what still is”. Katurah Morrish, (playing Louise) tells me of the realistic yet bleak “sense of cycle” the play leaves us with – although set in the 80s, it is undoubtedly still relevant.

The self-confidence of the team is striking when questioned about how they feel putting on a freshers’ play in the daunting Cambridge theatre scene. Joe Pitts (playing Joey and Curt) says that “just because we’re freshers, doesn’t mean we’re not part of that excitement. I don’t feel daunted, I feel energised. It’s such a powerful play, I think it’s apparent in our acting that we all love it.” However, Soultana acknowledges that the show does pose a chance “to prove ourselves” and Morrish admits to some of the particular challenges a freshers’ play poses, such as organisation and time management.

Producer Lola Seaton suggests that the team come up with three words to describe the show. I am presented with: “best freshers’ play...tragic...raw...gritty, hard, powerful” and “heartbreaking” (a description which prompts debate amongst the cast). However, all are certain that the piece remains “very funny”, having already provoked tears of laughter during rehearsals.

Watching rehearsals, it is clear that *Road*’s structure is far from simple, presenting us instead with what Lola describes as “layers of images”. This is particularly clear in scenes such as a skinhead’s passionate monologue. On this sense of harsh realism, Martha Murphy (playing Carol, Lane, and Valerie), commented that “I don’t think many people are going to be able to... see this play, and not feel uncomfortable in at least half of it”.

The cast and director have faced some practical issues in realising their vision. Accents seem something of a challenge, as not only is mastering a broad Lancashire dialect essential, but some of the actors play up to five or six different characters so have to create multiple tonalities to differentiate between them. The time constraints of a late show have also posed problems – much of the play has had to be cut, but the team are confident that the script’s unusual structure means the show will still be just as effective.

So what will you come away with after viewing *Road*? Clearly, this question can only be truly answered by actually going to see it, but I am assured that it is “a rollercoaster of emotions” that will challenge its audience to look at society in different and multiple ways. A case in point is the humorous yet highly uneasy scene where an older woman takes home a very drunk young man. Jonah Hauer-King (playing Scullery) asserts, “it’s not going to make you feel uplifted”, but such is the complexity of this play that the directors disagree: “it could do.”

Isabel Lowe-Zinola



The CUADC freshers’ shows have become a permanent feature in the ADC Theatre’s programming: everyone involved (cast/directors/producers/technicians/designers) has never worked on a Cambridge show before. As part of the Varsity Freshers’ edition, we decided to send our newest writers to meet the teams behind these exciting new productions!

No Way Out

by Jean-Paul Sartre

It seems marvellously ironic that a play which boasts one of Sartre’s most famous and harrowing philosophical lines, “hell is other people”, should be put on by a team so friendly and supportive of one another. I’ve dragged them out of bed for a 9am interview, but they all greet me with sparkling enthusiasm, eager to discuss the “menace” of the play and its “psychotic” characters.

No Way Out is an intimate, emotional play following three sinners’ banishment to hell and their sinister journey to self understanding. It grapples boldly with issues of existentialism, identity, freedom and suffering, not forgetting a particularly potent love triangle as well.

Director Nick Ashurst explains that he chose to direct this play because of his love for “the idea of the small, intimate space at Corpus”, together with the “darker stuff” contained in the script. Certainly, there is nowhere to hide in this hell – Ashurst cites particular inspiration from Jamie Lloyd’s production of *Richard III*, starring Morgan Freeman, and its ability to harness “the general enclosing feel” of the stage and the “intensity...of the actions beyond the script”.

Tom Chamberlain, playing Joseph Garcin, agrees, commenting that “it turns out hell is a room, just a room, nothing special about it... what makes it hellish is the way... [the characters] interact with each other, the dynamics between them...there are undercurrents of violence and threat without it being obvious”. Feeling excited yet?

It gets better: I get the thrilling impression that this play, while staged by the newest to Cambridge life, is far from PG. In fact, one of Zoscher Partos’s first moves as producer was to raise its age rating from 12 to 16. Nick tells me “it’s a bold production...we don’t exactly hold back” and that the hardest part of rehearsals has been “getting past certain inhibitions” in the “steamy, raunchy scenes”.

However, Chamberlain and Riss Obolensky, playing Inès Serrano, insist that “it’s actually been very easy” and that although “we’ve taken it further, perhaps, than Sartre would have done...maybe (he) would have gone as far as we have in a modern context”. It seems entirely appropriate that, whilst diving into the new adventure that is Cambridge theatre, these freshers have also

cast an equally adventurous modern light on this play.

Much of our chat focuses on their experience of Cambridge theatre so far. The words “fun” and “exciting” come up again and again, and not just from the cast; both producer and assistant ooze with enthusiasm for their positions. Partos tells me with laughter that “the set designer called me yesterday, saying, ‘I’ve found a sofa!’ It was very exciting!”

I also get to hear about the wonderful “tour of Cambridge” they’ve had whilst rooting out rehearsal spaces. Chamberlain reckons “there aren’t many colleges we haven’t rehearsed in... we even rehearsed in someone’s bedroom!”

I am impressed by their spirit and commitment towards theatre, with Ashurst admitting to “working six or seven hours a day... normally four hours on rehearsals... I’ll meet a techie and then work on the script for at least an hour”. Merely imagining that commitment alongside a Cambridge degree exhausts me, but Ashurst has enjoyed the experience so much he has already applied to direct another play next term. In fact, they all look at me as if I’m slightly crazy to even ask whether they will do it again; they are all wonderfully infected with the Cambridge theatre bug already.

