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No. 859
Friday 25th January 2019
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St. Edmund's drew controversy in December for its appointment of Carl (LOIS WRIGHT)



St. Edmund's students reject investigation panel into Noah Carl appointment

Jess Ma
Senior News Editor

The St. Edmund's JCR has unanimously rejected the College's investigation panel into the appointment of Dr. Noah Carl, whose involvement in eugenics research has sparked major controversy amongst

students and academics.

The investigation panel set up by St. Edmund's consists of three senior college members, none of whom have academic expertise in the social sciences or are confirmed to identify as BAME.

The investigation has also been labelled as a human resources investigation.

St. Edmund's JCR released in a statement saying that they had rejected the investigation panel on the grounds of three primary reasons – a lack of independence among those on the panel, a lack of academic expertise, and “poor representational ethics”.

The JCR questioned “the principles used to appoint the current investigation

panel” and the lack of external advice and student involvement.

“In the given circumstances, since all constituents of the Nominations Panel and Governing Body are implicated in the allegations of racist sympathies during appointment procedures, the College

Full story page 7 ►

NUS formally proposes to defund its Trans Campaign

Diana Stoyanova
Senior News Correspondent

The National Union of Students (NUS) has formally announced a proposal to defund its Trans Officer and Committee for at least the 2019-20 period, prompting criticism from the NUS LGBT+ Campaign, among other student activists

This proposal, which was formally confirmed on 16th January, comes alongside a series of cuts aiming to limit the number of full-time officers to 12 and plug the NUS' large deficit. The proposal letter was co-signed by the Chair of the Board, NUS President Shakira Martin,

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Rethinking beauty in the industry.

Using make-up to spark joy

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Varsity is published by Varsity Publications Ltd. Varsity Publications also publishes *The Mays*. Printed at Iliffe Print Cambridge - Winship Road, Milton, Cambridge CB24 6PP on 42.5gsm newsprint. Registered as a newspaper at the Post Office. ISSN 1758-4442.

Lord Adonis: “Although I am a radical education reformer, I can’t wave a magic wand”

*The Labour peer speaks to **Daniella Adeluwoye** about his proposal for new access colleges – and why he still believes that this is the ‘radical’ change Oxbridge needs*

Earlier this month, Lord Adonis controversially proposed that Oxbridge should establish new colleges for disadvantaged students. Both Oxford and Cambridge have since rejected this proposal, deemed “revolutionary but achievable” by the former Minister of State, and the idea has been criticised for failing to address the wider issues which are essential to discussions about Oxbridge access.

In the article in which he proposed this idea, Adonis anticipated its criticism. When we speak, this same attitude appears as he shrugs off the criticism this proposal has received over the past few weeks. Of his critics, he says: “The most insidious object, often unstated, comes from faux radicals.” However, it is possible to question how radical Adonis himself is.

Adonis is not new to being unpopular for his proposals. He has advocated for state schools to emulate the private sector and has criticised under-performing comprehensive schools, which proved to be hugely unpopular amongst trade union members and angered the left of the Labour Party. Adonis finds himself in the same position this month. This time he has frustrated individuals across the ideological spectrum, including Toby Young. Young described Adonis as having done “more to drive up standards in state schools as a Labour education minister than most Conservatives do as education secretaries.” If this comment made by Toby Young fails to give you an insight into Adonis’ politics, I don’t

know what else would.

I think it would be naïve of me to claim that structural reform would be an easier and quicker fix to the problems Adonis tried rightly to address in his *Guardian* op-ed. But surely we should be looking at Oxbridge’s access problem through a structural lens and tackling systemic and institutional issues? “I agree,” Adonis replies. But then, I respond, if we’re advocating for new access colleges, that’s not really tackling the real institutional issues that come before students even step foot in Oxbridge. “It is. It’s one structural means of doing so. But of course, there are others. I didn’t say this is the only thing to be done. And indeed, I hope that if we set up colleges which are specifically targeted at the 3,000 schools and colleges that don’t have a Cambridge tradition, that would impact significantly on the practices of the other colleges over time. So, I see these two as going together.”

What Adonis falls short of is promoting the more structurally radical reform that Oxbridge is in dire need of. We have to address the root problems which cause the imbalances in Oxbridge’s admissions. Oxbridge is merely a symptom of inequality - a mirror image of the gross educational inequality in our society. In response to Adonis’s proposal, a Cambridge representative stated: “We know we can do better still but we cannot do it in isolation.”

When I again push the argument that educational inequality is entrenched in British society and that this should instead be the focus when it comes to



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“By far the most effective way of killing any reform is to argue that it doesn’t answer some bigger question”



forming solutions, Adonis rebuts, “not *instead*, no. We need to do both. I’m a radical school reformer.” I realise that I have pushed him as far as he will go on this topic. Adonis claims that he is “completely signed up to radical improvements in the school system so that we have more young people with the qualifications to go onto Cambridge.”

I point out that it is idealistic – utopian, even – to believe that students in these new colleges would not be treated as second-class citizens by their peers. In his original article, Adonis anticipated this criticism. This would only occur, he wrote, “if they [weren’t] as good as the others.” The collegiate system at present is not immune to inequality between colleges and this is only reinforced by the disproportionate funding that they receive, as well as the Tompkins Table which ranks colleges based on their students’ academic performance. The idea that these new colleges would be immune to this cultural hierarchy is a stretch, wouldn’t you agree? “Well, we can’t solve everything with one reform ... Because at the moment, for historic reasons, you have a small number of colleges that have most of the assets. But, although I’m a radical education reformer, I can’t wave a magic wand.”

I’ve come to realise that our ideas of radical reform to the education system are very different. This is confirmed as Adonis goes on: “We’re far more likely to

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leges to start
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get big change from setting up new colleges than trying to dramatically change practices and redistribute assets between the existing wealthy colleges.” He believes that “nothing short of quotas... will bring about transformational change” but even in his most “radical moods” he couldn’t support such an idea. He seems to contradict himself because new access colleges are exactly a quota.

In recent years, there has been increased scrutiny on colleges where figures have revealed their intake of students from disadvantaged backgrounds. When I ask him whether the establishing of new access colleges would alleviate or even completely eradicate scrutiny from existing colleges, Adonis is certain that it “[wouldn’t] remove it at all.” He argues that instead “it would put more scrutiny on existing colleges to start asking quite quickly why they’re not following suit.” Personally, I beg to differ.

We discuss the current representation of state school students in existing colleges, taking into account that official statistics often fail to differentiate between state and grammar schools, and do not acknowledge disparities in the standards of different state schools. He asks whether the latest figures for Cambridge’s admissions show that 64% of students come from state schools, which I confirm. “Well, I’d like to see that go up to 70 or 80% as soon as possible.”

But when it comes to discussions on

▲ **Adonis claims that new access colleges would not decrease pressure existing colleges’s access efforts**

(ARUPMEETING21/
FLICKR)

access, there is a considerable amount of nuance that is lacking. The discourse pervading access is monopolised by how we might get disadvantaged students into Cambridge, but not so much on how best to support them once they’re here. Post-admissions access is an oft-neglected topic which, while crucial to the access debate, rarely makes national headlines. Adonis immediately replies that the new colleges could resolve this issue. “Well, I think the part of argument for new colleges is that they would develop expertise in how to support students from non-traditional backgrounds. At the moment colleges are very hit and miss in doing so but these colleges, because all their students are recruited from non-traditional backgrounds, have a massive incentive to get it right.” His ideas range from preparation classes before the start of term to special financial support and additional pastoral support. He even advocates that they could offer a foundation year.

Having implemented and proposed numerous reforms as Minister of State and head of policy for Blair, he is aware of the obstacles when it comes to pushing reforms. “I’ve been a reformer in politics for 30 years and I know that by far the most effective way of killing any reform is to argue that it doesn’t answer some bigger question which in fact is sort of impossible to address in any short time scale. It would be a classic Oxbridge de-

fence mechanism to avoid an immediate reform like the establishment of new colleges.”

In my opinion, Adonis should stop trying to take shortcuts and instead go against the grain. The issues we are facing will not be solved with tokenistic change – we need fundamental change to shift entrenched inequalities. Rather than relying on new access colleges which would “[focus] like a laser” on schools which do not send students to Oxbridge, we should focus our attention on why it is the case that so many schools produce a disproportionate amount of Oxbridge students, while others produce very few if none at all.

When I point out that these are plausible criticisms about the practicality of new access colleges, he frustratingly replies that these criticisms represent “a classic case of conservatives deploying arguments to defeat all reform in the guise of being fair-minded.” Now, I for one am far from conservative. From the commentary I have seen, criticism has been sparked by individuals from the left, the right and everywhere in-between.

Rather than dismissing such criticism on the grounds that it is simply “conservative” resistance to his proposals, Adonis should consider listening to disadvantaged students like myself and recognise that this Oxbridge-centric solution is neither radical nor, simply put, a good idea.

News

Overnight 'sleepout' will see volunteers raise money for Calais and homelessness charities

Chloe Bayliss
Senior News Correspondent

'The Big Cambridge Calais Sleepout' is being hosted on Saturday 26th January in hopes of topping last year's £11,000 raised to support homeless charities in both Cambridge and Northern France.

This Saturday, local charities – Cambridge Convoy Refugee Action Group (CamCrag) and The Whitworth Trust – are hosting a sleepout and winter fair at St. Giles Church on Castle Street. The event is set to start at 1:30pm this week, with a Winter Fair open to all, offering "soup, ponchos, and other gifts for sale", appearances by speakers and stalls from local charities and organisations. Later on, those who are brave enough to face the cold – with temperatures set to be as low as six degrees – will be given an evening meal and breakfast, with stewards supervising throughout the night. There will be an option to sleep either inside or outside the church, with those opting to sleep outside prompted to rent an 'SOS' tent for £5, specifically designed by CamCrag for the use of those displaced in France.

The money raised by the sponsored

“
It's a show of solidarity with people sleeping rough both in Cambridge and in Calais
”

sleepers will be split between the two host charities. CamCrag was established in 2016 and coordinates sending convoys of volunteers and aid from Cambridge to help refugees in Northern France. Typically, convoys sent to Calais leave on Friday evenings and are back the following Sunday, with volunteers helping to work in the warehouse supporting more permanent staff by organising donations and preparing food.

The Whitworth Trust, established in 1988, supports vulnerable, homeless young women who live at the Whitworth House hostel in Cambridge, which supports up to 15 residents at a time. Donations to the Whitworth trust go towards the holistic care of residents, from providing work clothes and vocational training, to helping pay legal fees.

The chair of CamCrag, Elliot Harris, told the Cambridge Independent that "the Big Sleep Out offers local supporters a real opportunity to do something practical and to direct their donations to help those who are homeless both in Cambridge and Calais". Last year the event raised an £11,000, with the money going to Wintercomfort, a Cambridge day centre that supports homeless people in Cambridge.

In the past few years, there has been a notable rise in student involvement in the work of charities helping those in our community who many not have stable living conditions. Student charities include Cambridge Homeless Outreach Programme (CHOP) that provides fundraising and outreach opportunities for Cambridge students, as well as hosting events to help raise awareness, and Streetbite, a group of students who take provisions and conversation to those on the streets on a daily basis during term time.

Commenting on the planned sleepout this week, Stephen Cole, President of CHOP, told Varsity: "I think it's incredible that people are volunteering to sleep outdoors on a cold January night to raise money for two amazing causes, and I would encourage everyone to sponsor the team if they can.

"It's a show of solidarity with people sleeping rough both in Cambridge and in Calais. We mustn't forget that there are many people sleeping outdoors in these conditions every night, out of necessity rather than choice, and this sleepout raises awareness of this as well as raising money to support refugees in Calais and homeless women in Cambridge."

► Photos from last year's Sleepout, showing (left) Cambridge City Councillor George Pippas in a pop-up tent, (middle) a tent in St Giles' grounds, and (top right) sleepers outside the church.

(JEREMY PETERS)

► The Sleepout will be held at St Giles Church (bottom right)

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News



KNOCK, KNOCK Miniature doors appear in Cambridge

Mystery artist 'Dinky Door' has been – you guessed it – placing dinky doors over Cambridge. These miniature pieces of art are only 6 inches tall and take about two months to make. Sightings of the tiny portals include a replica of Number 10 on Downing Street, a 'Teleport-O-Matic' machine in Market Square, and a 'Reality Checker' on Parker's Piece. The anonymous artist installed these pieces to encourage people to use their imaginations, and to "bring a smile to people's faces" in a time of "miserable news".

PROCR-APP-STINATION New app improves concentration

The Behavioural and Clinical Neuroscience Institute has released an app called 'Decoder' that is reported to improve attention and concentration. The app requires users to identify strings of numbers in missions full of distractions. Users will supposedly see improvements akin to using the drug Ritalin – often prescribed to people with ADHD – after using the app for only eight hours a month.

PARTY TIME Chinese New Year around the corner

Chinese New Year is set to fall on February 5th this year, and the 6,000 Chinese residents in the city are getting ready to celebrate. The university is playing a role in welcoming the Year of the Pig, with St. John's hosting a festive dinner; St. Catharine's putting on a film screening, a concert of traditional music, and an exhibition of traditional art; and the Fitzwilliam Museum hosting a family day. All of the events are being coordinated by the Cambridge Chinese Culture Festival.

MEAT THE NEW MACCAS Vegan burger restaurant opens

A new vegan burger restaurant, 'DoppleGanger Burger', has opened in Regent Street. Having been a pop-up in bar 2648 since January 2018, the business is branching out, promising freshly cooked vegan burgers bursting with flavour. The restaurant is cashless, but burgers are available to order on Deliveroo, with the menu offering three set plant-based burgers that will change every four to five weeks.

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News

ANALYSIS

Understanding Cambridge's environmental justice movement so far

Jess Ma
Senior News Editor

Last term saw the divestment movement branch out into demilitarisation and decolonisation campaigns, and dig deeper into Cambridge's colleges.

College divestment campaigns have sprung up, as a response to the University Council's landmark decision to reject full divestment from fossil fuel industries, and the successful case of Queens' College divesting their entire endowment from the sector.

In November, a joint *Varsity* investigation with *Cherwell* revealed significant holdings in oil and gas industry of some colleges, with Trinity College topping the list with £9.1m invested in the industry, including £1.2m invested in Royal Dutch Shell.

Around 250 students marched through Cambridge in a mass rally, calling on the University to "divest, disarm, decolonise", linking up divestment and demilitarisation calls with the decolonisation movement.

Zero Carbon Society launched banner drops at multiple colleges in last November in a call for college divestment and disrupted the Shell annual lecture, where a member of its executive committee was due to speak.

Following University Council's decision and the intense lobbying of last year, the divestment movement has consequently turned to new tactics in an attempt to continue pressuring the University. Shocking revelations uncovered how deep fossil fuel and oil exploration industries are entrenched in the University's institutions, affirming campaigners' strategy that colleges are worthy targets as they, like the central University, also bear high stake investment in these industries.

With CUSU's first ever Green Week, which focuses on climate justice and demands for University divestment, launching this week, it is worth examining the premises for divestment, the links Cambridge currently has with companies in these industries, as well as what it could mean for the University and colleges if they divest.

What are the premises for and against divestment?

Campaigners for divestment say that Cambridge's investment in the fossil fuel industry leads to the "institution's legitimisation of the destructive actions of arms and fossil fuels companies."

"This University must cut all ties and it must act now, otherwise it can have no hope of addressing its colonial past and present", as *Varsity* was told during the rally last term. Divestment is tied up with decolonisation, as the destruction of environment is brought in parallel view with protests against the exclusionary framing of knowledge and interpretations across subjects, with both seen as legitimisation of exploitation.

The Cambridge Decolonisation Network told *Varsity* that the ecological abuse of colonised regions and peoples are "inextricably linked" with climate change, thus "any movement that seeks to avert climate change's most disastrous



consequences needs to be a decolonial movement".

The Network stressed that the research and teaching conducted at Cambridge "reinforce worldviews that fail to challenge, or even mention, these injustices" of the plundering of natural resources from colonial sites. They argued that collaboration with the divestment movement enable both movements to "inform and enhance each other, building a coherent idea of how the University must be responsible for its actions".

For colleges who have investments in the fossil fuel industry, many cite the difficulty to divest in their indirect interaction with investment and charity laws. As a *Varsity* investigation revealed last June, for many colleges, external managers choose which companies to invest colleges' endowment in, with colleges being able to influence their choices by establishing ethical investment policies.

Another concern lies in the fiduciary duty of charities, which requires charities to maximise returns from their investment. The duty does allow charities to accept lower returns when investments conflict with the aims of the charity or will cause it to lose supporters. Colleges cited the difficulty in defining conflicts with its aims. Meanwhile, campaigners often argue that the University's goals of bettering the world conflict with using profits from environmental destruction.

Not many colleges have ethical investment policies, while for those who do, they are often vaguely worded. Caius, Girton, and Jesus require "integrity" from their managers while only two policies defined specific investments that are in

conflict with its aims.

Campaigners argued for divestment in large part on ethical grounds, citing the symbolic condonation on these companies' destruction on the environment and practical influences on research direction.

Zero Carbon organised several protests last term, including the rally with demilitarise and decolonise campaigns, banner dropping in multiple colleges, and disruption at the annual Shell lecture last year.

In the University Council's rejection of the working group's divestment plan last year, it stated "negligible" exposure to the fossil fuel industry in its investment, with "no exposure to the most pollutive industries" in their directly-held investments.

The Council also argued for diversity in the University's investments, saying that "it is inevitable in a diversified and indirectly managed investment portfolio that some exposure may appear in some funds and therefore it is not possible to demand absolute exclusion".

The Council further stressed on the need for strong investment returns to support research in their rejecting of the working group's suggestions.

What links does Cambridge currently have with the fossil fuels and arms industry?

The BP Institute, established in 2000 with an endowment from BP, which funds faculty positions, support staff, and the Institute Building, conducts research on multiphase flow and other energy research.

The Institute currently offers a fully funded PhD studentship and the PhD

▲ A divestment protest involving banner drops during Easter Term last year

(LOUIS ASHWORTH)

CASE Award on Natural Ventilation.

Energy Research at Cambridge holds the Shell annual lecture. The lecture was held last term and was disrupted by Zero Carbon activists.

Shell funded PhD students and early researchers in Cambridge in 2016, as evidenced by a research presentation in the 2016 Shell lecture.

The Department of Chemical Engineering and Biotechnology has ongoing partnerships with Exxonmobil, BP, Boeing and more companies.

The Cambridge Service Alliance, established in 2010 by BAE Systems, IBM, the University of Cambridge's Institute for Manufacturing and Judge Business School, collaborates with corporations such as Caterpillar, a manufacturer of oil and gas extraction equipment such as industrial gas turbines, natural gas and diesel engines, to conduct research on business models and support.

Gold membership of the Alliance can "influence the direction of Cambridge Service Alliance research through participating as a member of the Steering Committee", gain "facilitated access" to Cambridge experts in relevant fields, and be associated with the University, according to the 2018 brochure of the Cambridge Service Alliance.

