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Cambridge's Independent Student Newspaper since 1947

VARSITY



We're back!

An extraordinary Freshers' Week at Cambridge

Gaby Vides Senior News Editor Cameron White Deputy News Editor

This week marks the beginning of an unprecedented Freshers' Week for Cambridge's incoming cohort. While Freshers' Week is usually filled with club nights, bops, and formals, this year's arrivals can expect pizza nights with their household, socially distanced scavenger hunts, and Zoom pub quizzes. However, despite the uncertainty awaiting this year's freshers, colleges' Freshers' Representatives (FREPs) have committed to planning an eventful and welcoming timetable.

Initial plans changed to socially distanced fun

Grace Beckett, the Female FREP at Christ's, told *Varsity* that no plans had been made for Freshers' Week before the pandemic hit the UK in March. Having "made plans when the guidelines were much more lenient," Beckett added that "when the 'rule of six' came in [...] we had to cancel or rethink a lot of the

events we had already organised."

Cancelled events included a sociallydistanced silent disco and the college's Freshers' Fair moving "onto a virtual platform", with new plans involving "chilling in the Fellows' Garden, a dinner at Revs [Revolution] with the whole year but in their household bubbles [and] parties in staircases, [with] events mostly online".

Abi Caple, Vice-President of Murray Edwards' JCR also emphasised that many activities will be online: "We will still have events that are traditionally large group, such as a bar quiz and bingo, however these will all be done virtually" and "the Medwards Freshers' Fair will be online."

Varsity also spoke to Alex Mann, Vice-President of the JCR Committee at Corpus Christi, who stated that while "initial plans for Freshers' Week were to run as many in-person events as possible", in light of recent guidelines, "a lot of stuff has gone online," with "things such as consent workshops and anti-racism training [remaining] in-person

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Cambridge responds to the University's 'landmark decision' to fully divest

Amy Batley Associate Editor Ewan Hawkins Investigations Editor Gaby Vides Senior News Editor

After a five-year campaign from several student and staff groups, the University of Cambridge yesterday (01/10) committed to remove all direct and indirect

investments in the fossil fuel industry from its £3.5 billion endowment fund by 2030.

The announcement, which has been described as a 'landmark decision' by Cambridge Student Union President Ben Margolis, was announced in the Vice-Chancellor's annual address on Thursday morning. The targets mark a major break with the energy sector; Cambridge has held close financial and research ties with BP, Royal Dutch Shell, and other

fossil fuel companies for at least twenty

Cambridge Zero Carbon, the campaign which has been at the forefront of the five-year campaign for divestment, commented: "This is a historic victory for the divestment movement. After decades of close collaboration with the fossil fuel industry, Cambridge University has been forced to concede to divestment demands put forward by student and staff campaigners."

Zero Carbon added "this sends a resounding signal to BP, Shell, and ExxonMobil: no more will Cambridge University profit from the companies who have decimated frontline communities, bankrolled misleading climate science, lobbied against environmental regulations, and continued to explore for oil even as the planet burns."

Zero Carbon's lobbying efforts, including coordinating a motion backed by 324 Cambridge academics in 2019 calling on the University to produce strategies for divestment, have also been accompanied by rallies and direct actions, such as their week-long occupation of the University finance offices in June 2018 by 25 students.

As a result of this divestment report, Cambridge's Investment Office has arrived at the decision to remove their investments in fossil fuels across all

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FRIDAY 2ND OCTOBER 2020 VARSITY

News

EDITORIAL

A Messy **Michaelmas**

A term at Cambridge is already a messy and hectic term for many, as we rush from one thing to the next, and, with the onslaught of Covid-19, life is bound to get even messier. However, that is okay!

As we detail in this Freshers' Week edition, particularly in our exclusive interview with the Vice-Chancellor (News, page 6), the University as well as the Colleges are doing what they can to keep us safe and allow our lives to have some sort of structure and certainty. Whilst Varsity has been quick to critique many of the University's policies as well as the different approaches of Colleges to the pandemic (News, page 4), it is important to note that much is being done with students in mind.