I ask them each to sum up the play in one word and Chamberlain has no trouble, opting instantly for “intense”. The rest of the list is tantalising: “cruel... grotesque... sadistic”. Vicki Bowden, the assistant producer, brings us to hysterics, offering up her personal experience with fantastic honesty: “laminating!”

However, they can’t emphasise enough that, despite the “sinister, very powerful shock moments”, it’s “more than a thought provoker, it’s just a great night in theatre, that’s the goal”. Indeed, Sam Knights, playing the smaller part of the waiter and impressively juggling it alongside this year’s freshers’ comedy, is keen to point out the flashes of dark humour. It’s not all agonising, there are several moments of “light relief” and there is something “innately funny” in a very dark way about the idea that hell is only in the people around you.

I leave, enlivened by their energy, and with no doubt that they will use it to pull off this fantastically challenging play.

Holly Hampton

Stella Pryce chats
with the team behind
this 1930s farce

You Can't Take It With You

by George Kaufman and Moss Hart

Farcical comedy is a genre not unfamiliar to Cambridge; indeed the slapstick yet intelligent sketches of the Footlights are world-renowned. Thus, when confronted with a play like this, one instantly wonders – what's new? What does this play offer that Cambridge students have yet to see? While this may seem a daunting prospect for an entirely fresher cast, Frank Martin and Enrico Hallworth (directors of *You Can't Take It With You*) are not fazed. Martin is quick to tell me, "It's incredibly exciting and... such a unique opportunity." And Hallworth surely adds, "it's the way Cambridge works, everything is fast paced... but that is what makes it so exciting!"

The Cambridge theatrical scene can be terrifying. As a first year I have already spent hours scrolling through the never-ending audition listings. It is clear that the team behind *You Can't Take It With You* appreciate the sheer newness of their environment; Heather Fantham (lead cast member) notes that "being confined to such a short amount of time means you have to work so much faster".

Co-director Frank Martin agrees, "It's a massive step up but I think that's what motivates you to put the effort in. The ridiculously high standards of Cambridge theatre are what makes you try so hard to make it good!"

The play takes place inside the house of an eccentric 1930s New York family. In tone the piece lies somewhere between extreme comedy,

humility and joy. Martin tells me, "I think that what we are trying to convey both through the humour and the moments of greater profundity is that sense of joyfulness that exists in the household... The message behind it... is about finding that joy in life".

Continuing our discussion of comedy, Hallworth notes, "I think a particular challenge with this show is keeping the humour really fresh, because at this point it is quite dated and the risk with any comedy when you have rehearsed it many, many times is for the jokes to become a bit stale".

I ponder over the highly specific setting of the play and wonder how they intend to bring it to life. For Martin, "the text and the setting is provided by the language itself." This does, however, include the use of space, set and costume; he tells me how excited the team were when they received the first mock-up design of the set. Their main concern, he tells me, was that the aesthetics should reflect "the quirky chaos of the play itself".

Despite the trials and tribulations of the Cambridge theatrical scene, it is clear that the entire cast of this play are hugely enthused by the opportunity. It was evident in rehearsal that the subtleties of the farce genre are to be explored in depth, with an understanding of character and comic timing. This performance will be an extremely exciting and fresh piece of student theatre, definitely one to watch out for.

Stella Pryce



You Can't Take It With You is on at 7.45pm from 18th-22nd November at the ADC Theatre



No Way Out is on at 7pm from 18th-22nd November at the Corpus Playroom

The Mays #23

Applications are open to edit the 2015 Mays Anthology, the collection of the best student writing and artwork from Cambridge and Oxford.

Interested candidates should email mays@varsity.co.uk

The Mays, formerly the May Anthologies, are published annually by Varsity. The editor or editors will assemble a committee of students to invite fiction and non-fiction submissions of prose, poetry and drama, as well as illustration and photography. The committee also appoints guest editors from the literary world. The Mays is famous for having launched the career of Zadie Smith and previous guest editors have included Jarvis Cocker, Ted Hughes, Ian Patterson, amongst others.

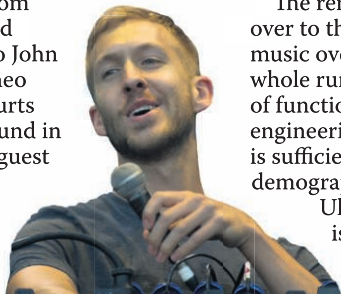
CALVIN HARRIS MOTION



Releasing albums has become an anachronism to much of the music industry. Nowhere is this more obvious than on Calvin Harris' new release *Motion* – an album which is not only littered with potential chart-topping anthems but in which the formula used to construct these pop monstrosities is transparently shown off.

The album is unashamedly repetitive with nearly every track starting with a star vocalist giving their eight lines, before being overwhelmed by white noise and searing synth lead lines when the track drops. It is quite remarkable just how similar a cast ranging from Gwen Stefani and Ellie Goulding to John Newman and Theo Hutchcraft of *Hurts* all manage to sound in their respective guest slots.

The mould is, however,



broken on *Slow Acid*, the album's only nod to dance music beyond EDM, and *Pray To God*, where HAIM and co-producer Ariel Rechtshaid succeed in stamping their disco inflected mark, and those two tracks end up being the album's singular highlights.

The remaining 13 tracks are given over to the same big room dance music over and over again so that the whole runtime of 56 minutes reeks of functionality and commercial engineering. Even the album title is sufficiently bland to appeal to all demographic target markets.