The Cambridge Judge Business School has collaborated with Lockheed Martin on cyber resiliency research in 2016.

Past Cambridge financial statements showed subsidiaries of Royal Dutch Shell – Shell Global Solutions International, Shell International Exploration and Production, and Shell Research Inc – have funded a number of grants across University departments, totalling over £2.6m in project funding between July 2012 and July 2017.

The University declined to confirm whether Shell currently funds academics or not, citing the data being unavailable. The BP Institute and Cambridge Judge Business School have been contacted for comment.

What could it mean for the University and colleges to divest?

In divesting from fossil fuel and arms industries, the University will be symbolically and practically distancing itself from fossil fuel extraction and the environmental and human rights impacts from those activities. This means that the University's research is not affiliated with the profits these companies acquired from environment damage and the arms trade, thus removing any implicit endorsement and support.

Campaigners have consistently argued for greater transparency in the University's external research collaborations, to allow for proper scrutiny.

Organisations of the University, such as Cambridge Enterprise, actively manage corporation collaboration requests and help researchers realise commercial potential of their work.

Meanwhile, four departments across STEM subjects, the School of Clinical Medicine, the Computer Laboratory, and the Judge Business School directly support research collaboration.

What could happen next?

CUSU's Green Week marked a new chapter in the environmental justice movement in the University, with a focus on individual action as well as structural change. It presents students with a localised narrative emphasising the relevance of divestment to them under the backdrop of tight-knit communities of their colleges.

“Campaigners say that Cambridge's investment in the fossil fuel industry leads to the “institution's legitimisation of the destructive actions of arms and fossil fuels companies”

University sees first ever Green Week

Belle George
Senior News Correspondent

The CUSU Ethical Affairs team and college Green Officers have come together to organise the University's first ever Green Week, consisting of numerous events centred on the theme of climate justice. These events come alongside demands for the University to declare a climate emergency, to divest, and to reconsider their current carbon neutrality targets.

The events taking place in Green Week, which began on 20th January and will finish on the 27th, include film screenings, panel discussions, a vegan potluck, a second hand clothes sale and the launch of a new online platform entitled 'Cambridge ball gown swap and shop'. So far, events have proven popular, with Keynes Hall hosting an audience of more than a hundred for a panel discussion on the topic of Gender and Climate Justice on Tuesday.

Three demands have been issued as part of this first-ever Green Week. That the University divest from fossil fuels and adopt a 2030 carbon neutral target, and that the University's 31 constituent colleges adopt this 2030 carbon neutral target in line with the University.

Speaking about the decision to link Green Week to these demands, CUSU

“Cambridge is currently committed to a 2050 carbon neutral target, having lowered the original targets in 2017”

Ethical Affairs officers Jakes Simms and Alice Gilderdale noted that “green impact award schemes and incremental changes are important”, but argued that these things alone are insufficient to combat the climate crisis “while the University and colleges are invested in fossil fuel companies” and while they have “inadequate or nonexistent” carbon reduction targets.”

The CUSU Ethical Affairs team has also created a People and Planet petition to affirm support for their demand that the University bring forward its carbon neutral target. At the time of writing the petition had gathered more than 400 signatures online, alongside physical signatures which the Ethical Affairs team have been collecting at various Green Week events.

Cambridge University is currently committed to a 2050 carbon neutral target, having lowered their original carbon reduction targets in 2017. After it was recently revealed that the University is on track to miss its original ten-year environmental sustainability target by a wide margin, a spokesperson for the University noted that “experts have been working [on] how we can bring the University's target date for carbon neutrality forward by a decade in recognition of these issues”. This is planned to be presented in a report to the University Council later this year. The spokesperson described the University's original targets, set in 2010, as “arbitrary and unrealistic.”

The events of the 2019 Green Week were organised by the CUSU Ethical Affairs team alongside various student societies, including the CUSU BME Campaign, Cambridge Zero Carbon Society, and the Vegan Society.



▲ A 'Women and Climate Justice' panel was organised for Green Week (BELLE GEORGE)

Speaking to *Varsity*, a Zero Carbon spokesperson said that the campaign “welcomes Green Week's focus on climate justice, which is undoubtedly the issue of our generation.”

“Green Week sets a precedent for continuing the conversation on climate justice”, they added.

Reflecting on the progress of Green Week thus far, Ethical Affairs officers Simms and Gilderdale echoed this sentiment: “we hope Green Week can play a significant role in building the momentum that will make change happen.”

They added: “We hope [Green Week] sets a precedent in future years for a Student Union that works even closer with ethical campaigns, takes ever bolder action on the climate crisis, and isn't frightened to demand change.”

St. Edmund's JCR cites lack of independence and representation as concerns in rejection of panel

► Continued from front page

cannot obtain the necessary distance from the matter acting only by itself.”

“[W]e believe the neutrality and independence of any investigation can only be established through a consultation with students on the specific procedures of investigation. Student representation on the investigation panel and the participation of experts from the University, who have verifiable distance from the procedures of appointment, is imperative.”

The lack of relevant academic expertise and uncertainty of BAME representation in the panel was also criticised, noting that possibility of external consultation on academic judgment “does not explain why the panel was constituted this way in the first place.”

“We note that the College has provided no answers to our question about whether any member of the panel identifies as a BAME person.”

“These recurrent patterns of poor representational practices cannot become entrenched in our institution's collective ethos.”

Students expressed outrage at the composition of the panel and the College's treatment of this investigation. An anonymous student told *Varsity* that lack of affiliation to the social sciences in the panel is “a staggering show of disrespect to students”, showing the “College's complicity, complacency, and incompetence all in one.”

Another expressed “frustration and deepening hurt”, commenting that the College has “clearly underestimated the level of hurt this decision has caused”, while the “failure to constitute a panel that is able to independently investigate this issue, underlines the widening chasm between the the student body and the management of the college.”

Others criticised the “unwillingness” of the College to conduct a fair investigation, believing that this shows that the College is “incapable of self-reflection”.

A spokesperson from St. Edmund's College told *Varsity* that “the College is following its internal procedures and will not comment while these are under way.”

“The failure to constitute a panel that is able to independently investigate ...underlines the widening chasm between the the student body and ... the College”

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News

Review of Prevent strategy announced by Security Minister

Kiran Khanom
Senior News Editor

Security minister Ben Wallace announced on Tuesday that the Prevent strategy, the government's counter-terrorism strategy that seeks to prevent radicalisation, will see an independent review.

The Prevent strategy makes it a legal requirement for public bodies, such as universities, to report those who may be at risk of turning to extremism. The legislation has faced scrutiny from civil rights groups such as Amnesty International as well as across the academic community and elsewhere: many have argued it fosters racial profiling of those of Muslim faith and that it negatively impacts freedom of speech.

In his announcement in the House of Commons, Wallace said: "I have decided that the time is now right to initiate a review of Prevent. Communities across the country have got behind the policy and are contributing to it because they want, as we do, their own young people to be protected from grooming and exploitation by terrorists."

The University of Cambridge has said in the past that it is "committed to trying to take the lightest possible touch" concerning Prevent.

However, its intervention in a 2017 panel discussion co-hosted by the Cambridge University Palestine Society and the Cambridge University Middle East Society faced criticism by students and

“
[The review] is an opportunity to galvanise momentum against Prevent”
”

academics at the time as being "heavy-handed". Cambridge later apologised for its citation of the Prevent duty in replacing the panel chair, SOAS academic Dr Ruba Salih.

A *Varsity* investigation last April revealed that the roll-out of the Prevent duty in Cambridge also saw stark inconsistencies across colleges, causing some Muslim students to "self-censor" in supervisions.

One student, Abdulla Zaman, described his supervisor warning him "not to raise any alarm bells", after assigning him topics relating to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

After an incident at the University of Reading in November where an essay written by a left-wing academic was marked as 'sensitive' under Prevent legislation, several academics at Cambridge spoke to *Varsity* about their views on the strategy, with one academic commenting that it "continues to be a central threat to the purpose and promise of higher education in the UK".

CUSU, the GU and numerous college JCRs have also criticised the inclusion of welfare support as part of the information shared under Prevent.

CUSU President Evie Aspinall said: "The review of Prevent is a very positive step and an incredible success for those who have campaigned for it. It is an opportunity to galvanise momentum against Prevent which has had incredibly damaging effects across the UK, including in Cambridge."



▲ **Wallace announced the review in Parliament on Tuesday** (DAILY MAIL/YOUTUBE)

She added that the Prevent strategy has "created a culture of suspicion and has limited the freedom of speech of Muslim students across the UK. Challenging the Prevent duty has been one of CUSU's main priorities this year and we hope to capitalise on this opportunity to lobby for the end of the Prevent Duty."

Numerous organisations and advocates have called on the scheme to be reviewed, including Parliament's joint committee on human rights and the Muslim Council of Britain.

Harun Khan, Secretary General of the Muslim Council of Britain, the UK's largest Muslim umbrella body, said on the evening of the announcement: "For far too long, the Prevent strategy has affected the lives of innocent families, been criticised for mainstreaming discrimination and lost the trust of communities around the UK."

"This latest step is crucial for all those who have campaigned for an Independent

Review of Prevent. Everyone committed to developing a truly effective strategy for tackling terrorism understands that it must be transparent, accountable and hold the trust of communities.

"We welcome the Government's support for a review; however, those tasked with its implementation must have the independence, credibility and trust required to deliver it."

Wallace said that Home Office statistics "show that Prevent is not about out any particular group or ideology but is similar to other forms of safeguarding carried out every day by social workers, teachers and police."

"I am proud we have helped divert hundreds of people away from posing a real threat and put them back on the path of living a fulfilling, law-abiding life." He added: "This review should expect those critics of Prevent, who often use distortions and spin, to produce solid evidence of their allegations."

Building work starts on £300m 'Cavendish III' Laboratory

Katy Bennett
Senior News Correspondent

Building work started this month on the new 'Cavendish III' Laboratory, which is set to replace the current Cavendish Laboratory on the West Cambridge site.

It will be the third Cambridge laboratory to be named after Henry Cavendish, who discovered hydrogen in 1766.

The opening was marked by Vice Chancellor Stephen Toope, who was joined by guests from the university, construction company Bouygues UK, and members of the local community.

The project is estimated to cost £300 million, and was approved by Cambridge University's governing council in March 2017. Construction of the main site and shared facilities hub will take approximately three years and should be completed by 2022.

The main 33,000m² site will be named the Ray Dolby Centre and is set to replace existing facilities for the Uni-

versity's Department of Physics.

This will include two lecture theatres, seminar rooms, a learning resource centre, common room and the Cavendish Collection exhibition. This will be accompanied by a 4700m² shared facilities hub, which will supplement the main building with catering services, as well as teaching, study and library spaces.

The Cavendish III aims to respond to and facilitate developments in modern physics research, with the University's stating that "the spirit of adventure and innovation will be fostered in the Cavendish tradition, but adapted to the new needs of frontier research."

This will take the form of a "purpose-built centre for [Cambridge's] world-leading research, bringing all the research groups in the department under one roof to encourage collaboration".

Aiming to be a "top-class facility for the nation", the project will also look beyond Cambridge by allowing other institutions access to much of the specialised research equipment which will be housed there.



▲ **The site of the first Cavendish Laboratory on the New Museums site** (RICHTEA)

Part of the funding for this project has been supplied by the government, who announced a £75 million investment in the Cavendish Laboratory as part of its Spending Review in 2015, from the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC).

In addition, the family of Ray Dolby, who studied for a PhD in Physics at Cambridge in 1961, announced that they would be donating £85 million towards

“
The spirit of adventure and innovation will be fostered in the Cavendish tradition”
”

the Cavendish III in December 2017.

The new laboratory will focus on seven main research themes: astrophysics, high energy physics, biological and biomedical physics, energy materials, emergent quantum phenomena, assembly and function of complex systems, and quantum devices and measurements, but aims to encourage collaboration across all of these research areas to foster new advances.

The Cavendish Laboratory already has an impressive history: it is where JJ Thomson discovered the electron, Ernest Rutherford discovered artificial nuclear fission, and James Chadwick discovered the neutron. The lab was also the site of the first experimental proof that $E = mc^2$ under the tenure of Rutherford, and thirty-two of its members have won Nobel Prizes.

The first Cavendish Laboratory was built in 1874 on the New Museums site, under the direction of James Clerk Maxwell, and moved to the West Cambridge site in 1974. The lab is currently led by Professor Andy Parker.

Defunding of NUS Trans Campaign draws criticism

► Continued from front page

and NUS CEO, Peter Robinson. However, the proposal cannot come into force until after it is voted on at the upcoming NUS National Conference, set to take place in April.

The NUS Trans campaign is an autonomous part of the NUS. According to the campaign's web page, their role is "to represent trans students and fight for their rights".

In December, the NUS' consideration of proposals to scrap liberation officer roles received condemnation from student activists. Now, in response to the formal proposal to defund the NUS Trans Committee and Officer, the NUS LGBT+ campaign has issued a statement expressing significant concerns. In this statement, issued on 21st of January, the campaign described the trans student population as "probably the fastest growing in the NUS' individual membership" and noted that these students "have specific welfare and campaigning needs".

"Defunding the NUS Trans Campaign forces volunteers to stand alone against the wave of transphobia in the public sphere", the LGBT+ Campaign wrote, noting that the work carried out by the organisation is "highly specialised and requires public policy support which is



◀ An annual Transgender Day of Remembrance event in Cambridge (STEPHANIE STACEY)

only available in large NGOs like NUS." The NUS LGBT+ campaign also expressed concerns about being solely responsible for trans rights and support once the trans campaign is defunded.

Writing in the *Gay Star News*, NUS LGBT+ Office Rob Noon said, "This decision is a political one and thus warrants a political response". Noon also claimed that the decision was made without consultation with either of the current NUS LGBT+ officers, who are both trans. The President of the CUSU LGBT+ campaign, Liam Plimmer, also expressed concerns, saying: "We are obviously disappointed with the decision, and are still consulting the community about our response".

An NUS spokesperson told *Varsity*: "Even with the savings we've made so far this year (2018/19), we know that we will still post a deficit in year, and in subsequent years, without further action. 2019/20 will be a transitional year which will require extraordinary action to ensure solvency and deliver a degree of financial stability."

"Because of this, the NUS Joint Board meeting last week decided to maintain funding for 12 paid officer posts in 2019/20 and pause funding for eight. This ensures that those officers we are electing are given the support and resources they need to deliver for students. This is an interim measure and specific to our transitional year of 2019/20."

“This decision is a political one”

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News

Colleges took divergent approaches to contro

Amy Batley
Investigations Editor

Data obtained by *Varsity* shows that colleges took vastly different approaches in the student welfare data submitted to the Office for Students' (OfS) controversial Prevent return. This was the first data return since changes to submission requirements obliged institutions to provide information on the number of students accessing welfare services.

Cambridge colleges were required to submit their Prevent accountability and data return [ADR] for a deadline of 3rd December 2018, the first ADR since the OfS changed submission requirements in June 2018. Following this change, colleges, and all higher education institutions in the UK, were asked to provide the "number of welfare cases referred for specialist advice and support" between 1st August 2017 and 31 July 2018.

Prevent is one of four strands of the UK counter-terrorism strategy, CONTEST, which is tasked with preventing extremist radicalisation.

Prevent obliges public bodies, including universities, to have "due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism". This 'Prevent duty' mandates public sector organisations to report any individuals who exhibit signs of radicalisation.

The ADR is used by the OfS as an indicator of an institution's compliance with the Prevent duty.

Freedom of Information requests submitted by *Varsity* reveal that colleges took vastly divergent approaches in their individual ADR's.

The OfS's new submission requirements are a response to the most recent revision of CONTEST. The OfS updated its monitoring framework for Prevent in Higher Education in June 2018, to now reflect CONTEST's emphasis on safeguarding, which includes requiring Prevent to be integrated into welfare support systems.

New submission requirements now request that higher education institutions provide data on the number of students accessing welfare services, specifically: "the number of cases in which specialist staff have made an intervention, either through a central student service or a nominated welfare or safeguarding lead" and not "self-referrals".

Most higher education institutions have no option but to provide an ADR of data aggregated across their entire organisation. However, for the purposes of the OfS ADR, Cambridge colleges are autonomous higher education bodies, so therefore report their ADR independently.

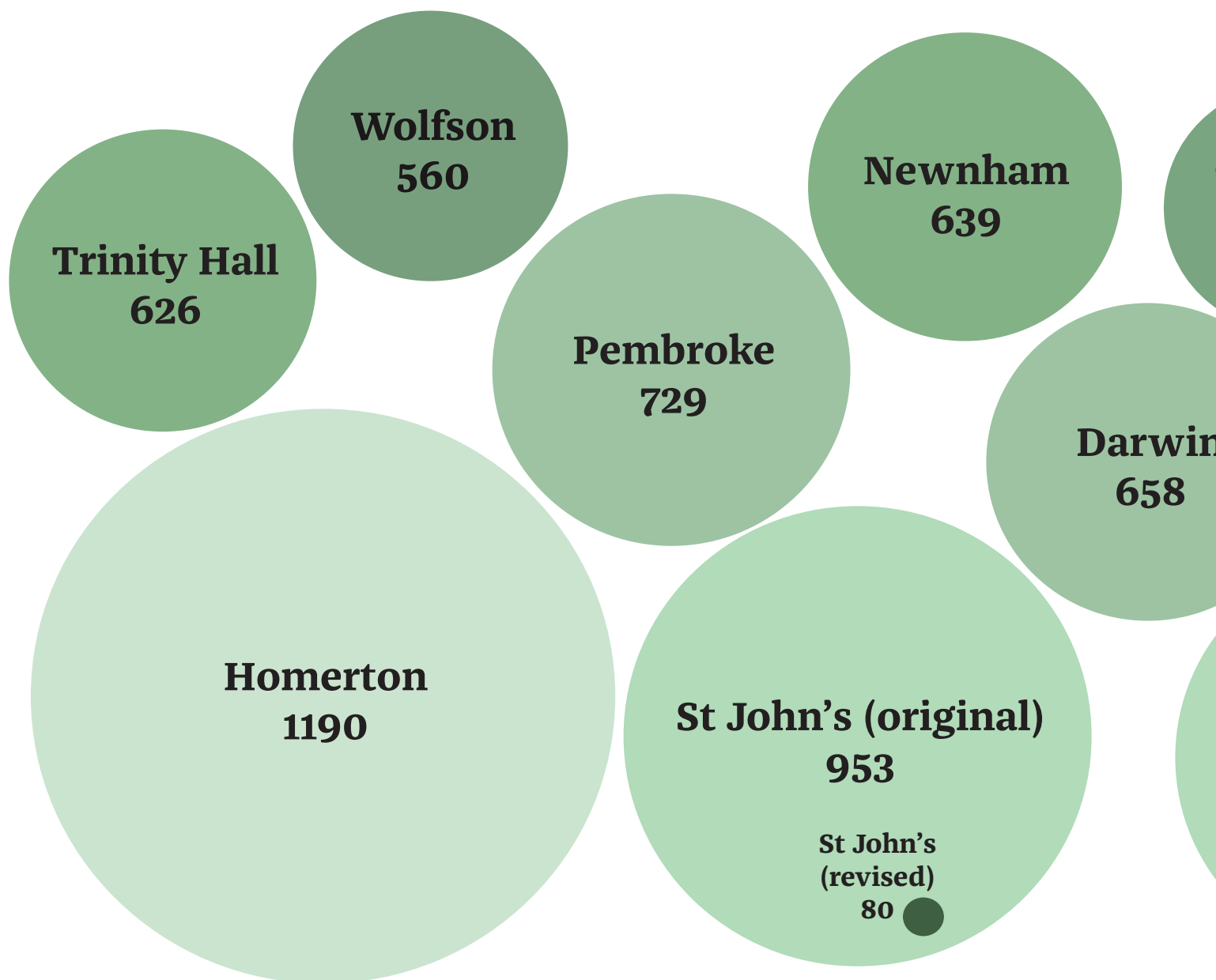
The OfS claim that "there is no straightforward measure of how well a provider is implementing the Prevent duty", and therefore propose that the number of welfare cases "is a useful proxy", which can assure "that providers are actively implementing procedures that allow them to identify and act on Prevent-related returns".