Ultimately, the album's failure is more indicative of the

way people consume music being so completely out of step with typical industry practice. This was never intended to be a comprehensive artistic statement, more a delivery mechanism for the latest batch of YouTube and club smashes.

Ordinarily, that would be OK, and you could ignore the vapid lyrics and nondescript packaging and concentrate on its dancefloor chops.

But even on those terms, the standard isn't near where it needs to be: gone is the slightly unhinged sense of fun on the landmark album *18 Months*, and in its place is a zeitgeist-chasing set of tracks that

are pitch perfect in their delivery and completely and utterly uninteresting. *Motion* feels stage-managed, cold and fake. It feels like it is taking its audience for suckers.

That's not say it fails at what it aims for: Calvin Harris knows how to make a club banger, and a perfectly formed one at that. So don't feel guilty about dancing like a loon to *Summer* when the chorus gets its 40 seconds in *Cindies*. But don't waste any of your own time expecting better from this vacuous, vapid album. Even when it shouts at its loudest, it has nothing to say.

Michael Davin

FRESHER MIX TAPES

RELAXATION – Ben Waters

1. James Blake - *Retrograde*

There probably aren't many things more soothing than James's falsetto warble. The song's ghostly sparseness and soaringly synth-heavy climax will either have you unwinding in seconds or cause your ovaries to spontaneously tremble and sing out in joy (I don't speak from experience for the second one).

2. Bon Iver - *Holocene*

On this track, Justin Vernon croons "I could see for miles." While such calm foresight isn't exactly typical at Cambridge, you can at least live vicariously through the man for the song's five minutes and allow its sonic river of cooling melodies to rinse you clean of all your anxiety.

3. Radiohead - *Giving Up The Ghost*

One of the most homespun and stripped back pieces by Radiohead. Here, an effortless mixture of piping, faded vocals and rickety acoustic loops will slowly but surely lull you into a state of rustic calm.

4. Bibio - *Lovers' Carvings*

The song starts off with a chirpy array of guitar riffs that wouldn't sound out of place on an obscure Nintendo game. It then bursts into an uplifting and mildly jazzy chorus of spine-tingling liberation. Probably the only song in existence where scat singing is acceptable.

5. Washed Out - *Feel It All Around*

There was probably a point last summer when you spent a carefree afternoon caressing your chest hair while nursing a long island iced tea (or was that just me?). 'Feel It All Around' captures that moment with sun-kissed electronica.

GOING OUT – Tess Davidson

1. Disciples – *They Don't Know*

London based trio Disciples create a mellow house sound that is steady and rhythmic. Perfect for starting out your evening.

2. Tensnake – *Love Sublime* ft Nile Rodgers & Fiora (Duke Dumont Remix)

German producer Tensnake's mellow nu-disco 'Love Sublime' is given a Duke Dumont revamp. The persistent beat combined with distinct piano chords overlaps beautifully with the vocals, creating a much more authoritative sound than the original.

3. Daithi – *Golden blush* (feat. Senita)

Daithi certainly knows how to create a sound worthy of pre-drinks. Hailing from Galway, Ireland, 'Golden Blush' is a glorious house sound. The gradual layering of electronic beats builds up with the piano, adding further soul to the voice of Senita, which hovers above the song like an electronic-induced siren call.

4. Horror Stories – *Flower Power*

West London duo Horror stories create an alternative sound, almost tropical in its bassline and use of percussion. The build-up of sound combined with the minimal vocals adds another dynamic to your evening.

5. Chris Bushnell & Rowland Evans - *She All About*

Bushnell and Evans join ranks to create a resonating, deep house sound that will be sure to kick-start your night. The driving bassline is reinforced by the frequent sounding of a cash-register, the rhythmic pace of the lyrics maintaining the steady pace of the beat.

ESSAY DEADLINE - Tess Davidson

1. Little Comets - *Creeping Up Appearances*

The simple, plaintive vocals of Richard Coles combined with the haunting harmonies of Michael Coles and Matthew Hall of Little Comets blend beautifully with the delicate chords. Gentle and soothing for any essay crisis.

2. Snakadaktal – *The Sun II*

Dream pop at its best. Australian band Snakadaktal lure you in with luscious melodies and floating vocals that are sure to leave you ready for any work or reading due.

3. Jon Allen – *Night and Day*

London based songwriter Jon Allen has a rustic, earthy quality to his voice which is complemented by the simple rhythmic pace of the guitar and percussion. A beautifully simple song that will play nicely in the background and soothe your nerves.

4. Novo Amor – *Holland*

Reminiscent of the fragility of Bon Iver, Novo Amor is a scraped back, contemplative sound, perfect for added reading concentration. The minimal guitar and percussion gently combine with the ethereal vocals, ensuring maximum essay focus.

5. Fossil Collective – *The Water*

UK based band Fossil Collective's main aim was to create a stripped back sound and in 'The Water' EP, this is most certainly achieved. The marriage of vocals and chords against a backdrop of gentle percussion, as with the other songs in the playlist, lends itself to ultimate focus and concentration.

INTERVIEW: O'HOOLEY AND TIDOW

The folk scene is currently experiencing a musical revival that is quite like no other. "It's vibrant", Belinda O'Hooley of the band O'Hooley & Tidow exclaims, "I think its redefining itself."