An OfS spokesperson told *Varsity* that the new requirement seeks "to provide assurance that welfare procedures are in operation in the absence of any Prevent-related welfare concerns".

Last term, the OfS's new ADR requirements were criticised in an open letter,

► The numerical values submitted in response to the request for info on welfare cases. Peterhouse responded with zero.

“A culture of surveillance and suspicion must be kept out of mental health and welfare support”



▲ GRAPHICS:
STEPHANIE STACEY

led by CUSU and co-signed by the Graduate Union Executive Committee and 21 college-based student bodies. The letter, which was released on in late November, criticised the OfS's regulatory changes as a "serious encroachment [...] into welfare provision".

This letter encouraged colleges to resist the OfS's new requirements. It argued that requiring that "colleges include all data about welfare support for students as part of their annual report on Prevent, whether or not those welfare cases relate to Prevent" was an "unacceptable overreach". The letter warned that this may "add to the already deeply worrying impacts of Prevent on the experiences of Muslim and BME students," while "a culture of surveillance and suspicion must be kept out of mental health and welfare support."

Rather than respond to the ADR with the number of welfare cases referred for specialist advice and support, the CUSU-led open letter encouraged colleges to submit "all tutorial contact as a welfare case for the purposes of the numerical data return, rather than singling out the number of students who access mental health support or the counselling service". This would mean listing the full number of students in a College in each ADR, which the letter claimed would be the "least harmful way" for colleges to resist the new requirements.

30 of the University's 31 constituent colleges gave responses to *Varsity*'s questions, while Clare claimed exceptions under the conditions of the Freedom of

Information Act.

Seven colleges – Downing, Jesus, St. Edmunds, Newnham, Peterhouse, Robinson and Wolfson – claimed that the CUSU letter was published after their College Council or Governing Body meeting, and they did not follow the recommendations made in this letter, released on the 28th November.

Both St. Catharine's and Emmanuel Colleges claimed to be unaware of the CUSU letter, and both estimated the number of welfare cases.

Certain colleges, despite awareness, refused to follow the recommendations of the CUSU letter.

Churchill estimated the number of welfare cases because they "felt that it was the only approach that the OfS would accept". Gonville & Caius College told *Varsity* that while the college "has sympathy with much of the CUSU position on the OfS's questions", it must "observe its legal obligations to provide information required by regulators". Girton, meanwhile, "was aware that some colleges were counting all tutorial contact as a welfare case for the numerical data return", but said, however, that "such a return was not what was requested".

Some colleges, however, did indeed follow the open letter's request. Five – Corpus Christi, Darwin, Fitzwilliam, Homerton and Pembroke – submitted the number of all college members due to CUSU's open letter. Trinity Hall submitted the large figure of 626, but said that the open letter was not a factor in

their decision. It is possible that other colleges, which submitted notably large figures may have unintentionally co-operated with the open letter's request.

St. John's College initially submitted the number 953, which included all students, in line with the CUSU-letter's recommendation. However, the OfS asked for their submission to be revised in order "to reflect a more disaggregated figure under the welfare cases managed data set; for example, the number of cases referred to the senior tutor".

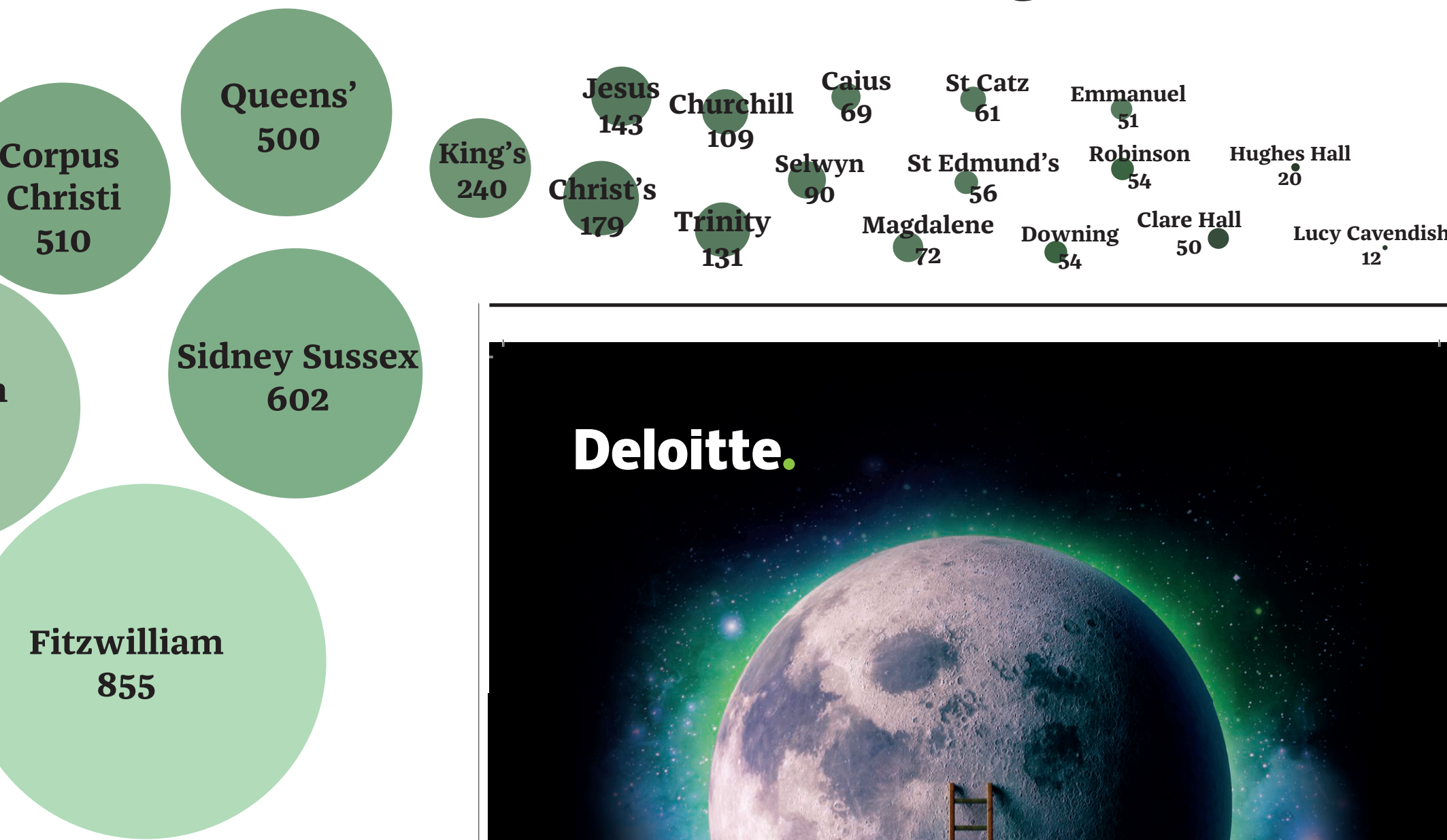
When asked for further detail about this request, a spokesperson for the OfS responded: "We don't routinely provide comment to the media on cases at specific universities." Several colleges questioned the relevance of welfare data to the ADR. Gonville & Caius claimed to "not see that there is any obvious relationship" between referrals to specialist services and Prevent issues.

Colleges were able to submit a comment alongside the numerical value of welfare cases. Some colleges used this to criticise the relevance of ADR's new submission requirements to the Prevent duty, even if they had nonetheless complied. Hughes Hall commented that welfare data "is not a matter of 'Prevent duty monitoring'... nor even related to it". Robinson similarly stated "we have used our best endeavours to comply with this request but do not accept that it obviously and directly relates to the College's Prevent Duty".

Selwyn, although complying with the ADR request, complained that de-

“[Welfare data] is not a matter of 'Prevent duty monitoring'”

Controversial Prevent return, following CUSU letter



terminating the number of welfare cases was “not... straightforward” because of multiple welfare support points, including University Mental Health advisors, the University Counselling Service, GP surgeries and intermission procedures.

Another recurring complaint was that welfare data had to be recalled retrospectively. Data was requested for the period from August 2017 to July 2018, yet institutions were not informed of this requirement until the June 2018 revision of the OfS monitoring framework.

Fitzwilliam’s comment stated that the “retrospective request presents a practical difficulty since these data were not collected at the time and cannot be reconstructed accurately”. King’s commented that “in order to provide this data in a more accurate form it is essential that we know that it will be required before the start of the reporting period”.

Retrospective reporting meant that for colleges which provided a numerical value in line with the OfS request, figures had to be estimated. This often included asking College tutors to estimate the number of students they referred to welfare services or estimates based on welfare referrals in the preceding month extrapolated to calculate a pro-rata value.

Peterhouse, meanwhile, refused to answer the question ‘number of welfare cases referred for specialist advice and support’, claiming that “the distinction between referral and self-referral [is] problematic”.

“
 We felt that
 it was the
 only
 approach
 that the OfS
 would
 accept
 ”

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Features



‘Nothing out of a bottle of Fair and Lovely could have given me confidence in my own skin’

Cynthia Fernando discusses facing colourism as a dark-skinned woman

As a dark-skinned woman of colour, involving myself in race-related activism has never felt like something I could opt out of. I am so obviously removed from Western beauty standards that it's often the first thing people will notice, and therefore, something inherently definitive. So when I meet otherwise well-meaning people who tell me I should not let my skin colour define who I am, or claim to be 'colour-blind', or that maybe I 'shouldn't get so worked up about race', I cannot help but laugh. How can I divorce myself from the colour of my skin when the way I navigate the world is fundamentally different because of it? Yes, it is exhausting to constantly have to think about my place in this world in terms of my skin colour. But it's not as if I've ever been given a choice in the matter.

As a child attempting to reconcile my Indian and British identities, I could not enjoy everyday life without constant reminders of the darkness of my skin. My family watching Indian television from the sofa of our British home, primarily to stay connected to the culture we had left behind, only served to make me want to distance myself even more, further than simple geography would allow. Adverts for skin-lightening creams would ambush me during the ad-breaks of my favourite soaps with promises to make

me more self-confident. In movies, jokes about girls looking as if they had been 'burned in frying pans' passed as comedy and entire song-and-dance numbers were dedicated to praising fairness. Marriage advertisements that explicitly excluded applications from dark-skinned women were not uncommon.

Outside of Indian circles, my darkness was apparent there too. I have heard 'you look pretty for a dark-skinned girl' played off as a compliment, and been warned by complete strangers to not spend too much time in the sun, in case I tanned. It always struck me when there was no malicious intent in their voices, but instead a genuine belief that they were complimenting me or looking out for me: protecting me from the implications of having dark skin. These statements demonstrate just how ingrained beauty standards of fairness have become - it is accepted as normal, even desired, to strive for as light a skin as you can achieve.

Colourism is the prejudicial and preferential treatment of people based solely on skin colour. Though not unrelated, it is distinct from racism as it can come from members of the same race as well as from external sources. This preferential treatment of lighter skin tones had a detrimental effect on my perception of beauty and self-worth. But it goes beyond words and hurt feelings - it raises fundamental questions about belonging. For a long time, I felt like an island: bodies of water separating me from any one mainland or nationality to call my own. Not only did I feel out of place in British society as a woman of colour, I also felt removed from my own ethnic group - all because of something I could not change. Despite this, I was incredibly lucky in my upbringing. Growing up in

“
Ingrained beauty standards of fairness have become accepted as normal, even desired
”

North London, I grew up in a diverse environment, surrounded by people of all skin tones. While memories of wanting to lighten my skin are painful ones, I was fortunate enough to have a family that forbade it and taught me the inutility of valuing physical looks. I was encouraged to pursue any career and further my education, a luxury dark-skinned people of colour are not afforded, being suppressed and silenced in India for the sake of their fairer counterparts. Having dark skin was associated with the lower-caste occupations of manual labour, and hence dark-skinned people are much less likely to be aided in aspiring to anything else.

It is because of this that colourism's relevance to me now is less about me as an individual and more about an acute awareness of its systematic nature. A simple browse through make-up aisles at Boots to search for a foundation to match my skin tone is enough to remind me of that reality. With the colour palette of a myriad of light skin tones to choose from and one dark foundation labelled 'mocha', the makeup industry paints itself as fundamentally colourist. Many bath products contain some kind of skin-whitening or bleaching product.

Social media reveals colourist attitudes. When my friends are white-washed under layers of Instagram filters, or someone praises Snapchat for contouring your features to make them look more distinctly Western, it becomes evident that most people still view the imposition of fairness as an improvement - not through their own fault, but through the fault of a society that has forced that narrative. It is not as explicit as the adverts I recall from my childhood, but its appearance in subtle ways highlights just how institutionally cemented

▲ Illustration by Alisa Santikarn for Varsity

“
Surrounding myself with and deriving inspiration from dark-skinned people of colour, I have gained confidence in my own skin
”

those beauty standards are.

Why does colourism often take a back-seat to discussions about discrimination? In the past, I have been hesitant to speak up about it. When movements such as Black Lives Matter call for a united front, to call out members of your own race for discriminating based on skin colour seems counterproductive and divisive. When the stakes are so high, a sense of guilt comes with criticising other people of colour. Dark-skinned people of colour also refrain from speaking out against colourist injustice for fear of conforming to stereotypes of anger and violence.

However, refusing to confront the issue ironically serves to deepen divisions. It is colourism itself that has divided our communities, by alienating certain members, and that denying that the problem exists just masks it rather than solves it. It is because of my upbringing that I feel fortunate enough to be able to talk about my experiences without significant repercussion. So I do bring it up and start conversations about it - skin colour has always been what other people have used to define me. Talking about it is my way of retaking control of it, in the hopes of changing that narrative.

Unlearning the beauty standards crammed down my throat has been a process, one that I may go through for the rest of my life. Whilst I occasionally wish for lighter skin, for the most part I love dark skin and enjoy the benefits of it (sunburns sound horrible, but I'll never know). Surrounding myself with and deriving inspiration from dark-skinned people of colour, I have gained confidence in my own skin, confidence enough to speak frankly and unapologetically about my experiences.

And nothing out of a bottle of 'Fair and Lovely' could have given me that.

'Our lives are like fingerprints – the one thing twins don't share'

Jess Molyneux recalls being separated from her twin for the first time

Oxbridge life can get pretty intense. You know what else gets intense? Sharing every aspect of life with one person for nineteen years: from the womb to birthdays, the 'top table' in primary school, to the stress and anticipation of the Oxbridge admissions process, my identical twin sister and I have been side-by-side every step of the way.

That is, until this academic year when I left Manchester for Cambridge at the same time as my sister left for Oxford. When opening your own brown envelope or UCAS Track notification has only ever been half the story, the ups and downs of Cambridge life can feel a bit funny all on your own. From the beginning, the experience has been characterised by a series of paradoxes. Separation felt totally natural, but was, at the same time, the weirdest and biggest thing I've done to date. Forging my own identity and making my own choices, and feeling like I was doing these things in a vacuum, without the usual comparative echo of my sister's equivalent or diverging decisions, was simultaneously emancipating and anxiety-inducing.

The nub of it was something which everyone experiences: university life is *scarily free*. It's not just the release from teachers or parents breathing down your neck, not just the liberating knowledge that no-one is checking up on your work because it is, after all, your £9,000 and your degree. It's not just the stressful excitement of doing your own laundry, or the dangerous gloriousness of being able to eat whatever you want. It's that every tiny aspect of your life is now up to you.

Especially as an English student whose lectures and supervisions don't exactly constitute an hour-by-hour timetable, how I divide up my day is for me to choose from an infinite number of possibilities. Libraries open 24/7 are super convenient, but they only add more options to the swirling mix. I'm the only one calling the shots when it comes to how much time I devote to reading, to lectures, to writing, to socialising, to exercise, to hobbies and events, to sleeping, even to *eating*, and when and where I do all of those things.

That's a lot of mental energy. Perhaps this amazing but terrifying total control is weirder, or at least more pronounced, for me as a twin. Having always had a reflection, someone your age doing roughly similar subjects and hobbies against whom you can evaluate your choices, is a sort of comfort blanket which lots of other people left behind when their parents stopped planning their days for them. It's not just about learning to be independent, as in the cliched trope of kids who can't boil an egg or iron a shirt before they go to university. Those things are the easy bits that you can pick up

► The author and her twin sister (JESS MOLYNEUX)



“My twin sister and I have been side-by-side every step of the way”

“Separation felt totally natural, but was, at the same time, the weirdest and biggest thing I've done to date”

in a flash and check off the list. What's harder, or at least more draining, and maybe more unexpected, is all the planning and the deciding.

Talk it up a bit, though, Jess, as my dad would say. This is all making me sound like a stressball and an overplanner, when really it's a small but constant part of life that gets easier to cope with. Because the result is sweet freedom. It's deciding for yourself what awesome things you're going to get involved in. It's realising that, actually, there might be a million possibilities for ways you could balance your degree, your social life, and everything else. But whilst that means more to choose from, it also means more ways to ace it. It means that doing things in the way you want is not just *allowed*, but the only way to cope.

For me, it's confirmed what I already knew but everyone else refused to believe: twin telepathy is a lie. When my sister and I compared notes during the break, we were both surprised by choices the other one had made that we wouldn't have predicted. (Women's football is the most standout example. I'm more proud of her two handballs than her GCSE results.) Even two people who share most of their DNA, and have been so used to making choices which reflect one another, often unintentionally, don't end up striking the balance in Oxbridge in the same ways.

All of our lives at Cambridge are a little like fingerprints – the one thing identical twins don't share; it's a nice way of thinking, I think, about the way we leave our mark here, creating our identity in, and inscribing it into, the city with every one of our tiny, daily choices.



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Features

The breast cancer gene and me



Looking ahead to Pink Week, **Charlie Morgan** discusses her discovery that she has a genetically higher risk of breast cancer

This was my best friend's mantra, as we sat on the freezing patio of a party in the middle of February last year. "If I had to choose one friend for this to happen to, it would've been you. You'll get through this, you'll be fine, you'll be fine..."

I was crying, wrapped in his arms, and I'd never felt so small in my life. A week earlier, a clinical geneticist had told me that I was a carrier of the BRCA2 genetic mutation.

Everyone has the BRCA1 and BRCA2 genes. They help to fight off a certain group of cancers, primarily breast cancer – after which they are named – and ovarian, prostate, melanoma and pancreatic cancers. But with a faulty gene, the risk of developing these cancers skyrockets. For breast cancer, my lifetime risk had grown from 12 to 69 percent overnight. For ovarian cancer, almost impossible

▲ ILLUSTRATION BY
ALISA SANTIAKARN
FOR VARSITY

to screen, my risk had grown from 1.3 to 17 percent. The news completely shook my world and was utterly terrifying – it was like nothing I'd ever experienced. A year later, I still find it hard to put into words how I feel.

My friend squeezed tighter when he realised what he'd just said. Saying that he would have chosen me wasn't cruel – or so he thought – but supportive. He knows I'm strong: I'm the advice giver rather than taker. I know what I want, and I go for it. He knew I could take this thing head on and would do whatever I could, *whatever that meant*, to fight it. But I didn't believe him. How could I fight against my own genetic code? A positive result for the BRCA2 mutation has ripples throughout your life, and when I was 20 and didn't (and still don't) even know what to be when I grow up, the diagnosis was overwhelming. My life stretched out in front of me, all at once, and irrevocably.

As a self-diagnosed optimist, I needed to put the news into perspective. Knowing about the genetic mutation is an incredible gift, and it has probably saved my life. And, I found out about the gene by chance: as Ashkenazi Jews, my parents had been invited to participate in a national study and were both tested for the mutation eight years ago. Unlike the general population who have a 1-in-500 chance of carrying the mutation, in Ashkenazi Jews the risk rises to 1-in-40. Usually the gene can clearly be traced through a family's medical history like a bitter and unwelcome guest. Yet, despite

“For breast cancer, my lifetime risk had grown from 12 to 69 percent overnight”

no known history of breast cancer in his family, my dad tested positive.

When a parent carries the genetic mutation, there is a fifty percent chance of passing it on to each of their children. I decided to get tested, and the blood test was easy – but the waiting impossible. After four weeks, by some extraordinary coincidence, I was called by the geneticist while on my way home from Cambridge. I learned two things that day: that a little (or big) cry on public transport is totally liberating, and that my result was positive. On the train I phoned my mum, a doctor who has perfected the art of handling bad news, and her response was characteristically cool: 'shit, shit, shit, shit, shit'.

After a positive diagnosis for the BRCA2 mutation, your geneticist will give you three options. First, you can do nothing, and hope that you're in the lucky minority. Second, you can choose non-invasive options, and combine annual anxiety-inducing screening with chemopreventative drugs (with scary side-effects) that do not guarantee risk-reduction for those with BRCA mutations. Or third, you can have a bilateral prophylactic mastectomy. This risk-reduction surgery can (almost) cure a lifetime of worrying! I knew immediately what I wanted to do, and that summer made my first appointment with the breast surgeon.

In July 2019, after finishing my master's, I will have a double mastectomy. During the five-to-eight-hour surgery, two surgeons will replace my danger-

ous breast tissue with implants and will reduce my risk of breast cancer by at least 95%. The surgery is complex, and although it's often confused with cosmetic breast augmentation, it's far more about risk than the risqué. To look on the bright side, that's not so say there aren't perks in little extra perk. But this will be my first surgery and overnight stay in hospital – even my debut in a hospital gown! The minimum six-week recovery period, aftercare rituals, plus the list of side effects, are terrifying. Despite all this, I know I've made the right choice.

This won't be the end of my fight with the BRCA2 mutation. There are more surgeries and risks to manage later in my life, but I don't want to wait to share my story. By chance, I was involved with Pink Week for two years before receiving my diagnosis, and I've seen the amazing work it does to raise money and awareness. This Pink Week, learn how to check yourself for breast cancer, and do it monthly. If you think your family might carry the BRCA gene, talk to your GP. There are lots of steps you can take to arm yourself against breast cancer. My fight, for now, is a quest for the perfect post-mastectomy front-fastening heat-moulded boob-loving bra.

Charlie will be speaking at the Pink Week event 'BRCA Education Evening' on Saturday 9th February, 7-8.30pm in the Emmanuel College Old Library.

If you are concerned about anything, further information can be found at <https://www.cancer.gov/about-cancer/causes-prevention/genetics/brca-fact-sheet>.

“Take me home, Mill Road”

Eliane Thoma-Stemmet visits Mill Road to find out whether it lives up to its reputation as a cultural melting-pot



As Cambridge’s most vibrant and diverse high street, Mill Road has a big reputation to uphold. But does it continue to live up to that reputation today?

To the untrained eye of a wee fresher, Mill Road can seem like an unchanging, stable microcosm of culture, a reliable place for recovery from the general grandeur that suffocates central Cambridge. As the brown child of first-generation immigrants from Germany and South Africa, a regular dose of Mill Road was prescribed to me when I first arrived as a wholesome remedy for those craving a reminder of reality outside the university, and a feeling of going home to my own melting-pot community.

Talking to Mill Road’s high street merchants, I heard different realities from each of them. There was optimism and despair, comfort and anger, voiced by different faces of the community. While the street used to be filled exclusively with small merchants, greengrocers, butchers and the like, one shopkeeper expressed anger that persistently rising rents had driven countless small shops, which once characterised Mill Road, into packing up. “It’s becoming a food place. The old shops can’t last anymore.”

A Costa has tried to make itself at home on Mill Road, although how well it fits into the street is

questionable, as it is immediately noticeable that it’s the only corporation on its side of the road.

This begs the question of whether there is a detectable atmosphere of anticipation for the future of Mill Road among its community. The majority of shopkeepers I talked to were not convinced that the public was apprehensive. “People are not worried”, they told me. Costa and Sainsbury’s have indeed sprung up, the latter replacing a long-standing greengrocers keenly remembered by other shopkeepers, and the likelihood seems high that the rate of chain supermarkets and cafés will only increase in years to come.

Even so, it’s not the case that every move-in is cause for concern for the community; I came across several independent cafés, such as Tom’s Cakes, which have also moved to Mill Road in the last two years, having been attracted to the buzz of the high street. “It’s the best community out there”, Matt from Tom’s Cakes told me, a feeling reiterated by all of the shopkeepers I had spoken to. Perhaps to assume that change to the makeup of businesses is threatening to its history, rather than part of the natural – and inevitable – evolution of every high street, is a misconception to be avoided.

Or perhaps this would be naïve? At Cham restaurant, a manager warned that gentrification is a ‘silent change’. Even if changes happen slowly and are met without much protest, their impact is still detectable. Already, some residents sense a divide between the two sides of the Mill Road bridge, feeling that the far side of the bridge suffers less from issues of gentrification and is more ‘flourishing’.

“I didn’t set out with too many expectations of feeling at home”

▼ Mill Road’s vibrant shopfronts (HASSAN RAJA)

The Mill Road Winter Fair, and on-going projects to tackle rising issues of traffic congestion and noise pollution, are marks of the continued vibrancy and solidarity of the community. Mill Road cafés generally use bread from Mill Road bakeries. One woman spoke of the mutual trust and cooperation of the businesses, which has built up over years, as she remarked, “We look after each other.”

Going to Mill Road in search of a melting pot that might remind me of my own community in Leeds, I didn’t set out with too many expectations of feeling at home, aware that every community is unique in its diversity. As a student living outside of Mill Road, I was conscious that I might feel like a tourist there. Clearly, finding somewhere that reminded me of ‘home’ would be a tall order, but in all my conversations with people for whom it *was* home, the sense of pride in the unity of their community radiated through speech and body language, and their welcoming approach to new members of the community was asserted for me by those who had moved to Mill Road in recent years and already felt it had “the biggest community feel”.

The road may have changed over time, a little for the better and a little for the worse, but its powerful dedication to its community and the determination to protect its cultural diversity and distinctive character should leave no one in doubt that Mill Road deserves nothing less than its reputation as one of the best places in Cambridge.



Opinion



Discounted tickets are just the first step in tackling May Balls' exclusivity

Jesus' discounts are a welcome change, but more can be done to tackle exclusivity

Charlotte Newman

Cambridge May Balls bring to mind extravagance, expense, and, above all, exclusivity. The move by Jesus College to cut their May Ball tickets by 50% for Jesus students on a partial or full bursary is welcome news in combating this image.

The only other colleges to reduce ticket prices, Wolfson and Hughes Hall, have previously given 20% discounts to those on full bursaries, but nothing to this extent has ever been offered before.

However, despite this huge discount, the reduced price is still £77.50. As a state-educated student who receives close to the full Cambridge bursary, £77.50 is expensive for a single night's entertainment and may still be unattainable for some despite the discount.

The exclusive nature of May Balls, with their hefty price tags, only risks adding to the alienation many students from low-income backgrounds profess to have felt when it comes to the Cambridge social calendar.

The discount for those on bursaries may allow more disadvantaged students to attend, but it also excludes students who may not receive the bursary but

are nevertheless dependent on student loans.

To put it into perspective, those on a full bursary have a maximum parental income of £25,000 per year. Just under half of that (£12,000) was spent on Trinity's fireworks display alone at their 2016 May Ball. A price of a May Ball ticket is on average between £100 and £150, with tickets for Trinity and St John's May Balls last year costing £175 per person. A household earning £25,000 per year has a weekly income of £480. Therefore, a £150 ticket would be worth nearly a third of that family's weekly income.

To extrapolate to an annual income of £150,000, with a weekly income of £2,884, the equivalent ticket worth a third of that family's weekly income would cost nearly £900. It is then easy to see why £100 to £200 can be such a lot of money to spend on a ticket. The steps that Jesus, Wolfson and Hughes Hall have taken mark admirable progress in this respect, but this is not yet enough.

The opportunity for students to work at May Balls does provide the chance for students to earn some money and attend the event at a discounted price; however, ideally it would not be necessary at all.

The system, to an extent, perpetuates the divide between those who can and those who cannot afford to go to May Balls. In 2018, improving significantly on the previous arrangement where 'volunteers' were reimbursed with the opportunity to buy a ticket to next year's ball, Trinity's committee announced that workers would be paid at least the minimum wage.

This year St John's has advertised that they will pay under 25s £7.50 an hour, and for those working a 6 hour shift during set-up and clear-up, they will reduce the ticket price for the following year by £45, to reflect the same wage. However, the remaining ticket price would still be close to £150, which may be inaccessible to students from lower-income families.

Some students have to work a ball in order to attend in the first place, and some can't afford a ticket even then. For those students from lower-income backgrounds who can afford ball tickets, the price of those balls still represents a greater level of commitment. The system can divide richer and poorer students and certainly doesn't promote inclusivity.

▲ Certain May Ball fireworks displays are notoriously expensive (CMGLEEE)

“For a student on a full bursary, a £150 ticket would be worth nearly a third of their family's weekly income”

It can be an intimidating prospect for someone from a less advantaged background to apply to Cambridge. The social pressure to attend May Balls, and the assumption that students will go to multiple May Week events, means that those from low-income families, discouraged by expensive tickets, are prevented from feeling fully integrated into Cambridge life.

Discounted tickets are a great start in tackling the problem of the exclusivity of May Balls and it would be excellent if more colleges followed suit. The improvement of workers' pay is also encouraging. However, the worker system does not fully address or resolve the issues of accessibility for lower-income students.

Perhaps the solution would be to lower the price of tickets for all and have a smaller budget for May Balls.

A shift in the social emphasis on the extravagance and exclusivity of May Balls to one of inclusivity would also be a step towards making low-income students feel more included. A solution would have to tackle both the social perception and economic exclusivity of May Balls as they currently are.

Divestment is a feminist issue. Women's colleges must lead the way

The impact of climate change on women is an opportunity for Cambridge's all-female colleges to lead the divestment movement

Belle George

During the ongoing divestment debate at Cambridge, it must be recognised that unethical investment in fossil fuel companies is, above all, a feminist issue. It is imperative that Cambridge's women's colleges rethink their investments to reflect this. The three female-only colleges – Newnham, Murray Edwards and Lucy Cavendish – are institutions with long histories of fighting for gender justice. In 2019, climate justice is gender justice. With pressure from divestment campaigns increasing, these colleges, along with their co-ed counterparts, have the opportunity to recognise and act on the undeniable fact that climate change is a women's issue.

Figures released by the United Nations earlier this year revealed that women are more likely than men to be affected by climate change, stating that 80% of people displaced by climate change are women. The position of women as primary caregivers and providers of food makes them more vulnerable in the event of natural catastrophes, such as the increasing number of floods and droughts associated with climate change. Statistics from non-profit environmental advocacy group Natural Resources Defence Council reveal that two-thirds of the jobs lost after Hurricane Katrina had belonged to women. In cases where gender intersects with race, the severity of the impact increases: the BBC reported that after Hurricane Katrina, African-American women were

“It simply is not enough for an institution to teach feminism without practical application”

among the worst affected by the flooding in Louisiana.

Given that the number of natural disasters caused by climate change is increasing rapidly, the world's most vulnerable women will continue to bear the brunt of the fallout of these environmental catastrophes if no action is taken.

An article published by European Parliament News states that “when women and girls are displaced, they are much more exposed to sexual violence and have other needs, such as sanitary ones, that are often not met.” Sexual violence and period poverty are both ongoing issues of debate in Cambridge, but discussions are at risk of becoming insular, forgetting those who suffer the aftermath of climate crises. This insularity, should we not turn our gaze outward as well as inward, risks creating tension between the feminist theory taught at our University and how we put this feminism into practice. It simply is not enough for an institution to teach feminism in an academic context without practical application. As institutions dedicated to providing opportunities for women to succeed, women's colleges should play an active role in countering this inward-looking perspective.

Cambridge's all-female colleges are the only such institutions of higher education in the United Kingdom, on the basis of providing a safe and empowering space for women. Newnham asserts they are a college that “gives priority to the achievement, needs and potential

of women”, while Murray Edwards argues that all-female spaces in Cambridge must continue to exist because “there is much gender inequality still in the world.” These statements demonstrate an interest in the fates of women in the global community, which should be matched by pushing for University-wide divestment.

Claims by these colleges to support the protection and enhancement of women risk coming under scrutiny in light of their lack of commitment to divestment. Figures requested under the Freedom of Information Act, and published in a *Varsity* and *Cherwell* investigation last term, reveal the extent of the all-female colleges' investments.

Most notably, Lucy Cavendish was found to have direct investments in oil and gas companies, including BP and Shell, totaling £450,293. Investments in fossil fuel companies whose practices serve to exploit and further disadvantage the world's most vulnerable women are unethical. Research published in 2016 detailing the long term detriment to the health of women in Louisiana as a result of the 2010 BP oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico revealed that both direct exposure to the oil spill and indirect effects of the spill had an impact on the physical health of adult women residing in southeastern Louisiana.

Lucy Cavendish's website states the college is as “radical” as they were in the 1960s when it was founded. Divesting from companies like BP, whose practic-

es endanger women, and pushing for University-wide divestment, are obvious next steps for the college's efforts in fighting gender inequalities. Women's colleges are faced with the opportunity to make substantive change to the lives of women globally by committing to divestment.

The three women's colleges are already facing pressure to divest, with climate justice groups at Newnham and Murray Edwards organising banner drops and letter writing sessions last term calling for their respective colleges to divest. It seems likely to intensify in Lent Term – over the Christmas holiday, the Zero Carbon campaign highlighted the crucial link between climate change and women's livelihoods, stating in a Facebook post: “[t]here are multiple ways in which the climate crisis intersects with feminism, something which Zero Carbon will be exploring in the coming term. One thing, however, is for certain: there will be no solution to the ecological crisis without women's liberation and gender equality.”

Female-only colleges should not limit their feminist efforts to the women who walk their corridors. They must act for the protection and care of women worldwide. Managing their investments in an ethical way that reflects support of all women, everywhere, would be a point at which the rationale for these institutions becomes praxis. Women's colleges must recognise this and take their place at the forefront of the divestment movement.

The burden of access work must not fall on individual students

Oxbridge must do more to support disadvantaged sixth-formers through the application process

Olivia Emily

In year 12, I was dreaming of Cambridge, imagining myself as a student in the little city with the river. It was the kind of Cambridge you see on TV – picturesque, proficient students, the perfect foundation for the perfect life. I could see myself, my best self, as one of the students in this city.

But the odds were stacked against me. I didn't think I'd get in. Not because I wasn't smart enough, but because, coming from a state school, I just didn't know how. I didn't have teachers who understood how the admissions process differed from those of other universities, and the only people I'd ever met from Oxbridge were similarly-disadvantaged current students working with outreach schemes.

In an ideal world, entry to Oxbridge is a level playing field. In reality, it simply isn't. Oxbridge remains a dream that many don't even see the point in attempting to achieve.

I have been lucky enough to benefit from outreach attempts, and I don't want to minimise the incredible work done by Schools Liaison Officers and admissions tutors. However, in my ex-

perience, it felt like a load of information had been dumped on me at once, and I didn't even know where to begin deciphering it. With a massive workload already, it felt superfluous that I should have to learn even more just to apply to university. It would've taken a very large weight off my shoulders, not to mention my work plate, if even one person around me knew what applying to Oxbridge is like.

The whole system needs to be demystified. During my application, I remember feeling like part of the admissions process was how well I could navigate the countless forms and red tape, seeing if I even had the patience to do it. All of these new concepts – ELAT, winter pool, college, academic interview – meant nothing to me. But without anyone to guide me, I had to make sense of them myself to make my dream of a Cambridge acceptance a reality.

I even started teaching my teachers about the process, explaining what the winter pool meant or reminding them to enter me for my ELAT entrance exam. I hope this is information they are passing on to applicants now, but the difference

I made in my state school was a drop in the ocean compared to the wealth of privilege held by those well-funded and very experienced eight top schools that send more kids to Oxbridge than 3,000 other schools combined.

Then, when state-school students get here, we see a similar trend. We often take part in outreach schemes; we become mentors in schemes like Project Access, or contribute to InsideUni; we write articles about how the access system is fundamentally flawed. The structure remains the same, and it is individuals who are working to change it.

When access becomes the responsibility of individuals, both when applying and when we get here, an unfair burden is placed on those from disadvantaged backgrounds. If Oxbridge altered their access and outreach schemes only slightly, this burden could be lessened.