Nowhere is this rejuvenation of tradition more apparent than in the sound of folk duo, O'Hooley and Tidow. Hailing from Yorkshire, the couple's unique, dynamic sound, as heard in their first two albums *Silent June* (2010) and *The Fragile* (2012), is causing quite a stir in the world of folk.

Described by *The Guardian* as "stunning and delightfully

unconventional", their alternative approach to writing lyrics stems from a "sense of responsibility to our audience", O'Hooley reveals.

Their main focus is society and nature. Referring to their most recent work, *The Hum*, O'Hooley shows evident respect for their folk-song ancestors. However, she explains that "people are looking back on the old ways of doing things but doing them in their own way, in an independent way." She draws reference to one particular track, 'Summat's Brewin', as a prime example of how rebellious their songs can be.

For O'Hooley & Tidow, this sense of subversion is most apparent in relation to corporate companies. In 'Summat's Brewin', they pay tribute to what they see as a "real ale revolution"; the ability of local communities to unite in protest. "There is definitely an energy there", O'Hooley claims, and this is clearly a strong focus of

inspiration for the duo.

In describing their sound, O'Hooley insists that "[w]e are trying to write songs from today", referring to how modern folk music is drawing influence from contemporary surroundings and discovering new paths of expression.

This is particularly evident in their first two albums, where O'Hooley plays the piano. This may not initially seem particularly audacious, yet, the tight confines of the folk tradition meant the duo "soon realised, playing a piano in the folk world was seen as being quite a rebellion." She goes on, "we have gone against tradition by using the piano."

Their ability to push boundaries is reinforced by the influence of their producer, multi-instrumentalist, Gerry Diver, who encouraged them to try a new direction in their sound.

These new alternatives eventually went as far as using a pneumatic drill for a backing track.



Belinda reveals their initial hesitation.

"This was quite a risky thing to do. We like to be in control ourselves." Yet this renewed imagination and ability to change direction was "a real joy to both of us".

There is little doubt that O'Hooley & Tidow are creating new musical parameters for the folk world. When asked if she had any advice to budding folk musicians still at university, Belinda was most vociferous in her support.

To break into folk music is to break into a very niche market indeed, and Belinda advises anyone interested to "find some unique way of performing or writing, something that sets you apart from other people". Her wisdom is most apparent, however, in her closing comments, sure to inspire many generations to come: "If you feel creative and want to say something, do it."

Tess Davidson

JODI PICOULT LEAVING TIME



Despite the author's reputation for writing novels that serve reliably as sun-lounger entertainment, in *Leaving Time* Jodi Picoult surprises with a successful deviation from her typical dramatisation of a family's moral dilemma.

Set against a backdrop of elephant conservation and psychic encounters, my first impression was that

the novel had a strong potential to flop. However, Picoult constructs a genuinely gripping detective story, as we follow 13-year-old Jenna's search for the truth about her mother's disappearance, and concludes with a plot twist that was not, at least to my untrained eye, obvious from the prologue.

Whilst the glaring impracticalities of the novel require a suspension of disbelief (the involvement of both an alcoholic private detective and washed-up psychic in a 13-year-old's somewhat delusional quest smacks of the severely unlikely), the disparate elements of this story fuse together against all the odds to make a

very fulfilling literary whole.

Leaving Time is written from the perspective of each of its main characters, meaning that it does not feel like a 400-page teenage diary – rather, we get to know all of the protagonists in vivid detail during the course of the story.

The lives of each have been defined by turning points, and it is this exploration of individual trauma that makes the novel so successful.

Each character is united by an awareness of their own failings in life and a fear of the past, and their collective sense of loss is a feeling that all readers will be able to identify with.

Intriguingly, the relationships between these characters are mirrored by an unusually in-depth exploration of elephants' cognitive behaviour. Whilst I appreciate that this may not be to everyone's taste, I found that this added an interesting layer to the human emotions that form the backbone of the novel.

The book invokes a genuine discussion on the nature of the grieving process; perhaps it is this preoccupation with death that makes the implausibility of the psychic palatable to the reader.

Either way, the various elements of the story undoubtedly come together through its naturalist qualities.

Ultimately, *Leaving Time* is a worthy break from reading scores of academic literature – but then again, what isn't?

It is not, and does not pretend to be, groundbreaking in its exploration of human nature, but the fact that it incorporates elements of this means Picoult has written more than a simple chick-flick-cum-thriller.

Her characters, as ever, prove likeable and their successful interaction with a story line that at first seems unworkable made the novel surprisingly enjoyable. And if that doesn't sell it to you, maybe the elephants will.

Christie Morrallee

SAY WHEN



I don't quite know how to feel about *Say When*. With the tagline: "a comedy about acting your age and other adult decisions", I was not feeling particularly enthused on the way to Cineworld. But I have to say, I did enjoy it – it's an easy watch, but not one that I would watch again.

Titled 'Laggies' in America, meaning "those who lag behind", the premise of the film is that Megan (Kiera Knightley) is suffering from a 'quarter-life crisis'. She is stuck in a rut: dating the same guy since high school, working for her dad's sign company and having very few plans for the future. She finds solace in Annika Hunter (Chloë Grace

Moretz); a 16 year old who Megan sees as a kindred spirit. They become friends and, in search of escape from her life of adult decisions, Megan ends up having a weeklong sleepover with Annika and, in doing so, almost reverts to adolescence. But wait – there's more, and that's where the 'rom' in 'rom-com' comes in. Annika happens to have a very handsome father, Craig Hunter (Sam Rockwell), who, by chance, is single. He and Megan certainly have chemistry. Will she? Won't she? These questions must be asked. However, despite the definite focus on romance, the film is much more about self-discovery and acceptance.

The plot itself is

ridiculous: what 16 year old girl would allow a 28 year old woman, even if it is Kiera Knightley, to stay for a week long sleepover? But this improbable storyline is delivered in a charming way and the relationship between Megan and Annika is convincing and endearing. Highlights include an absolutely stellar wedding dance to Daniel Bedingfield's 'I Don't Want to Run Away' by Allison, Megan's best friend from high school played by

Ellie Kemper, and the improvised scenes showing the madness of teenage girl existence, between Annika and Misty (Kaitlyn Dever), her school friend. Plus the scenes in which

we see the Hunters' tortoise, which is frankly a great addition to the film.

It's not the most original or inventive movie – there are quite a few clichés – but hey! In choosing to go to a rom-com, you are choosing to be smacked in the face with cliché after cliché, and the director, Lynn Shelton, does it well. It's an admirable performance by Knightley, Rockwell and Moretz. I definitely never imagined Keira Knightley, arguably the nation's sweetheart, with a convincing American accent while skateboarding, but in *Say When* she delivers both. It's a far cry from Lizzie Bennet and Anna Karenina, but not an unwelcome shift. Rockwell is also good, performing the charming male lead commendably. As for Moretz, in a film about acting your age and achievement, there is no one more depressing to see – 17 years old and

already doing ridiculously well, you can understand why Megan wants to spend a week basking in her adolescent glory. Moretz has mastered the art of playing the slightly sullen but endearing teenage girl – definitely a tricky balance. The cast carries the film and I imagine that Knightley's foray into American rom-coms will be successful, although probably not a box office smash.

I don't know whether watching a film about being unemployed, over-qualified and hiding just to escape it all is a good idea half way through term, but *Say When* is engaging enough to make it worth it. Light and amusing, it's easy to enjoy. However, if you are looking for something illuminating or revelatory, I would argue that it probably won't fulfil your expectations.

Xanthe Fuller



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Is doping in cycling finally a thing of the past?

Will professional cycling ever be rid of the culture of doping?

Arnav Kapur
Sport Correspondent

When people think of cycling, one name inevitably pops up: Lance Armstrong – arguably the greatest cheat in the history of professional sport. His name, along with many other cheating cyclists over the past two decades, has left cycling with a tainted image. Think blood transfusions, drug injections and pill popping. But cycling is changing. In time, we will reach a point when we refer to this period as the 'Doping Era'.

The first ever documented cycling race took place in May 1868 in a quaint little park in Paris. From then it quickly took off across most of Europe and cycling became an integral part of culture in France, Italy, Spain and Belgium. Cycling was an accessible and attractive sport. The costs to enter the sport were minimal, once a child had a bike, which they often borrowed from their parents, they could ride for free. It was this success that led to the first Tour De France in 1903, Giro D'Italia (Tour of Italy) in 1909 and Vuelta a España (Tour of Spain) in 1935.

As professional cycling gained popularity, prize money and wages in teams increased to the point where road cycling became a viable career option rather than just a hobby.

However, it wasn't until the early 1990s that the first signs of drug use appeared. The most prevalent of these was EPO (Erythropoietin); this drug would increase the oxygen levels

in the blood and thereby increase maximum lung capacity, enabling these athletes to push themselves further. EPO became widely used during the 1990s but without any test for them, cycling's governing body the UCI (Union Cycliste Internationale – French, naturally) had no way to regulate it. It also posed many risks to the human body – the blood could thicken sufficiently during a period of rest, such as overnight, so much so that lack of blood circulation could lead to death. After a few tragic fatalities, it wasn't uncommon to find professionals waking up in the middle of the night for a quick set of jumping jacks to get the blood pumping again.

The use of other performance-enhancing drugs continued under the radar until it all came to the fore during the 1998 Festina Affair. Festina, the watch company, had sponsored a professional team which in 1998 had a team car checked at a roadblock. Officers were shocked to discover an entire trunk filled with hundreds of vials and syringes for EPO and steroids. Under the police investigation

that ensued, all nine riders confessed to doping and the team was forced to leave the Tour De France prior to starting.

Sadly in professional cycling, doping wasn't restricted to this one team.

A famous cycling doctor, Gérard Gremion, declared that in 1998, 99 per cent of the peloton used doping. It was clear that the Festina Affair was only the tip of the iceberg.

To detail the history of doping and name its athletes would, unfortunately, require more than a newspaper's worth of pages. However, in the years since 1998, prominent names in cycling like Lance Armstrong, David Millar and Alberto Contador have all been banned for the

he was now underperforming and suggested past doping explained his fluctuations. When he was consistent, consistency was challenged.

However, the likes of Froome, Nairo Quintana and Vincenzo Nibali should be believed. Over the past five years, the sport has changed and a new generation are coming up. The

testing procedure for doping has intensified with the victor of a stage, the leader of the general classification and several random riders selected on a daily basis for testing. During the 'off season', the whereabouts of riders is constantly monitored by 'doping control officers' who can make surprise visits at 6am on

your doorstep. Failing twice to appear at the address listed in your journey itinerary is punished with an immediate suspension, even if an adequate explanation can be given.

The UCI, international cycling governing body, have introduced a 'blood' passport, which records the levels of oxygen and certain other chemicals in your blood over the course of your professional career. This enables monitors to identify any fluctuation in chemical levels and thus identify doping.