While it is helpful for sixth-formers to hear from students from similar backgrounds, access work should go deeper than school visits and student Q&A panels. We should remove the burden from students, and train teachers in the art of Oxbridge applications. In such an

“The biggest issue in access is not just reassuring kids that Oxbridge is an option, but teaching them how to go about getting in”

already stressful environment of Sixth Form, students need to be supported, not burdened with more to learn. The current system is doing little to prevent this burden.

We should follow the path of Brampton Manor, the state school currently holding 41 Oxbridge offers.

Sam Dobin, the director of the sixth form said: “The secret is having the students believe in themselves.” I couldn't agree more, but let's not ignore the fact that there's also a lot more to it than that. Brampton Manor employs “a team of five Oxbridge graduates” who help students get their head round the process.

The biggest issue in access is not just reassuring kids that Oxbridge is an option, but teaching them how they should go about getting in. Ultimately, the burden of access needs to be taken off the individuals and shifted back onto the institutions.

Whether it's training school staff or streamlining the application process, more needs to be done to demystify Oxbridge and what it takes to apply, and this will simply never be achieved through student work alone.

Opinion

Brexiters were wrong to reject the backstop

A mistaken understanding of 'Britishness' lay behind the rejection of the backstop

Peter McLaughlin

May's deal is dead: there is no coming back from the worst defeat of a government in parliamentary history. But it is worth reflecting on what killed it: widespread opposition to the Irish backstop.

The backstop was a policy intended to prevent a hard border returning to Ireland. If, after the Brexit transition period, the UK doesn't manage to strike a trade agreement with the EU, the backstop would have ensured that (at least) Northern Ireland would stay aligned to some single market rules. Without a backstop, World Trade Organization (WTO) rules (which would apply by default after the transition period) would mandate that Britain could not be any more lenient on goods coming from Ireland than it could from goods coming from any other WTO member.

It is almost a truism at this point that a hard border would be ruinous for Northern Ireland.

Northern Ireland sends billions of pounds worth of exports across the border every year, so a hard border would have an immense impact on the region's economy, which is still recovering from the Troubles. It would also undermine the Good Friday Agreement, the deal that brought peace to Northern Ireland, which promised an invisible border from Carlingford Lough to Lough Foyle.

Fears have been expressed that customs checkpoints, perceived as symbols of occupation by certain republicans, could once again become a target for terrorist violence. And, often unmentioned, a hard border would close off Northern Ireland's Irish nationalist community from the Republic, isolating them from their own country and potentially fueling resentment of the union.

Despite all this, the backstop seemed the most fiercely opposed part of the Withdrawal Agreement. The DUP saw the backstop as a betrayal of Brexit and of Northern Ireland. Jacob Rees-Mogg said that he believed "most of the poison" in May's deal was in the backstop, and indicated that he might have supported May's deal had it been removed. Even Jeremy Corbyn opposed the idea, saying that the DUP disliked it "for very good and sensible reasons".

What were these reasons? One of the most important was that the backstop was seen as a threat to the union. DUP Brexit spokesman Sammy Wilson said that the Government had broken the "fundamental agreement" that they "would not separate Northern Ireland constitutionally or economically from the United Kingdom". Were the deal to have gone ahead, Northern Ireland might have traded with the EU on different terms from the rest of the UK, and, the argument goes, this would threaten the

unity of the UK as a whole and undermine Northern Ireland's shared identity with both the UK and the Republic of Ireland. But this is wrong. Rather than undermining the Britishness of Northern Ireland, the backstop is necessary to ensure that equal consideration is given to its people as British citizens.

Nations like Britain no longer match up neatly with the model of a homogeneous group of people with similar culture, ideals and values – indeed, it is doubtful they ever did. In looking at the country and what is best for it, we cannot pretend that such differences do not exist – instead, we must respect them, and work with them. This is not a mere recommendation; it is a necessary condition of treating all UK citizens equally, of giving them the right to assert their identity freely.

If Northern Ireland is genuinely to be an integral part of the United Kingdom, if it is really to be "as British as Finchley", it must not be forced to fit into a political, economic, or constitutional mould designed for the rest of the UK. Ultimately, Northern Ireland's belonging in the United Kingdom is not predicated on whether it adheres to exactly the same trading regulations as the rest of the nation. Hence, Northern Ireland must be allowed to actively contribute to British politics and identity on its own terms, adding to the diversity that informs any

real idea of 'Britishness'. There won't be one size that fits all: the unique position of Northern Ireland demands differences in politics and identity, and we must learn to accommodate this.

To see the backstop as undermining Northern Ireland's Britishness is to see Britishness through a very narrow lens. And when one moves beyond this rigid idea of Britishness, and considers Northern Ireland's unique position in relation to Brexit, the impact that a hard border would have on people's livelihoods, on the fragile political and constitutional situation, and on many of its inhabitants' identities – I would say it becomes obvious that a safeguard, in the form of the backstop, is absolutely necessary for any EU exit.

As a remainder, there was much I disliked about May's deal. But what was perceived by many to be its greatest weakness was, in actual fact, a strength: the backstop showed a willingness to allow for different political and economic situations, and to acknowledge that the UK is stronger for its diversity. Ignoring Northern Ireland's uniqueness will not make it disappear, and imposing the same trade regulations as the rest of the UK post-Brexit, on the grounds that this is an essential part of being British, will only result in alienation. A backstop-free Brexit will make us all much, much poorer.

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Andy Murray's everyday feminism is commendable, but it should be the norm

Murray uses his privilege to shed light on the continuing sexism in sport

Bethan McGinley

The media storm that followed Andy Murray's announcement of his retirement brought with it a tide of reflection, not just on what he contributed to tennis as an athlete, but also what he has contributed as a man. Throughout his career, he has been an advocate for gender equality in the sport, writing in his blog for *L'Equipe*: "Have I become a feminist? Well, if being a feminist is about fighting so that a woman is treated like a man then yes, I suppose I have".

His twelve year career is testament to this; he has repeatedly argued for equal pay in tennis, and in 2014 he hired female coach Amélie Mauresmo. It was this decision, combined with the influence of his mother Judy, who introduced him to tennis, that prompted the unapologetic feminism now associated with the Wimbledon champion. After hiring Mauresmo in the face of widespread scepticism, Murray noticed that "she was slated every time I lost, which is something my former coaches never, ever experienced. It wasn't right." He concluded that the experience "highlighted a few things I hadn't given loads of thought to."

To add to this, Murray has, perhaps unintentionally, continually challenged detrimental perceptions of masculinity within sport. Headlines following his

“
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wrought
by his
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2012 loss at the Wimbledon final almost universally included mention of his tears, and even very recently, papers took note of the emotional delivery of his retirement announcement. Undeniably, he is not afraid to cry. Such displays of emotion have been a breath of fresh air, helping to break down the damaging 'boys don't cry' stereotype in sports where, too often, physical strength is perceived as the antithesis to emotion.

Murray's everyday commitment to equality may have introduced feminism to an audience unfamiliar with its practices and ideals. Through Murray we have seen this demonstrated again and again. We saw it when he hired Amélie Mauresmo. We saw it when he corrected a journalist on Sam Querrey being the first American "male player" to reach a grand slam semi-final since 2009, not the first American player. And we saw it when he openly declared his opposition to Djokovic's assertion that male tennis players should be paid more than their female counterparts.

Yet it is important to note that Murray is not the epitome of feminism. His commitment to equality grew out of his experiences under Mauresmo's coaching, where he found that "her competence was always under fire", adding "I felt embarrassed." This shares similarities with the common 'what if it was your

mother' argument, which implies that men can only care about the plight of half of the world's population on the grounds that it may in some way affect them indirectly through their personal relationships with women. Sexism is an issue simply because women are people in their own right, deserving of equal opportunities, not because of their relationships with men. Perhaps the very fact that Murray's matter-of-fact feminism garners such extensive media attention reveals just how far we still have to go: his example should be the norm, not the exception.

Yet, he is an exception. And this is why we celebrate his decision to hire a hugely qualified female coach; we praise his correction of a journalist's mistake; and we commend his support for equal pay.

These things, in and of themselves, are not particularly commendable, and they follow in the footsteps of countless female players who have already been campaigning for equality. But because he is a man, he is able to challenge the status-quo with the power wrought by his privilege, in a way that female players cannot.

Hence, it is the way Murray uses such privilege that is worthy of attention, both because of the extensive sexism in tennis that he fights, and because of the

feminist example he sets for men and women, particularly in sport. The deeply rooted inequalities in tennis have long existed; as seen in the Battle of the Sexes in the 70's and more recently in 2016, when the Indian Wells tournament director, Ray Moore, was forced to resign after saying that "lady players" should "get on their knees every night and thank God" for the male players that he believes "have carried this sport." It is Murray's calm dismissal of such views that endears him to the world. He embodies a feminism that can be adopted by all, for the benefit of all.

The Good Lad Initiative here in Cambridge does the same. Working alongside sports teams and the university more broadly, they like Murray are helping to teach men that they can drive positive change.

Ultimately, we live in a university culture where 2 in 3 female students have experienced verbal or non-verbal harassment at university, where 42% of LGBT students have hidden their identity for fear of discrimination and where the largest killer of young men of university age is suicide. We all have a responsibility to promote equality and challenge toxic masculinity, and as Murray highlights, everyday feminism can be the answer. Where you go from here is your decision: the ball is in your court.

vulture

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Photographed by Sarika Datta

third space ii: exhibition preview

third space is back for its second instalment, following the success of last year's exhibition. **Sarika Datta** sits down with curators and contributing artists

"It's about championing and channeling diasporic narratives which are often neglected", states Anki Deo (Pembroke College, Second Year), "we're here to facilitate these stories, in whatever forms they take". *third space* is back for the second year of its annual exhibition, which defines itself as an artistic showcase of experiences of those who identify as from neither "here" nor "there".

Following last year's exhibition, founder Jay Parekh, now graduated, is trying to generate more awareness than ever of the importance of providing an artistic space for people of colour, particularly within Cambridge. "The *third space* exhibition allows people to tell their stories and to discuss the vast array of issues that affect people of colour", he remarks. As Anki, co-curator of the exhibition points out, it is an exciting time to be at Cambridge, wherein increasingly more diverse tastes finally have the opportunity to be catered for and being both racially and politically engaged is no longer as solitary an endeavour as it has been in the past.

Edwin Boadu (Trinity Hall, Second Year), fellow co-curator, mirrors this sentiment, viewing *third space* as a pastiche of those who felt they never quite blended into a community or particular sphere. He reveals that seeing such a space being created in Cambridge is "heartwarming" and provides a sense of relief and comfort: "I moved from Italy to the UK seven years ago and am ethnically Ghanaian, thus the notion of diaspora is one that resonates deeply with me. In spite of ethnicity or language abilities, I always felt I was never quite enough to belong to one community".

Kalvin Schmidt-Rimpler Dinh (Trinity Hall, Masters), also a co-curator, expresses the sense of disheartenment that can arise navigating Cambridge as diasporic. Being raised in North Carolina and Berlin respectively and of both Vietnamese and German descent, Calvin occupies a space of composite identity which he describes as carrying "several anchors" to which he holds equally legitimate claims. He also notes his adoption of British culture, having just started his fourth year studying at Cambridge and how this myriad of affiliations has created a wariness to any strong associations with one particular notion of identity. However, he argues that it is through being placed in this position of hybridity that he is able to perceive and better understand cultural tensions and his study of post-colonial literature and theory has further opened up these realms of understanding that have previously been sidelined in his personal history.

third space is, for many students, the first exhibition they will have submitted work to. Anki recalls the white Barbie wearing a sari



▲ "The *third space* exhibition allows people to tell their stories and to discuss the vast array of issues that affect people of colour" (SARIKA DATTA)

that she submitted last year, a gift bought in Mumbai from her grandmother. She laughs as she recalls the cutting ironies the Barbie represented. "She bought it for me so I could be in touch with my heritage but it only reinforced the idea of colourism and whiteness being good." This year, her submission takes the shape of a traditional form of Hindu art, an Indian floral decoration known as Rangoli. Deeply personal and sensitive, the piece was inspired by her desire to explore the toxic delineation of South Asian countries while toying with the idea of using an overtly religious medium to promote a message of embracement. Being ethnically Indian, yet growing up in London her whole life, Anki describes coming to Cambridge as experiencing "a race awakening". She recounts her relationship with identity having oscillated from being buried and ignored to a state of confusion and upset, until finally settling into a place where she can now navigate these contentions from a perspective of acceptance.

Running themes throughout conversations touch upon language and clothing as a means of self-expression and describing how the inability to speak one's native language can produce an intense feeling of displacement. However, it is perhaps these disjointed gaps which enable children of the diaspora to look inward and create their own spaces of identification, spaces that are fiercely personal and unashamedly bold. For Mia Watanabe (Trinity College, Third Year), wearing her *haori*, a piece of traditional Japanese clothing, is a small but profound statement on her autonomy as a mixed-race queer woman and gives her comfort in navigating the complexity of in-

tersectionality. "Being both *ha-fu* (a Japanese term for half-Japanese people) and being bisexual often places me in a social category of double-negation. I am neither Japanese, nor not-Japanese; neither British, nor not-British; neither exclusively attracted to people of the same gender (as myself), nor not exclusively attracted to people of the same gender". She recounts having tried to embrace this double-negation for many years, in the hope of gaining a position of acceptance by those around her, both in Japan and in the UK. However, it is precisely in letting go of trying to grasp a socially accepted identity in both countries that she has found contentment in this affirmative third space, a third space occupied by her, and solely her.

Similarly, Mishal Bandukda (Sidney Sussex College, Third Year) of British-Pakistani descent likens *third space* to a haven of solace for those who "fall between the gaps", confiding how the exhibition emerged at a time when she truly needed it. Depicted above wearing a necklace constructed of intricate Sindhi metal and bead work, she explains it was the first piece of traditional jewellery she bought with the intention of pairing with Western clothing, regardless of the binary juxtaposition the combination initially appeared to create. "I thought of it as cool rather than embarrassing to wear; it's a symbol of how far I've come in combatting internalised shame about my heritage".

Often, members of the diaspora occupy a space whereby the conventional expectations of skin tone and appearance are challenged, as experienced by Saffie Patel (Corpus Christi College, Second Year) who reflects on

the struggles of being half-Indian and half-Turkish: "I often worry that my attempts to be 'Indian enough' come across as disingenuous when by all accounts I am white passing and privileged." It is often the painful process of learning to recognise that other people's assumptions do not validate or invalidate an individual's notion of identity, and it is this path Saffie finds herself gradually navigating.

For contributing artists Arjun Singh-Lotay (Girton College, First Year) and Victoria Ayo-deji (Queens' College, First Year), it will be the first time that either of them will submit to an exhibition. Growing up in East London and with ancestral roots in both the Punjab and Kenya, Arjun identifies as belonging to several diasporic subsets and describes how this has been sewn into the fabric of his daily life from tying his turban in Kenyan style to the everyday enjoyment of adding masala spices to his PG Tips.

Similarly, Victoria, of British-Nigerian identity, also grew up among the wealth of diversity of East London and both artists recall the exploration of self-discovery this allowed them. Victoria's navigation between cultural spaces as a child is patterned with intimate memories of accompanying her mother to Dalston Market to buy ingredients to cook Nigerian delicacies like jollof rice and listening to the thriving music genre, Afrobeats. Despite having never been to Nigeria, Victoria notes that this dislocation hasn't prohibited her from creating her own space, given the flourishing community of second-generation British-Nigerians she has grown up with. Interestingly, her submission, titled *my first time in Africa was not my parent's birthplace*, is com-

► **members of the diaspora occupy a space whereby the conventional expectations of skin tone and appearance are challenged**

(SARIKA DATTA)

posed of a series of photographs taken during her trip to The Gambia in 2016. She recalls the questioning of her dual identity that she experienced during her time there due to her inability to fluently speak a Nigerian language. “I’m slap bang in the middle – I’m not British but I’m not Nigerian. I’m British-Nigerian.” Arjun reinforces this feeling of occupying multiple spaces, describing it as “the shady space in the middle of a Venn diagram” and this sentiment is further echoed by Anki as she remarks, “it’s not about the number of circles, but most importantly the midpoint between them”. After discovering his grandfather’s old film camera in the attic this summer, Arjun’s submission focuses on capturing his experiences of navigating selfhood; “I wanted the lens which my *Bapu Ji* used to capture Britain in the 1970s to be the lens I used to experience Britain in the 2000s.” The photographs range from images of Arjun growing up with his “little topknot dressed in school uniform”, to capturing celebrations for the festival of Vaisakh in Southall, the bastion of British-Asian culture which allowed the diaspora a place to discover itself.

For many students of colour coming to Cambridge, the obstacles they can encounter are overwhelmingly disorientating and dislocating. Creating platforms such as *third space* not only permits these artists a platform of self-expression and solace, but it serves as a celebration for students to understand each other’s work and assist one another in their journey of identification. For Arjun, *third space* is a way for him to give back to a community to which he is grateful for the help he received in discerning his multifaceted identity. For Calvin, it is a path through which he can explore the relationship between object and memory, delving into the story of his own family’s migration stemming from Vietnam War.

Collecting submissions from such a wide array of mediums is a testament to the complexity of stories being told about the experiences cultivated as a person of colour. “One of the really beautiful aspects I always find is that even if you take two people who have similar narratives on paper, their work and their outlook will be so much more than just facts such as where you call home and where your parents are from. Standing alone, none of these is ever going to be a full enough picture”, asserts Anki. Representation, dislocation and marginalisation are pervading themes amongst submissions, but these are heeded alongside themes of liminality, freedom and beauty, all of which Jay hopes to expand outside of Cambridge and into a wider context: “I want to keep expanding *third space* as a way to give people of colour the opportunity to tell their stories in other cities as well as commission work from rising artistic talent”. In an increasingly divided and hostile world which forces categorisation and sticks labels where they are unwanted, it seems that *third space* has come at the very time we need it most, generating the nuanced and multifaceted conversations that must be had in order to move forward.

The exhibition *third space* will be held at Sidney Squash Courts on Saturday 26th January, 7-11pm, with a film screening at 8pm and spoken word and musical performances at 9pm. On Sunday 27th, the exhibition will be open from 10-5pm for standard viewing.



Rethinking what is beautiful

Columnist Caterina Bragoli discusses the effect of long-held standards in the industry

The fashion industry progresses forward with intangible speed, whether through the seasonal rotation of garments or the way in which consumers are fed fast fashion. This rapidity rarely allows a glimpse into the hard-hitting realities that occur behind the scenes, or at the forefront of campaigns, which are camouflaged by a façade of aestheticism. The problematic standards within the industry require addressing amidst the tumult of advertising, modelling and creating.

Advancing forward with its unprecedentedly swift churning out of garments and advertisements in an attempt to keep people enthralled and captivated by the perplexing glamour of the fashion industry, an environment of ever-changing trends has undeniably emerged. Whilst we are often programmed to seek comfort in the notion of an absent corporate aesthetic, this idea has gradually been contorted into the problematic concept of the 'aesthetic trend'. We are encouraged to seasonally scour through various media outlets, whether it be Instagram or Vogue, looking for the most desirable items that are being hailed as the next big thing. Disposability rears its head in this instance, with those coveted items having a life span of approximately four months, solely to be deemed outdated.