These changes have been met with praise by experts in the anti-doping field. Teams, in fear of the shame doping brings, now conduct their own internal testing and Team Sky have famously implemented a zero-tolerance policy. This prohibits any rider or staff member with a connection to doping from joining; a harsh but necessary measure. The penalties for doping have also increased, with calls for lifetime bans for any athlete caught cheating. Germany is considering

making the use of performance-enhancing drugs a jailable offence.

All these new shifts dissuade a rider from resorting to cheating. Within the peloton there has been a shift towards an anti-doping consensus, with most riders openly criticising those caught. This is a stark contrast from the 1990s when one rider, Christopher Bassons, was brave enough to speak out against doping, and subsequently had to retire the next year when no teams would hire him.

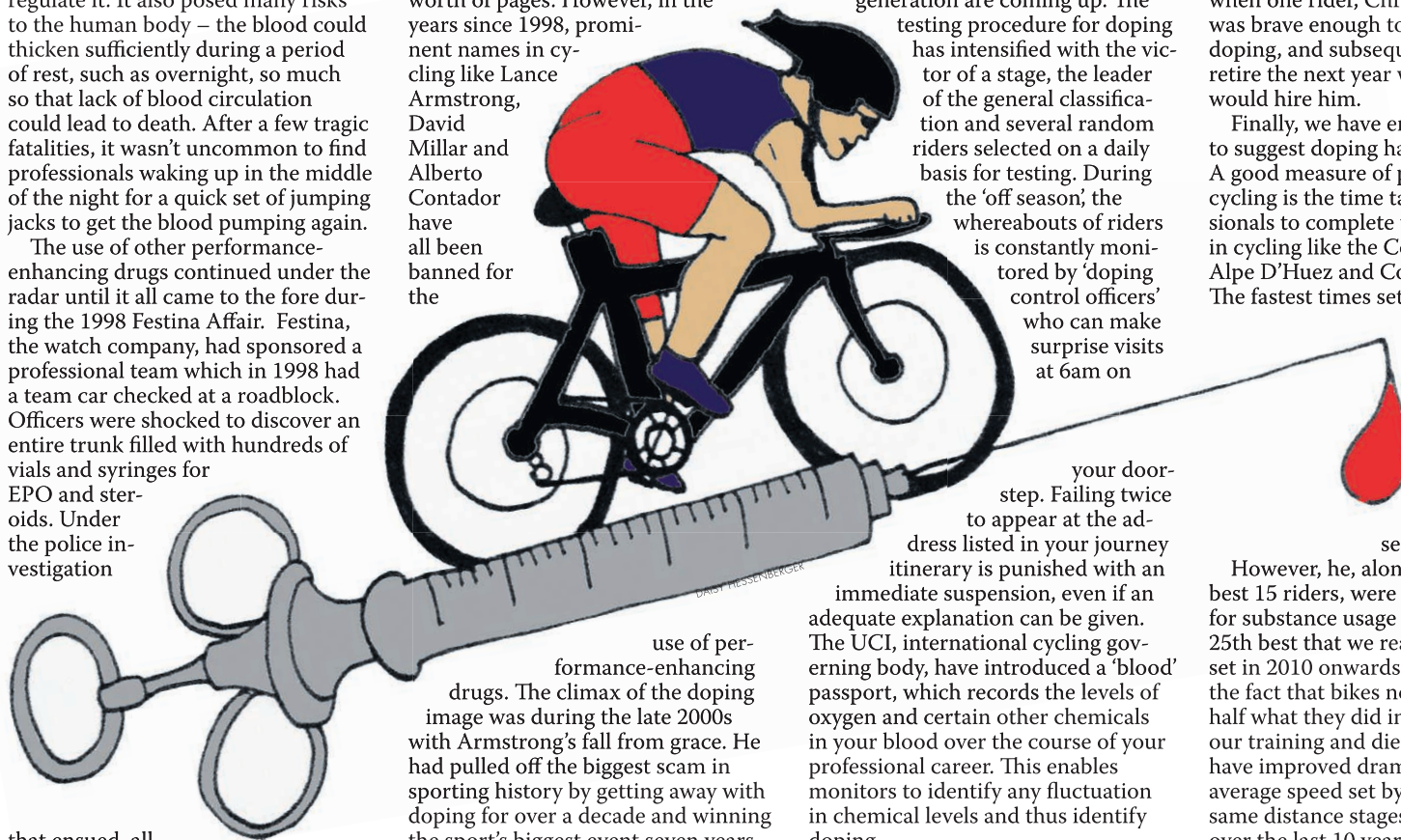
Finally, we have empirical evidence to suggest doping has decreased. A good measure of performance in cycling is the time taken for professionals to complete the hardest climbs in cycling like the Col du Galibier, Alpe D'Huez and Col du Tourmalet. The fastest times set in the 1990s

are still better than those set now. Mythical climber Marco Pantani still holds the best time up Alpe D'Huez at 37:35, which he set in 1997.

However, he, along with the next best 15 riders, were all later caught for substance usage and it's only at the 25th best that we reach a 'clean' time set in 2010 onwards. This is despite the fact that bikes now weigh literally half what they did in the 1990s and our training and dietary programs have improved dramatically. average speed set by the peloton for same distance stages has also fallen over the last 10 years which also suggests that the prevalence of doping has decreased.

The history of doping has marred the image of cycling for years, and led many to question whether it can ever truly divorce itself from performance-enhancing drugs. The improvements in testing, paradigm shifts from within cycling culture and empirical evidence, however, all suggest that this is happening.