The effect of this is far more deep-rooted: it serves to exacerbate the unattainable images of perfection that women are consistently fed daily. These toxic notions of what constitutes flawlessness are *fleeting*. How can a standard of perfection be established when what's fashionable changes (quite literally) like the seasons do? The coveted aesthetic trend of the moment, whether it be embellished designer logos emblazoned on garments or homages to 90s dresses, is temporary, thus contradicting any idea of a consistent 'perfect look'. And so, the aesthetic trend fosters an environment of inadequacy and incompleteness. In reality, as opposed to shoppers flocking to partake in this seasonal masquerade, people should be encouraged to shun emerging trends in favour of what they feel works best for them. If fashion is a mode of expression, why are we being fed transient corporate aesthetics that are changed at least four times a year?

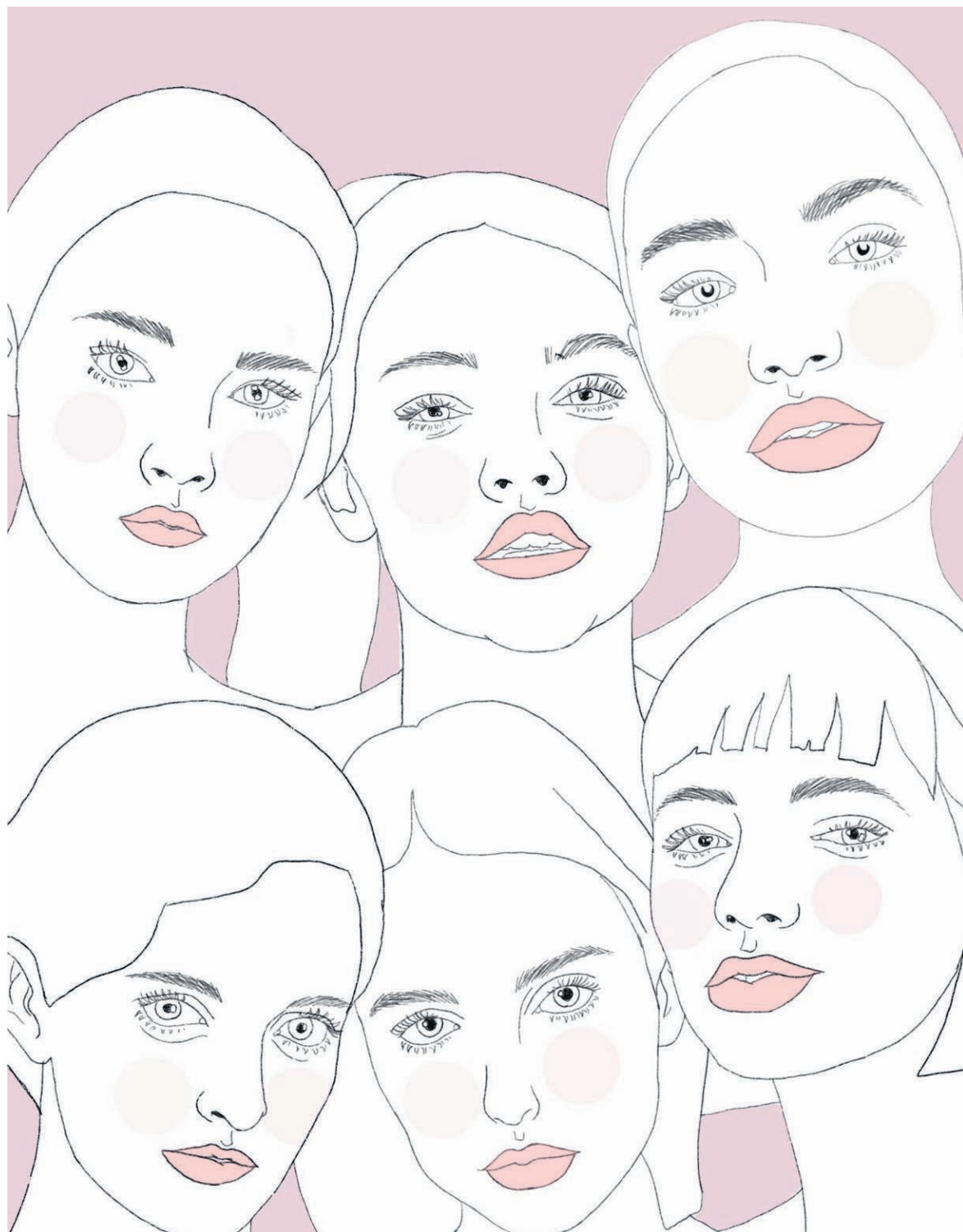
Feeling the unyielding insistence to remain up-to-date with cutting edge trends evokes pressurising feelings. This ties into an equally fundamental consequence: the societal pressure surrounding fashion. Fashion was - and undeniably remains today - a creative and expressive art form that has morphed into an indicator of social status. Fashion is essentially utilised as a weapon against women, a set benchmark that only a select few can really reach. An unfortunate target for this tirade of pressure to dress in a way deemed fashionable is teenage women. Searching for your own identity becomes increasingly challenging when you are fed an image of what that identity should be. Stepping out of the door into a street of judging stares when someone looks *different* is a calamitous reality for untold amounts of teenagers refusing

to conform to a preconceived notion of perfection.

The curse of comparison plays a vital role in the cultivation of this social pressure. The dissemination of images surrounding what women are supposedly aspiring to look like will, without doubt, feature models wearing highly sought-after clothing, alienating a significant proportion of consumers who financially can't afford to keep up with the financial strain and disposability factor of fashion. These factors serve to catapult the fashion industry to a realm which is unattainable for many people across an array of demographics. With an untold number of women partaking in this cruel game of comparison, feelings of inadequacy run rampant. Fashion is lauded for playing such a crucial role in enabling those who are artistic, unique and original in their own way. However, by placing the industry on such an inaccessible platform, what once was a vital source of refuge becomes something only for those able to pay the price.

When most people are asked about problems in the world of fashion, there is one topic that is at the forefront of most answers: body image. More specifically, the archetypal body image associated with the modelling industry. A constant, stationary aspect of the industry is the notorious use of 'underweight' women to model. It is fundamental to acknowledge that this important topic is being discussed - perhaps not particularly actively - by specific European countries such as Italy, Spain and France, and action is beginning to surface. France has legislated that models are required to provide medical certificates to confirm they are healthy enough for work, after banning extremely thin models. Yet, does this emerging change really make a difference?

For years, the fashion industry has projected what is a widely-acknowledged portrayal of what the ideal female body is: tall and slender. Whilst it is important to acknowledge that this is a body type many women have, and shouldn't be attacked, the damage that the glorification of this image has caused to young women is relentless. "Exposing young people to normative and unrealistic images of bodies leads to a sense of self-depreciation and poor self-esteem that can impact health-related behaviour," says French health and social affairs minister Marisol Touraine. What Touraine states has great significance: this intangible perception of the most coveted female body type that has been consciously accepted for decades has never truly had to account for its unfathomable impact. In an ever-progressive socio-political climate, with the emergence of modern-day feminism as an immovable political force, how can women



▲ Industry beauty standards have cultivated a culture of conformity. (ALISA SANTIKARN)

be confined to embrace a sole body type? The female spectrum of beauty is unbounding due to its sheer enormity and variety. Shunning the vast majority of women in such a callous way is detrimental to any progression occurring within the industry.

Trickling into the media gradually are images of various sized models gracing catwalks or covers in an attempt to promote the acceptance of all body types. There should be no single standard when it comes to body image: our bodies are our bodies and it should be as simple as that. This idea prompted 37 leading models, including Iskra Lawrence and Savina Karlsson, to write a letter to the fashion community pledging their support for the National Eating Disorders Association. They urged the American Fashion Industry to 'prioritise health' and 'celebrate diversity', two factors that need to be addressed on a global platform. The letter claims that eating disorders have the highest mortality rate out of all mental health illnesses, which is a harrowing reality that drives the cruelty of this aspect of the industry home. Fashion is and should continue to be empowering, yet it

also has the capacity to leave severe scars on young women trying to find their identities. These instances of women banding together and trying to exert control over such a vital problem displays a sense of unparalleled solidarity. It proves to an industry that has been set in its ways for decades that change is going to happen, or else the industry will ostracise itself as more women are praised for their natural bodies.

Fashion will always be a vital mode of expression to people across the globe, allowing them to channel their originality and creativity in an eclectic way. Yet, the unattainably high levels of body image that have been set for decades seem so infallible. By remaining such an intrinsic part of the industry, masses of people who are keen participants will continue to be ostracised. The damage that has been caused by unfair and alienating beauty standards may never be eradicated, but with the promise of change ushering its way into the forefront of the media, a new beauty standard can be established: that there is no room for standards.

Makeup's purpose: sparking joy?

Cie Jen Wong
Fashion co-editor

My first ever makeup product was a pink, glittery L'Oréal lip gloss bought by my mum when I was five. I remember applying the sticky gloss that was all the rage in the early 2000s, feeling so pretty with shiny lips whenever I went out with my family.

I was frequently exposed to makeup while growing up. As a Chinese dancer, heavy stage makeup was one of the first makeup looks I wore. When I look at photos of myself having makeup put on by dance mums, and all those strong (unblended) eye looks, I'm thankful that stage makeup remains on the stage.

Almost every girl's first makeup inspiration would be her mum, and I was no different. I learnt a lot from her, and picked up my love of lip products from there. Lip products were the only products that I was allowed to use, and I took advantage of that. A lip product collection was amassed, growing to the point that it was practically unusable. My school didn't allow makeup and lipstick was purely a weekend thing. But, I soon realised that lipstick was a mainstay in my routine. The whole bare face, bright lipstick aesthetic was mine. I still firmly believe that a good lip rounds off the entire look.

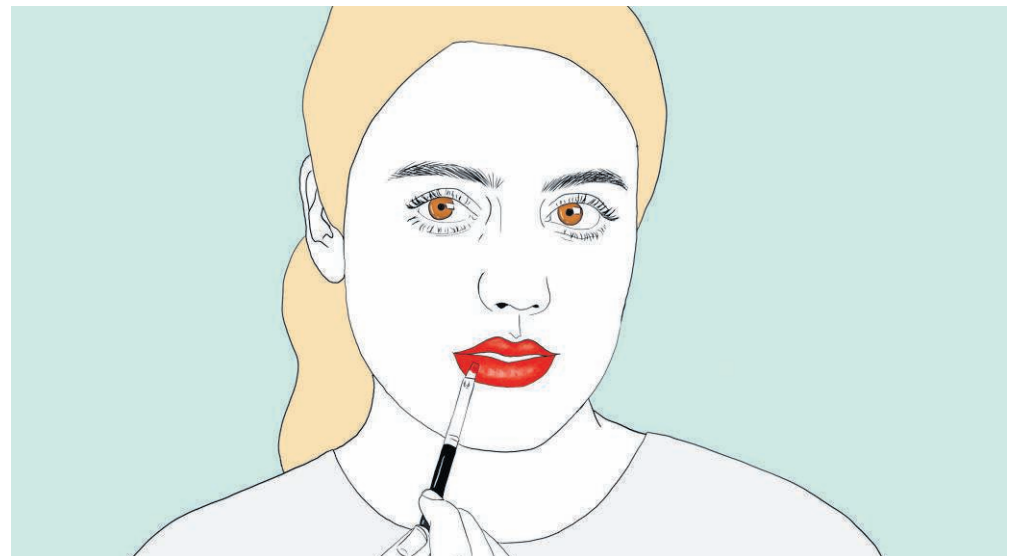
Fast forward to my teenage years, and YouTube/Instagram started to be a massive thing. Like everyone else my age, I was obsessed. I still remember watching Michelle

Phan. Then came people like Tati Westbrook and Jeffree Star, whose videos I devoured. I used to joke that I was great at makeup in theory. I could tell you what every step in a makeup tutorial was. I loved the idea of makeup – the idea that you could change how you look was magical. In those awkward teenage years, all I wanted to be was to fit into what was 'popular'. The Instagram style of makeup I was heavily exposed to told me that I needed to do everything from concealing, to baking and the list goes on.

I remember begging my mum to buy me a full face of makeup when I was maybe 16 or 17. She flat out told me no, that I didn't need makeup. She told me that I could continue having lipsticks, and that she would buy me whatever I wanted when I graduated.

In hindsight, I'm glad she did that. I think she wanted me to learn how to be confident in my own skin, and to understand that beauty comes from within, as cliché as it might sound. When brands like Glossier and Milk Makeup burst onto the scene, I understood where she was coming from. In those two brands, I found a message that really resonated with me. Makeup should be about enhancing what you have, and it can be really easy (this was important – I am too lazy to do an hour-long routine everyday). Not only that, I loved the aesthetic of the two brands.

Beyond my love of bright pink-toned lipstick, I also discovered my true soulmate – highlighter. This was a natural consequence of seeing beauty gurus slap on highlight to "glow for the gods". It just resonated with me;



▲ ILLUSTRATION FOR VARSITY BY ALISA SANTIKARN

I like looking glowy (and occasionally blinding) to ensure that my future is as bright and shiny as my cheekbones are.

My first big makeup shop happened at Sephora, the makeup utopia. I bought my first eyeshadow palette and highlighter. Since then, I've slowly added to my collection. My makeup shopping philosophy is simple: if I want it, I can wait, if I need it desperately, I'll buy it. The concealer purchase, for instance, was in preparation for late nights in my degree, and it has been very worthwhile. The blush was for revival after dying in reading. It has been worth it, too.

Today, I think that after a year of experimenting with makeup, I finally know what my makeup look is. Glow skin with a hint of colour and gloss is usually my go to when I have the motivation to look halfway decent. Glow skin with a more blinding highlight, a striking lip and some colour on my eyes is what I fall back on when there's an event. It's quite laid-back and simple in comparison to the intricate makeup tutorials I spent my teens watching, but it's me. In all honesty, I really do love makeup, and think I always will. It makes me happy, and that should be the purpose of makeup: to spark joy.

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Staging in the sunshine: open-air theatre in Cambridge



▲ Minack Theatre near Porthcurno in Cornwall, England. (BENUTZER:CHEF)

Jess Beaumont reflects on the pros and cons of venturing outside for theatre this term

It's currently so cold outside that my feet start hurting whenever I leave the house, but that also means I am longing for summer and everything it brings.

Reading a book on a sunny window sill, turning every possible meal into a picnic, exams being over... Last year, prelims safely out of the way, much of my summer term was taken up with rehearsing for two May Week Shakespeare plays, both of which we were to perform outdoors. Whether I made a mistake thinking I could regurgitate that sheer amount of the Bard in one go isn't up for debate.

More importantly, the vitamin D deficiency I'd developed in my first two terms was almost instantly cured. We never needed to worry about finding rehearsal space – with few overcast days, let alone wet weather, almost all of our rehearsals were outside, by the river, under trees, in college gardens. It is an idyllic image, and at Cambridge, we're on the whole extremely lucky to have such a saturation of beautiful and historic outdoor spaces. And the amount of space is needed – last year there were six different Shakespeare plays running across Cambridge in May Week.

Outdoor performances are inextricably linked to theatre tradition. The earliest formal plays in England were performed outdoors as part of religious festivals. In 1379, when the York Mystery Plays were performed as part of the festival of Corpus Christi, the tradition of moving pageant wagons was well established – the plays

would travel around the city to perform to the widest possible audience. The open-air theatres of the 16th century long preceded their covered cousins, and as such many of Shakespeare's plays were written with a quasi-outdoor staging in mind. You could argue that it is harder for a director to evoke the Forest of Arden or Italian countryside in the confines of an indoor venue than to situate Juliet's balcony in a terraced garden. I once saw the varied locations of *Romeo and Juliet* depicted entirely in and around a VW camper in the middle of a park.

The capacity of Cambridge colleges for these kinds of performances is huge. The majority of colleges have an abundance of open, grassy courts surrounded by imposing historic architecture, while sculpted gardens and the occasional dark, wild corner are to be found all over the university. When outdoor performances are so tempting in the summer months, it is perhaps dangerously easy for the content to become somewhat repetitive. In the past four years, there have been twice as many summer term performances of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in and around Cambridge. And with so many performances going on each year, originality is arguably becoming harder and harder to come by. It becomes an uphill battle to stage a fresh take, even if performed on a flat, perfectly manicured college lawn.

There is also no getting around that performing in college outdoor spaces has some pretty major drawbacks. When using a court lawn rather than a secluded garden the performance is inevitably plagued by interruptions from residents and other college events, especially towards the end of the summer term, when societies venture outdoors for garden parties. This distracts both actors and audiences, and counteracts any possibility of full immersion, no matter

how convincing the performances. Without the simple solution of a backstage area, it becomes a logistical nightmare to maintain the boundaries of the stage-area, and so the parameters within which the audience is asked to suspend their disbelief collapse.

If a production aims to avoid the noise problems with an evening performance, they then have to contend with the twilight; lengthier plays may find their final scenes take place in complete darkness. Natural lighting and weather conditions must be taken into account by directors. If the sunset does align with the performance, will it be counteracted or complemented by lighting choices? In established outdoor theatres, such as the Porthcurno's iconic Minack Theatre, weather frequently does not affect the fact that the show must go on, but in Cambridge, on the door sales can be crippled by drizzle.

Sometimes, when the stars align properly, the greatest disadvantages to outdoor theatre can be their greatest advantages. In 2014 I saw Arthur Miller's *All My Sons* at the Regent's Park Open Air Theatre. The outdoor setting of this play lends itself to an open-air performance, but the central London location could not help but occasionally break my immersion in the rural Midwestern setting.

At yet, as the play reached its climax, with Chris reading his brother's letter, his dialogue was punctuated with the roar of a jet engine on the London City Airport flight path. No ambient noise could have been more appropriate or better enforced the emotional weight of the scene. Although maybe it was the combined quality of the performance and expert writing that meant I was fully engrossed in Miller's world, rather than the outside world distracting me, distractions were incorporated into the world of the stage.

“
The weather does not affect the fact that the show must go on, but in Cambridge, on the door sales can be crippled by drizzle
”

It's time to wine down

Edward Pinnegar picks off his student wine column asking: red or white?

Wine can seem very complicated: it's tied up with strange jargon and people with scrunched-up noses who swirl it about in glasses the size of Wales. At Cambridge it's often encountered at formals, drunk after (occasionally during) unintelligible Latin graces under portraits of obscure men whose glassy, all-seeing eyes seem pretty judgemental about you.

For those who chose to drink, there is one important question: red or white?

This question is a great starting point for getting your head around what you really like about wine. Basically, reds are fermented with their skins on and whites aren't.

After harvesting the grapes, they're crushed and destemmed – leaving an unappetising-sounding mixture of seeds, skins, pulp and juice. After fermenting, more often than not in stainless steel, but traditionally in vats, sometimes trodden by foot, the wine is run off and the pulp pressed again to extract the remaining juice.

Press too softly and all the tasty, healthy compounds (called polyphenols) – which tend to be in the skin and the seeds of the grapes rather than in the fleshy pulp – will be wasted. Press too hard, and the wine be-

comes bitter.

So why don't white wines 'age' like reds? My grandad used to think that all wine improved with age. 'An older vintage,' one of us would say (with much trepidation) as a 1974 Sainsbury's red emerged from the cupboard, with forty years of dust to match.

My grandad was wrong, and we drank a lot of salad dressing.

The idea of aging a wine, at least, is that it's meant to improve after a bit of time sitting around. Some do, some don't – but again, it all comes down to the skins, and a bit of straight-forward chemistry. It's the presence of polyphenols – the colour pigments, flavour compounds and tannins (the stuff in red wine that makes your mouth feel a bit dry) – that influence the rate at which the wine reacts with oxygen.

As a rule of thumb, deeper reds – ones that have a darker colour and a richer flavour – tend to age better because they have the necessary chemical structure and tannin levels to improve.

Lighter reds, which have lower levels of phenols and so are more chemically unstable, don't stand up so well to years stashed away: too much oxygen and you might just end up with a sad old vinegary salad dressing.

Cruelly snatched from their skins at birth, whites are usually similar. Some types of white grape are exceptions: more chemically complex Chardonnays, Viogniers and Rieslings can keep and improve... if you have the self-discipline not to Hoover them up in the meantime. On that note, I'd like to offer a little guidance

on what to drink this week if you're looking for the perfect glass of wine to drink alone or share with friends.

It's week 2 and it's cold, so this week's suggestions are two very different styles of red, and a white. All are available from a Cambridge branch of Sainsbury's, Aldi or the Cambridge Wine Merchants.

Vicente Faria Animus Tinto 2017, Douro (Portugal). Aldi, £5.49. Vegan.

As a rule of thumb Sainsbury's wine isn't always great value, but this easily beats anything you'll get there at that price level. The sort of red that'll warm you from the inside. Best with anything a bit heavy – think cheesy or meaty – or, for a vegan option, anything with Quorn, mushrooms or beans.

If it were human it'd be: renowned for giving good hugs.

Chateau Curton La Perriere 2014, Bordeaux (France). Cambridge Wine Merchants, £7.08

(with 10% student discount).

A great introduction to Bordeaux, one of the world's most famous wine regions. A medium-bodied (ie. slightly 'lighter') style than the above. It even won a gold medal in 2016, so hey it must be good (these do genuinely count for something).

If it were human it'd be: your friend's dad who's sixty-something but still actually rather cool.

Sainsbury's House Sauvignon Blanc, Western Cape (South Africa). Sainsbury's, £4.80. Vegan.

Don't be put off by the bland label! You'll be pleasantly surprised by this crisp white. Leave it out of the fridge for 20 minutes prior to drinking. Typically described as 'fruity' – you might get a hint of grapefruit or lemon. Have with something lighter like fish, or anything with (cooked) peppers, onions or avocado. If it were human it'd be: unequivocally spicy af.



▲ Illustrations for Varsity by Rebecca Grubb

The joy of cooking in Cambridge

Zach Lande

When I was in my second year, I started to try my hand at cooking and venture away from Hall, the college's reliable bastion of student nutrition. I swiftly found that a self-sufficient method of sustenance was incredibly fulfilling, especially when I shared my new-found skill with my friends. This made me curious to discover what other students in the college were concocting in their kitchens and gyms.

Tim is a PhD student from New Jersey with strong Italian-American roots. His dish of choice was an authentic nonna (grandma) recipe, a tangy Chicken Piccata, served with creamy polenta and crispy roasted asparagus. It has remained unchanged for generations since its origins in Sicily, birthplace of his grandmother. As a first-generation Italian in America, she preserved her home cuisine in a new and foreign land.

Tim's motivations for cooking the dish remain the same: "Making the food that you would normally have at home is a way of getting over homesickness.

It's basically nostalgic comfort food." With

only £8.00 worth of ingredients and 20 minutes of your time, you can put together a meal for two. And herein lies the beauty of the dish, which is best appreciated when shared with someone else.

I asked Tim, "What is the best way to start getting into cooking?", and his response was, "When I invite friends over for dinner, they want to reciprocate."

Food is meant to be enjoyed with people; it is a break from the day, a chance to clear your mind, and forget about work for an hour or so. What better place than Cambridge to give it a go?

The Italian theme continued when I paid a visit to Luca and Federica, two fourth-year Engineers who made a Southern Italian-inspired spaghetti. The dish was invented during Easter term, when they desired to make something tasty, using healthy ingredients, to get through the exam season.

The pasta itself is a riff on a classic spaghetti alla puttanesca, with a few personal touches. At a cost of £5 for two people, and only 30 minutes of effort, it is a masterpiece in simplicity.

Federica emphasised the influence of her family and friends on her cooking, since eating is always a social occasion in Italy. Passion for food reigns supreme, which, according to Luca, is what "distinguishes Italians from other cultures. The English don't put in quite as much passion. In the UK there is a stronger link to working and being efficient. Food is a necessity, whilst in Italy it is a daily ritual."

So how can we, as students, learn to develop a passion for food? Luca suggests that you should "trust yourself to buy the ingredients you need to make the recipe, because then you have no excuse not to make it.

“*Chicken Piccata, served with creamy polenta and crispy roasted asparagus is a Sicilian delight*”

Think of your future self and the need to cook." Food is meant to be enjoyed with people; it is a break from the day, a chance to clear your mind, and forget about work for an hour or so. What better place than Cambridge to give it a go?

Gabriel, a third-year Lawyer from Singapore, was my final port of call. His dish was a classic crowd-pleaser; a gooey, chewy, melt-in-the-mouth, chocolate-chip brownie. Baking is a cheap and efficient way of producing tasty treats that are a guaranteed pick-me-up.

For Gabriel, however, baking is just one of many skills which he had to learn when he moved overseas and started living by himself. Figuring out how to cook was not just a means of survival, but also a continually satisfying experience that gave him the ability to make anything he wanted. In his small gyp, the basic equipment and facilities do not limit his passion.

Even though Gabriel only has a microwave and rice cooker to work with, the possibilities are endless. In Singapore, "food is the national religion and a massive part of Singaporean culture."

He is a "huge fan" of adding a personal touch to his food, so he seeks inspiration by browsing individual blogs and finding people's recipes and ideas from there.

The meals I shared with these students showed me that cooking is indeed more effort than ordering a takeaway, microwaving a ready-meal, or having your parents cook for you.

More importantly, cooking is a continually rewarding, and often therapeutic, life skill. It is also a shared experience, a way to express yourself to someone you care about. That someone can even be yourself.

“*At a cost of £5 for two people, and only 30 minutes of effort, it is a masterpiece in simplicity*”

Following *You*

After watching Netflix's latest hit-show, **Shannon Phillips** questions just how far social-media stalking should go

Developed by Greg Berlanti and Sera Gamble
Starring Penn Badgely, Elizabeth Lail,
Luca Padovan
Currently available on Netflix
★★★★☆

It's the season for guilty binge-watching and *You* makes for delightfully creepy late-night viewing. After spending a few months airing on TV very much under the radar, *You* has recently been enjoying an explosion in popularity following its availability on Netflix. But why the sudden surge in interest?

Meet Joe Goldberg (Penn Badgely), the adult-world, book-store managing reincarnation of *Gossip Girl*'s Dan Humphrey, complete with self-righteousness and sarcastic social commentary. Except this time we're privy to his inner monologue from the beginning.

In the first scene, aspiring writer Guinevere 'Beck' (Elizabeth Lail) swans into Joe's bookstore and the two converse flirtatiously. They judge the choices of other customers and

chat about different authors, but in the end she leaves without passing on her number. So Joe does what any of us would do: he tracks her down on Facebook and Instagram. Scrolls casually through her photos. Finds her address. Steals her phone and reads her text messages. Follows her to various social gatherings. From the get-go, *You* veers from satirical romantic drama into true crime and back again. It subverts typical genre tropes at every corner and takes you along for the ride. Of course it's not entirely believable – take Joe's magic baseball cap of invisibility or Beck's ability to write bestsellers under duress. Still, it's clever enough to be entertaining.

You is a social media horror story with the killer hiding behind shower curtains and jars of teeth stashed in the bathroom tiles. Beck is relatable in that she is incredibly blasé about her privacy settings, as most of us are. At some level we all suspect Facebook is listening in on us even though we do nothing about it. In this narrative, Beck's carelessness leaves her open to observation and eventually to manipulation and heartbreak. Joe seems to think he sees the 'real' version of who Beck is and not the fake social media persona she projects to the world. Joe himself is social-media shy (when he's not using it for stalking purposes), disdaining people's false façades and vain ambition for the 'authenticity' of his rare books and vinyl. Of course, as an audience we are aware that Joe's good-guy presentation is a façade masking his



▲ Penn Badgely pursues Elizabeth Lail in Netflix's new drama series (NETFLIX)

psychotic tendencies and need for control.

Because Joe steals Beck's phone early in the show, we're also given a unique angle on dating in the 21st century. Haven't many of us wanted to know what the other person was thinking when we starting dating them? Was that moment significant? (Yes!) Do their friends like me? (No!) Was the sex just as bad for them? (Definitely.)

Throughout the show Joe is made to be uncomfortably relatable. As he justifies his own actions, we are caught agreeing with him, secretly hoping he gets away with whatever he is planning. After all, he's doing this in the name of love, right? But this is not the *Breaking Bad* anti-hero story of Walter White where the protagonist ends up unwittingly doing the wrong thing in spite of good motivations. At points it does appear that way, especially when Joe is playing the supportive boyfriend. Instead, his underlying motivation is selfish. He has to be in control. He wants to do what's best for Beck, provided it's on his terms. Joe spends all of his time striving to remove the obstacles between him and Beck, whatever the personal cost to Beck herself.

She has many unhealthy relationships which she comes to realise she's better off without, but in attempting to solve all of Beck's problems for her, Joe removes her of any agency. It is a damning reminder that even as we try to help the ones we love, we need them to want to help themselves.

Instead of being a nuanced anti-hero, Joe is a villain who ends up doing some good along the way. The audience is left more than a little disgusted by him at the end of the show. Even the potentially redemptive subplot with his next-door neighbour's kid turns to corruption in the end. The narrative style also means that we are robbed of Beck's perspective entirely by the end of the season, thus forcing us to focus solely on Joe's increasingly manipulative actions. More than being a cautionary tale about social media, *You* becomes a warning against trusting people blindly – on social media or otherwise.

In the end, despite its unique and clever blend of plot twists, tense moments, and genre-hopping, *You* leaves us with an unsettling message. People aren't who you think they are... they're worse.

Vice

Directed by Adam McKay
Starring Christian Bale, Amy Adams, Steve Carell
Released 25 January

★★★★☆

Lillian Crawford

Halfway through Adam McKay's docusatire *Vice*, the credits roll as Dick Cheney (Christian Bale), retired from politics, sits in the sun with his family. It is a cruel joke, not only in the prospect of the former American vice president abandoning the corridors of power for summer picnics, but more in waving a way out under our noses. Until this point, the audience has been under an attack of absent-minded cuts, parallel shots, and mediocre caricatures. The opening text informs us that the filmmakers have done their "fucking best" to tell the truth. What we get is a fucking mess.

This was, of course, to be expected. McKay, having already flung off his farcical *Anchorman* days in pursuit of relevant cinema with 2008 financial crisis-drama, *The Big Short*, has evidently been scratching his head for a similar project. The benefit of a subject as secretive as Cheney is that fabrication becomes a necessity, something one would imagine to be difficult when the events depicted remain in living memory. That would be worthy of analysis if *Vice* was even remotely concerned

with the past – it is a film made for the present, as obvious a veiled comment as Charlie Chaplin's Adenoid Hynkel in *The Great Dictator*.

The difference between Chaplin's masterpiece and McKay's car crash is that the former knows when to be silent. Talking never ceases in *Vice*. Christian Bale delivers his speeches with a forced growl, straining to mask his natural tones and project through endless prosthetic layers.

The noise gets louder. Satire can misfire, but *Vice* doesn't want simply to be comedic. It wants to give a version of events, while knowingly biased, that will teach American viewers a lesson or two about megalomaniacal practices in their nation. To do so, McKay pulls out every gimmick in the book. He forces us to read slide after slide of sickly yellow text, to watch real footage sandwiched between reconstructions and still photographs.

A few faces amongst the torrent of images that awash the viewer stick. Torture victims. Tony Blair. Mike Pence. A beaming vintage Donald Trump. They go by in a flash but stay long enough to ensure you register them and give a knowing hum. It is a film deliberately designed to be seen by Americans, knowing that it will stir them into a frenzy of debate. Given the mania of the current climate and the fractious nature of society, such a childish display of hate-mongering can only be condemned. At least we in Britain can look on without investment, safe in our own strong and stable island across the sea.

The Mays Call for submissions!



The Mays Anthology is delighted to announce that submissions for our 27th edition are open.

The Mays is the premier student anthology, publishing the best new writing and art from Oxbridge students each year. Widely credited with launching Zadie Smith's literary career, The Mays continues to attract the brightest creative talent from both universities. Previous guest editors have included Kate Bush, Stephen Fry, Rupi Kaur, Nick Cave, Patti Smith, Colm Toibin, Jarvis Cocker & Ted Hughes.

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▲ Clockwise from left: Mural tribute to Aaliyah in Detroit (PICRYL); Jovante Cunningham in Lifetime's *Surviving R. Kelly* (LIFETIME/YOUTUBE); R. Kelly's 'Backyard Party' music video (RKELLYTV/YOUTUBE)

R. Kelly: drawing the line between man and music

In the wake of the documentary *Surviving R. Kelly*, Shameera Lin re-examines her previous admiration for the star and considers how listeners are complicit

At a recent bop, coming several months after Ben Zand's incisive documentary on the allegations surrounding R. Kelly was released, 'Ignition (Remix)' was blasted through the loudspeaker. A synchronous mass of drunken students grooving to the refrain of 'bounce, bounce, bounce, bounce, bounce, bounce, bounce' suffocated my senses, dominating the buzzing setting. No signs of outward distress, at least to me, to be seen.

I, on the other hand, froze upon recognising the voice of the man whose sound dominated an embarrassingly sizeable portion of the soundtrack to my formative years. I felt violently ill for a moment, unable to distance myself from what I was now wholly aware of, yet without a direct connection to: this monster I had once called one of my favourites only two years prior.

Until now, I have been unable to untangle myself from the knots of humiliation that form in the depths of my consciousness, when moments of pleasure arise from listening to a verse from some R. Kelly tune for which I once had fond memories. Fleeting pleasure, prolonged shame.

Finding out that a beloved artist has acted unforgivably is indeed a life-altering experience. I cannot recall, and I would rather not, the exact moment I realised listening to R. Kelly would no longer cohere with my conscience. As a survivor of sexual assault, it was especial-

ly distressing to know I had been supporting the music of a man who groomed a 15-year-old Aaliyah, another artist whose music I grew up loving. A man, whose fame for having been caught on tape peeing on an underaged girl sexually, matches his musical fame.

How could I not have comprehended my complicity earlier?

At the peak of my R. Kelly phase in 2012, he was well-established as the man on the pee tape. I would crack jokes on the subject matter. I found a now-infamous video of R. Kelly and Aaliyah on BET, where Aaliyah called Kelly her "best friend in the whole wide world" in response to allegations of a relationship between them – a sentiment Kelly reciprocated when he thanked his 'best friend' [Aaliyah] at the 1994 Billboard Awards. Music magazine Vibe later revealed a marriage between the pair.

This trend was further seen in an interview Kelly had with music journalist Toure after being cleared of charges in relation to the tape. Asked if he liked teenage girls, Kelly could not help requesting for a telling clarification: "When you say teenage, how old are we talkin'?"

I was blinded by my love of his music. Engaged in a wholesale purchase of an insidious idea, I saw the relationship between Kelly and Aaliyah as one of forbidden love, spurred on by my own problems with having fallen for much older men as an impressionable teenager.

I projected my romantic desires on what was a clear instance of predatory behaviour. I was Aaliyah, and the object of my affection was R. Kelly. Except that she got him, whereas I never did (thankfully). I gained inspiration from Aaliyah's crooning, about how her love for someone whose "age ain't nothing but a number" would remain unchanging in a song penned by, you guessed it, Kelly himself.

Only years after did I truly understand the truly poisonous implications of a 27-year-old man wanting to marry a 15-year-old (spoiler: it's never about love), but this was also before I had denounced Kelly's music perma-

nently.

Today, revisiting R. Kelly is always a matter of pain. The bop is an instance of how we are all quite capable of being complicit as fans of problematic artists. I'm certain most, if not all, of the attendees at the bop were not inherently bad people, but it is far too easy to turn the other cheek when you are blinded by your enjoyment. When the temptation to revive the pleasure I once derived from his music resurrects briefly, even if it lasts a mere ten seconds, I would automatically remind myself of why I stopped listening to him. R. Kelly's lyrics seem to me exactly like the person he is now known to be – sexually denigrating, narcissistic and simply vile.

As an English major, I am often taught to distance the writer from the craft. When the lines are blurred between art and reality, however, that is when you know you must take a stand. Much like Ted Hughes, I perceive Kelly's work as an extension of the man, but I no longer allow him to profit off my enjoyment. Instead of consuming anything made by a once loved monster, take a moment to listen to those whose lives have been altered irrevocably by their actions. In my case, watching *Surviving R. Kelly* has been more of an eye-opener. In this important documentary series, survivors vividly describe the horrors of being involved with Kelly – I can only apologise to them for having not heard their experiences before.

Like those at the bop, I am not an inherently bad person. And whilst I am tempted to deem anyone who still listens to R. Kelly a morally dubious character, a personal connection with art often leads us down the path of ignorance – I understand this far too well. Getting past my engagement in what I see as a personal failure requires more than just boycotting R. Kelly's music. I have made a lifelong vow to myself: I will always do my best to develop a discerning perspective toward any kind of creative consumption I choose to engage in. Now I can say to R. Kelly, with all certainty: 'thank u, next.'

“Today, revisiting R. Kelly is always a matter of pain”

“When the lines are blurred between art and reality that is when you know you must take a stand”

Science

Meeting the hackers of the future

Reporting from the University of Cambridge's annual hackathon, Science Editors **Zak Lakota-Baldwin** and **Marco Oechsner** find a wealth of creative projects produced by a diverse group of students

What comes to mind when you picture a hacker? For many of us, the stereotypical image is of a pallid, hoodie-clad teenage boy, breaching Facebook's inner walls and leaking sensitive information from the safety of his basement. Spend a few minutes talking to any of the boundlessly inventive and enthusiastic students at Hack Cambridge, the University's 24-hour hackathon, and you would come away with an entirely different impression.