It seems that finally, the Doping Era might really be over.



use of performance-enhancing drugs. The climax of the doping image was during the late 2000s with Armstrong's fall from grace. He had pulled off the biggest scam in sporting history by getting away with doping for over a decade and winning the sport's biggest event seven years in a row. Unsurprisingly, followers of the sport had lost trust in riders and now cast a doubtful eye on any performance. Riders became 'guilty until proven innocent' and the sad irony is they couldn't prove they had never taken a performance-enhancing drug; they were trapped. When Chris Froome won a stage of the Tour De France in 2013 on Mont Ventoux, people doubted such an incredible performance. When he struggled earlier in the year, people questioned why

Fresher LAX

The challenges and rewards of playing University Lacrosse

Sophie Abbott
Sport Correspondent

"Eat, sleep, play lacrosse" is an appropriate motto for the Cambridge University Lacrosse Squad. Since the beginning of pre-season, it has been non-stop with training, fitness and matches. Playing university sport is a big step up from school lacrosse, and as a fresher this can be a daunting prospect. However, any misgivings have totally disappeared.

There's something about cycling around Cambridge with the rest of the team, lacrosse sticks balanced somewhat dangerously down the back of our rucksacks, which gives you a unique sort of confidence. And this feeling carries onto the pitch – each and every one of us wants to do our best for the University. Although I remember how passionate school teams could get, I don't think they could be a match for the Cambridge Squad.

The atmosphere during training is unparalleled. Our captains assume the role of coach with a

professionalism that I could never have expected. For me, this really is a unique opportunity that rivals any previous training I have had, whether at school or elsewhere. This student-run approach is the cement for the solid structure of the team. Everyone works together on the basis of mutual respect and often, as I'm sure the other freshers would agree, of complete awe.

There are of course some challenges when starting afresh in a new team, such as name learning and not knowing where the pitches are. But these are definitely challenges and not struggles. Although work and sport are definitely not enemies, I've quickly realised that it's important to learn to work anywhere and everywhere, including on a 12 hour round coach journey to Exeter. But isn't that more fun than a library any way?

I thought that joining the Cambridge University Lacrosse team as a fresher would be incredibly nerve-racking but I could not have been more wrong.

When I think about the best moments so far of my first year, so many of them have been to do with lacrosse. Playing sport at university level fills you with such pride that I think anything and everything, work related or not, is possible.



The Cambridge Knee Clinic

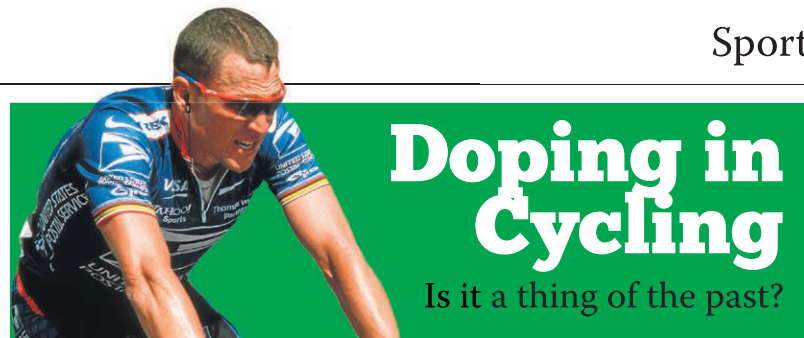
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Sport



Fitz Fresher Alexi Spyrou in the thick of the action pre game vs Downing last weekend

Your first foot forward

An insight into the fledgling career of a college starlet

Peter Rutzler

Sport Correspondent

You can never truly grasp the importance of College football until you play it. As a Fresher at Fitzwilliam College, I'd heard rumours of the footballing prowess and the history. But it's only when you turn up for that first trial that you realise just what playing for the firsts really means.

Finding yourself surrounded by thirty other keen trialists, a sudden realisation hits that you've woefully underestimated the standard of football. Perhaps they were right about Fitzwilliam including footballing ability in the admissions process. This is no Sunday league kick about against the other prawn sandwich brigade colleges. This, of course, is the be-all and end-all.

After a summer of very little strenuous activity, being thrown into a small-sided game that claimed to be merely a 'kickabout' when in reality you knew it was so much more, really does take its toll.

Staggering up and down the left wing, cramp in both your calves and a deep sense of regret for drinking one too many pints the night before, dreams of first team football seemed to evaporate into a cloud of beer-breath and sweat.

However, all was not lost – something I did must have impressed. There are four Fitz Freshers who have so far made the grade for this year's campaign, including myself, with others potentially to come through.

One of the first things you notice is the sense of belonging that seems to

define every aspect about college life at Cambridge. It's no exaggeration to say that there isn't a greater sense of pride out there than pulling on your college shirt for the first time.

Added to that is the weight of an esteemed past. Fitzwilliam truly does have a terrific footballing history. Undoubtedly, it is the greatest footballing college that the University of Cambridge has ever seen. Naturally, therefore, making the cut for the first team is an honour.

Very quickly you begin to pick up



FITZWILLIAM TRULY DOES HAVE A TERRIFIC FOOTBALLING HISTORY

and share the aversions and rivalries, feeling the pain and the deep-rooted sense of injustice over Churchill's fluky double cup elimination of two Fitz sides last season. That, of course, and the general dislike for St John's. It's never easy joining a new team, but luckily at Fitzwilliam there is no ridiculous initiation ceremony (as far as I'm aware of – I hope this remains the case).

It's straight down to business and putting in the hard graft on the training field, combining UEFA Coaching standard drills with endless penalty shootouts and before too long names match faces and it's as though you've always known your teammates.

Squad harmony is always of the utmost importance in any team, and it is something that seems to have already been achieved at Fitz.

As our College Captain Carl Plane told me, everyone "settled into college football very well" and show "great

enthusiasm, both on and off the pitch, working hard in training and getting to know the rest of the squad off the field as well.

"Bearing in mind the hectic schedule of a Cambridge [undergraduate], I am delighted with the commitment of the [f]reshers so far and hope we can reward them by winning some silverware."

As a fresher, besides the warm welcome that is extended, one of the most advantageous parts of joining any college team is the chance to meet and get to know other students from different years. The college quickly becomes a much smaller place, and your teammates are always on hand to offer advice, even if it is just explaining why you should always pass the ball to them.

Playing football is also a great way to get away from your studies. The Cambridge workload hits you thick and fast and can be overwhelming for any first year, especially when coupled with all that is new about University life, such as simply living away from home. College football, from Firsts to Thirds, is an effective way to relax and focus your mind elsewhere.

But let's not forget, the most important thing is what happens on the pitch. The pleasantries are put to one side; victory is what matters. Walking out on a surface that would not look out of place at the Emirates, college football becomes very real. Fast, intense and full of passion, the games live up to their preseason billing. You can only dream of what Cuppers must be like.

After an indifferent beginning on the pitch for Fitzwilliam this year, life as part of the college team has at least gotten off to a better start.

It has helped me to settle in very quickly and feel part of the college. Besides, who has time for Week 5 blues? I've got a game to prepare for!

Defending KP

Shreyas Gopal defends England's sacked cricket star Kevin Pietersen

Shreyas Gopal

Sport Correspondent

Cricket can be a boring spectator sport, let's be honest. A game which can last five full days and still not have an outright winner, with the slightest hint of precipitation suspending play, will understandably dissuade some from watching.

The England cricket team, in particular, although undeniably successful under the leadership of Andy Flower, Andrew Strauss and most recently Alastair Cook, can be more than exceedingly dull at times, with the top three of Strauss, Cook and Jonathan Trott often painful to observe at the crease, accumulating runs for fun, despite it being anything but fun to watch.

One man however, used to make sitting down and watching England bearable. Step forward Kevin Pietersen.

And England needed Pietersen – in just his fifth test, at the Oval in 2005 during the final test necessary to regain the Ashes. Not only did he deliver, he produced one of the finest innings seen on these shores, scoring 158 in what would become his trademark, flamboyant style.

England needed Pietersen in Colombo in April 2012, following a wretched 3-0 drubbing against Pakistan in the United Arab Emirates in their last series. And, as usual, he delivered. In searing and stamina-sapping heat, he dominated the Sri Lankans to lead England to a series-levelling and face-saving victory.

The controversial South-African born off-spinner-turned-batsman had by 2013 scored more international runs than any other English player in the history of the sport, only to be sacked from the team this February, with the England and Wales Cricket Board citing a breakdown in trust between Pietersen and the rest of the players. But who is really to blame for this lack of trust?

Yes,

Pietersen made many mistakes which he has openly admitted to, including the textgate debacle during the South Africa series in 2012. However, when three of his so-called team-mates, Tim Bresnan, Stuart Broad and Graeme Swann were apparently behind the fake Twitter account which openly mocked Pietersen for all the internet to see, it is no surprise that he found himself, as he commented at the time, "completely broken, absolutely finished, [and] mentally shot".

But when England needed Pietersen yet again – just later that year in India after having already lost the first test – despite all the problems that were occurring in the dressing room, he once again delivered.

His destructive knock consisted of 24 boundaries, and when he was finally dismissed for 186, having completely taken the game away from a fired-up Indian side who were determined for revenge following a 4-0 whitewash the previous year, no one was in any doubt that they had witnessed one of the greatest innings from one of the greatest batsmen so far this century.

It's admittedly true that Pietersen never did quite fit neatly into the dressing room, perhaps there really was some jealousy caused by his IPL ventures; perhaps he was just always a bit too different.

Following the fourth test defeat in the winter Ashes of 2013/14, during a players-only meeting designed to be a forum for frank and open discussion after another humbling loss, Pietersen reportedly launched into a verbal tirade, criticising the management, Flower in particular. His teammates were shocked. How dare anyone voice their opinion just when they've been asked to do exactly that?

It was symptomatic of the Flower regime: be very aggressive on the field, sledge the opposition relentlessly, cheat if you can thence away with it (Stuart Broad refusing to walk in the 2013 home Ashes series), but don't rock the boat. Don't argue with the sabermetrics and the statisticians and the dieticians and the sport's psychologists.

Unfortunately, Pietersen will never play international cricket for his adopted country again, and cricket itself is by far the greatest loser from this catastrophe.

But perhaps there are some positives as well. Pietersen has outlined a strong desire to stay on at Surrey next season and help to nurture the young players there just like Jason Roy and Zafar Ansari, who once dismissed

Pietersen three years ago on the hallowed ground of Fenner's.

There are high hopes for Ansari, the Trinity Hall alumnus, and maybe with Pietersen's guidance he will find himself scoring the level of runs that once made KP a superstar, and someone who should be remembered in the future as England's greatest ever batting talent.