The event, which took place at the Cambridge Corn Exchange and Guildhall over the weekend of January 19th and 20th, brought together hundreds of brilliant young hackers from universities around the world. They collaborated and innovated, using their hacking skills not, as the name may suggest, to tear down firewalls, but to build something new. The core idea is at once simple and thrilling – in the 24 hours allotted, the hackers are challenged with putting together an original, exciting creation, be it a piece of software or hardware. When the dust settles, the big name sponsors and judges (among them representatives from Microsoft and Amazon) award prizes to their favourites, and the hacking efforts of all are celebrated.

Varsity spoke to Timothy Lazarus, a third year CompSci at St. John's and the General Manager of Hack Cambridge, about the history and ethos of the event. Now in its fourth iteration, it shares many of the features of the famous US hackathons that inspired it, but has come to stand out in one crucial way – rather than operating a simple sign-up system, it has a selective application process, and uses a sophisticated algorithm to ensure a diverse mix of participants.

Lazarus explained: "In the first year, we didn't develop this complex algo-



rithm, and the male to female ratio was just way too high." He added that the focus on improving representation at the hackathon came from a desire for people to appreciate that "anyone can hack, irrespective of your background – if you're given the opportunity to make something amazing, you will."

The hackers, unsurprisingly, did not disappoint. Speaking to the cheerfully exhausted teams, many of whom had barely managed an hour's sleep between them in their creative frenzy, it was striking to see what a broad range of problems they had applied themselves to, and how ingeniously they had solved them.

One team designed an app capable of using camera technology to detect a

▲ **Teams of students worked on a huge variety of projects over the 24 hour period**

(MARCO OECHSNER)

“Anyone can hack, irrespective of your background”

◀ **The first place prize, awarded for the most innovative hacking project**

(MARCO OECHSNER)

fall induced by a stroke, which would then notify the friends and family of the stroke victim with a video of the fall and give them the opportunity to immediately alert emergency services. Another team, seeking to combat fake news and media bias, devised an extension to Google Chrome which records and assesses the articles that a user reads in order to build up a personalised political spectrum and recommend alternative sources for a more balanced view.

The remarkable diversity at Hack Cambridge was apparent not just in gender, but also in geographical distribution. One particularly diverse team included students from Germany, Canada and Egypt, who found common ground in their frustration at what they perceived to be a lack of any suitable note-taking apps, and rectified this by simply designing one themselves.

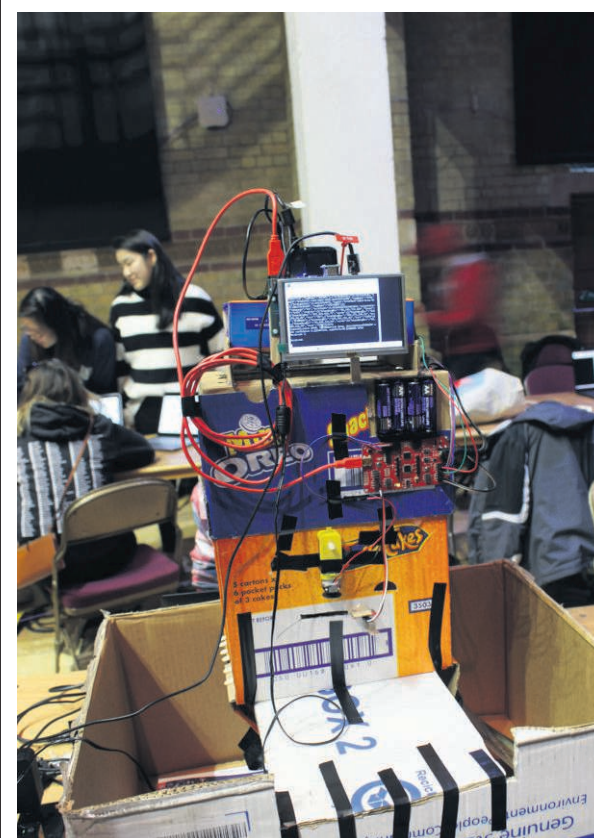
To appreciate what a truly global phenomenon hackathons are set to become, take the example of Major League Hacking (MLH). An American company which has now spread to Europe, it provides support for hackathons (including Hack Cambridge) in the form of hardware, promotion, sponsor contacts and financial backing. In 2013, the year of its foundation, MLH helped to facilitate five events in North America – now it supports over 250 across two continents, and looks set to expand ever further.

The future of hacking is bright, and as the world continues to present us with novel challenges, it seems more important than ever that we seek ways to ap-

▼ **A smart mailbox capable of physically sorting spam**

(MARCO OECHSNER)

ply technology and human ingenuity in a constructive manner. Hackathons such as Hack Cambridge represent a unique opportunity for young people to try things out in an inspiring and empowering environment, where for 24 hours anything is possible.



New year, new me? Not if you don't really want to change



◀ Illustration by
Chloe Marschner
for Varsity

With two thirds of British adults failing to keep their New Year resolutions for more than a month, **Raphael Korber-Hoffman** spoke to behavioural psychologist Dr. James Erskine to find out why

January can be a difficult month, with the new year's festivities soon giving way to a gloomy return to work. There are short days, long nights, and the weather only gets colder. For many, January brings with it an extra strain in the form of attempts at New Year resolutions, often focused on weight loss, quitting smoking or other forms of self-improvement. Searches for gyms on Google spike by up to 40% in January in some cases, with gyms recruiting as many optimistic would-be fitness gurus as possible each new year. At low-cost Planet Gym, around 50% of their members don't even make a single visit. Why are people statistically so unlikely to follow through on their own goals, even when the benefits are so clear, and the costs, with habits such as smoking, so dear? This was the question that a sold-out audience at the Blue Moon Pub had come to find out from a man who has spent decades researching this question.

"This time of year, it's a little artificial", Erskine tells me over a beer in the pub where he is about to give his talk at an event run by the Cambridge Skeptics. "Because it's the right time of year, people decide unilaterally that they are going to change, and it's not a great way of doing it because you have to be ready for the change." I ask what being 'ready' would entail, and he responds that this occurs when "your back is against the wall, you have to change now. If you're not sure or you're ambivalent, it's just not going to work." What Dr Erskine's

research boils down to, essentially, is that people only change their behaviour when they have a strong enough desire to keep going despite the challenges. A helpful factor would be a conscientious personality without a high degree of neuroticism, but Erskine believes that more important is having a support network: "If you haven't got support ... you'll frequently fail."

Part of the reason why so few resolutions make it out of January is due to what Erskine calls the 'what the hell effect'. "Where I think resolutions and intentions fall down", he elaborates, "is on you being overly hard on yourself when you fail. The classic is not that you don't succeed. You succeed for a time, and then you fail. At that point you have a choice, you can re-instigate it, or you can say 'what the hell' and go off the rails. The classic is you go off the rails." The key to not falling at the first slip up, Erskine says, is not to worry too much about the failure.

It's important that if "you have one cigarette on 15th January [you don't] view that as cataclysmic. Say, 'ok, I had one cigarette, not such a massive deal... I'm still a non-smoker.'" Deciding to give up is just making the failure permanent.

Failure is a theme which runs through our interview, with Erskine decrying the emphasis placed on it, especially by Cambridge students. Somewhat gloomily, Erskine makes the point that freshers arriving each September are "setting themselves up to fail because you come to a place which is so selective in its criteria for entry that you're among the best of the best. Anything less than great, you're found wanting." So does Cambridge produce as much low self-esteem as it does good grades? It all depends on outlook, as Erskine points out: "The way around that is not to mind failing, basically ... failure is never fail-

ure, it's a stepping stone to getting the right answer. And I think that mindset really helps to put yourself out there." Such an attitude, he adds, would also solve the main problem of many a late-night essay writer. "Procrastination is often seen as a way of avoiding future judgement ... I think that one of the tragedies is that people view failure as detrimental."

Further, Erskine urges students to be realistic with themselves and not set too high a bar - "Why make life hard? It's hard enough already" - and come to terms with striving to be the best they can, but not more. But with a willingness to fail being massively beneficial, as Erskine argues, I ask why so few people seem to have this trait. The numbers seem to be going down, Erskine responds, partly due to social media.

Cambridge provides many opportunities for that idyllic Instagram shot over the Cam, or that classic millennial snap of avo toast, but Erskine sees no sign that this is making any of us happier, or more resilient against let-downs or criticism. "It sells a lie that everyone can win, and it's just not the way the world works. So if you are chasing financial

“You can never be consistently, chronically happy”

status, amazing experiences, nights in fantastic restaurants, then not everyone can and that's the simple fact ... but we're constantly bombarding ourselves with people who are above average, and find ourselves wanting." If there's little contentment to be found in the supervision room or online, I ask Dr Erskine how people can find happiness. Unfortunately, the psychologist has more bad news. "You can never be consistently, chronically happy", he says, but this is a good thing as if it were the case "it would be a calamity... imagine being in love, you'd not notice a car when you cross the road." Rather, we should aim for general contentment in our lives, "what makes a huge difference in future happiness is having more time off ... beyond £40,000, earning more doesn't make us happier. If you want a contented life, buy experiences not things. And then focus on relationships with people that mean something to your life. That will be a contented life."

After an hour of discussion, Dr Erskine excuses himself to head outside for a smoke. I follow him out to leave through a cloud of cigarette fumes drifting off into the crisp January air.

“One of the tragedies is that people view failure as detrimental”

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Former CURUFC captain: “The experiences that we had and the team culture that we created was special”

Speaking to **William Ross**, Nick Koster reflects on his experiences as Cambridge men's rugby captain

Standing tall at 6ft 4in and weighing in at 242lb, the imposing figure of Nick Koster at the back of the scrum is certainly one that opposing forwards will be glad to see the back of. Described in the aftermath of last month's Varsity defeat by coach James Shanahan as a “warrior and outstanding leader”, Koster certainly led from the front on the big day, not only scoring a try but leaving the field with blood gushing from an open eye wound and more blood pouring out from a cut on his head, an image which embodied the culture of bravery and unflinching commitment to the cause that Koster instilled in his team.

Indeed, reflecting on his tenure as captain at CURUFC, Koster is particularly proud of the team culture fostered during his time at the club: “The feedback I had from players at the end of my captaincy was that it was, in spite of the loss, an experience that they really enjoyed and one of the best experiences of their lives. Unfortunately, rugby teams are measured by the scorecard but I think that there's so much that we achieved in terms of the friendships that we grew and the experiences that we had and the team culture that we created was special.”

Koster's Cambridge team, largely comprised of undergraduates, came up against a vastly experienced Oxford side containing seven players with professional experience. If anything, however, the team's inexperience adds to Koster's pride.

“For a team of undergrads to be able to put in the performances that we did during the term - to win seven out of ten games going into the Varsity match - was to me something that I was really proud of and we got so much out of the group. Everyone gave a lot more than they thought they could and a lot of people achieved a whole lot more than they



thought they could. For me, that's probably one of the greatest experiences of my rugby career: being able to influence team culture and actually contribute to my team being very successful despite the fact that we had one half of rugby at the Varsity Match where a lot went against us”

The culture at the club was so strong, in fact, that Koster readily admits that he enjoyed his time playing rugby at Cambridge more than he did at any of the professional clubs that he played at (Bath, Bristol, Western Province and Stormers). “Throughout my professional career when you speak to people about their best rugby playing days most of those guys ironically enjoyed their amateur days more - I saw that when I played at Cambridge.

When you play with a bunch of people who aren't paid to play rugby and they play for the love of the game it's a bit different. Because everyone's turning

“I wouldn't want to become like another rugby club that plays in a league - there are enough of those”

up with no egos involved, people just turn up and play a sport that they all enjoy playing, they enjoy each other's company and it adds such a different dynamic. Everyone has one goal that they're striving for and that's to win the Varsity match, but when you play professionally it's pretty much everyone for himself because everyone wants to get another contract and the most important thing is that you get another contract - at the end of the day, it's what you're doing for a living.”

When asked to impart some advice about the role to incoming captain Stephen Leonard, he highlights the importance of “embracing the unique challenge and making sure that it stays a unique challenge.”

“One of the special things about CURUFC is that the captain's role is so unique - you select the team, you make the big decisions, and you run the club to a large extent. And even though we've got an extremely talented coach in James Shanahan, I think it's important [that the captain retains his powers].”

A lot of people are talking about changing things to be the way that it runs at other clubs but it's very important for us to remember what our selling point is and that's tradition, history and all of that stuff. We're not going to attract 25,000 people to Twickenham if it doesn't stay unique. Obviously you need to lead by example and make sure that you play well but for me one thing that sometimes goes unnoticed is how unique this club is and how important it is to keep it unique.”

Pressed on the distinctive structure of CURUFC's season and their format

▲ Koster led the men's Blues at last year's Varsity match

(KEITH HEPELL/
CAMBRIDGE
INDEPENDENT)

of only playing friendlies rather than league-games before the all-important Varsity match, Koster is similarly keen to preserve CURUFC's idiosyncrasies: “You've also got the fact that you play a load of friendlies and then you've got the one massive game at the end of it. I wouldn't want to become like another rugby club that plays in a league - there are enough of those. For me the unique experience was that it was twelve weeks and literally nothing else mattered apart from the Varsity Match.

The memory of last month's Varsity defeat is so fresh that it is perhaps easy to forget that Koster was part of the 2017 match-winning Varsity team, a moment which he ranks as his proudest achievement in a rugby career which also included appearances for the South Africa Under-20 team and the Barbarians.

“I'd just started studying at Cambridge, I study part-time so I was looking for a job, I'd just had a kid, I'd just moved back to the UK from South Africa, and my body was pretty knackered after playing professional rugby for ten years. It was so outside of my comfort zone - I was meeting all these new players, guys who are extremely bright and there was a cultural difference to anything that I'd ever been a part of so to experience all of that and all that change and to still be able to contribute to winning on the day against all the odds was probably the best achievement of my career in the circumstances.”

Dedicated, courageous and eloquent, all at the same time, Nick Koster will certainly be remembered as a legend of Cambridge University rugby.

“We're not going to attract 25,000 people to Twickenham if it doesn't stay unique”

◀ Koster prior to the 2018 Varsity match (THE VARSITY MATCH/YOUTUBE)



Embracing a unique challenge: William Ross speaks to former CURUFC captain Nick Koster 31



Cambridge

6

De Montfort

2

▲ On Wednesday, the women's badminton Blues recorded a 6-2 victory over De Monfort University in the BUCS Midlands 2B division, moving within four points of the division leaders (NICHOLAS FOONG)

How fair is the tennis scoring system?

Finn Ransom talks to Dr Chris Hope about his work analysing the pros and cons of the sport's unique format

Jose Mourinho would have us believe that sport is the domain of the soul not the mind. Logic and numbers have no place. "The way people that don't understand football analyse football is with stats," said the Portuguese after the Manchester derby; "I don't go for stats, I go for what I felt and I watch in the game".

Last month I spoke to the bespectacled enemy. Dr Chris Hope, an Emeritus Reader in Policy Modelling at Clare Hall, specialises in the metrics of public policy, using models to investigate climate change policies in countries across the globe.

The Cambridge academic has also turned his metric dark arts to sport: in the summer of 2002, Hope calculated a strategy to determine the best time for a Premier League club to sack its manager. Recently, Hope has been absorbed by a quite different conundrum.

Tennis is a sport steeped in numbers: points lead to games, games to sets, sets to matches. The fragmented scoring system is one of the sport's major strengths – in Hope's words, it makes for various "mini-dramas" over the course of a match. The return to 0 every game and

“Tennis makes dominance hard and drama easy”

set sustains the competition in a way a running tally would not. In other words, the format counteracts dominance and maximises the 'weaker' player's chances of causing an upset. But is this fair?

"If you have somebody who is a better player and somebody who is a slightly weaker player objectively," as Hope put it to me, "how often under this format does the worse player win?"

Hope categorised players into four qualitative groups to figure this out – moderate, good, strong, or exceptional on serve. Hope decided that for men this would mean having a minimum win percentage on serve of 62.5%, 67.5%, 72.5%, or 77.5%. For women, 55%, 60%, 65%, or 70% to reflect the lower percentage of points won on average on serve on the Women's tour.

It was then a matter of using the same probabilistic techniques Hope adjusted for Premier League managers to calculate what kind of bearing tennis' format has on a one-sided match-up. Hope simulated a match under tennis' typical scoring system over 100,000 times with his model; he then did the same for a running score with each player alternating serve for six points. The winner would be the first to 151 points for men, or 91 points for women, the average length of an actual five or three set match. This way a win percentage could be calculated for various underdog encounters under the two formats, and compared.

When the rift is large – between moderate and exceptional – the rela-

tive increase is greatest, but in absolute terms it is minimal. When a player who is strong on serve plays one who is exceptional, though, the weaker player in this instance for men wins 7.7% more matches than if the scoring system were points-based; for women, a substantial 3.2% gain. More than that, things are made exponentially more competitive the narrower the margins. Tennis makes dominance hard and drama easy.

This might seem like the misguided pedantry of a mathematician. For one, being the best is not necessarily reducible to winning the most points on serve. And it's only right that some points are worth more than others; tennis should be as much a test of mental steel as physical skill. Hope accepts that numbers can only tell part of the story. "Everybody has to decide that for themselves," he insisted.

"Some people are passionate that we should go over to a more straightforward scoring system. But for others it's one of the glories of tennis that you get all these mini-dramas and you don't have long periods where it's really boring.

"All I can do is put out the facts and ask whether we think that is a reasonable trade-off to have in order to have a more exciting game." And yet the evidence that tennis is walking a dangerous tightrope with its formats is everywhere. There have been six 'Tiebreak Tens' tournaments in the past three years, where matches consist of just one tiebreak to

ten in a quick-fire eight-player knockout. Fast4 Tennis has swept the UK domestic circuit, and in November the ATP once again ran its own five set iteration at the second NextGen Finals. Sets were first to four games, with no advantages and decided by a tiebreak at three games all. There were bigger points, more often.

Hope intends to repeat his modelling on this format ahead of Wimbledon, and he expects to find that it is even more unfair. "And that's something fans, players and administrators in the game have to consider seriously," he said bluntly. "It may well be that it would be worth going to that format for at least some competitions. But if it turns out that it's an awful lot more unfair then people might want to think twice about it."

A fortnight after we spoke, the Australian Open announced it would be introducing a first-to-10-points tiebreak at 6-6 in the deciding set. "We went with [this format] to ensure the fans still get a special finale to these often epic contests," announced tournament director Craig Tiley.

But the one thing we truly want and expect of sport is justice. We are cheated by numbers in the world all the time, from referendum results to the price of a pot of strawberries and cream. We expect better of sport. The score must reflect what we see and, I daresay, feel. As soon as we lose that, we lose interest.

Perhaps tennis should be careful what it wishes for.



Could you be a match for Varsity? Email our sport team at sport@varsity.co.uk to get involved