In this edition, we similarly have kept the students, particularly freshers, at the forefront of our minds, so that we can best prepare them for what will be an unpredictable term, despite the efforts of the University. From the Letters to Freshers (Features, pages 10 and 12) to our Vulture Bucket List for Micahelmas Term (Lifestyle. page 20), we hope to give the freshers some advice on how to best thrive during the coming eight weeks.

Whilst we do not know what will happen, we suggest that you embrace the uneasiness and unknown. Don't feel the need to make everything perfect and structure your timetable from morning to evening. Embrace the spontaneity of the coming weeks and make every moment count (Violet, page 30). Get involved with anything that you think may be of interest from Cambridge Theatre (Theatre, page 28) to the Arts (Arts page 27), and whatever happens this term, try to finish it having tried something new and having met new people. Let go of the need for everything to be set in stone and embrace the messiness of Michaelmas under Covid-19.

Rich Bartlett xo

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but socially-distanced under 'educational' purposes." He added that there will still be a "welcome event — much like a beer garden — on Courts."

Having planned "classic fun activities" such as "clubbing, punting [and] 'salsa and sangria'," Suzi Pozniak, the Female FREP at St Catharine's, said that "the rule of six obviously put a massive spanner in the works," leading to the cancellation of "a lot of communal things allowing [the Freshers] to have fun."

Re-organised and Covid-secure social activities will now include "scavenging hunts, delivering [the Freshers] Domino's Pizza, going punting — basically things that can happen in groups of six, [and] unfortunately, no beer garden."

Emmanuel's FREPs have planned a timetable which includes a "beer garden on one night with a Footlights performance" and "an outdoor cinema night on the first night."

Selwyn's FREPs, Harry Mayne and Poppy Robinson, are committed to "doing as many open air events in the day as possible and using their Freshers' Committee to run trips to the Botanical Gardens, Grantchester meadows and Cambridge coffee shops" while in the evenings they are "extending the college bar into a marquee on Old Court with themed events each evening."

When asked about the impact of the new restrictions on freshers' ability to make friends, the Selwyn FREPs were pessimistic: "the new 10pm rule might actually be quite unhelpful in student communities as it means people are more likely organise their own late night events which won't have formal social

Ensuring Covid-19 guidelines are followed

Students returning to Cambridge for the start of the academic year will have to follow both the government's latest Covid-19 guidelines as well as individual colleges' policies. Freshers arriving this week will be socialising largely within their households and will have to observe social distancing measures when interacting with the vast majority of

Emmanuel has "quite easily" adapted their events "so that people don't mingle beyond their own household." For example, FREPs will encourage "people to bring their own food and drink to any events, rather than having the bar serve anything" and they will be "putting physical markers out on the grass so that it's clear where people should keep to."

While Selwyn's "Freshers' Committee are going to be on hand to make sure that freshers social distance at each event." they are not planning to police freshers outside of events. Selwyn's FREPs continued: "It'll be important for older years to set the example but ultimately freshers have to take responsibility for their own distancing."

Similarly, Murray Edwards' Vice-President told Varsity that the college hasn't specified that it is the JCR's "responsibility to police the freshers;" while Corpus Christi's JCR members "will not be required by the college to police social distancing and mixing of households."

Prioritising of welfare

Given the uncertain circumstances for this year's freshers, welfare is a priority for all FREPs Varsity spoke to, with colleges ramping up their welfare provisions both during Freshers' Week and throughout term.

The Christ's FREPs have introduced additional welfare arrangements for any incoming freshers who may struggle with the anxiety-inducing climate of a Covid-secure Freshers' Week by providing all freshers with "a pack explaining the mental health services [available] in Cambridge."

Mann also informed Varsity that, to provide additional welfare arrangements for Corpus Christi's incoming freshers. there will be a "higher number of welfare events in Freshers' Week" which will be "continued throughout [Michaelmas] term." Pozniak highlighted that St Catharine's JCR members have been running "a virtual Welfare Tea" during the pandemic, and that "the reaching out of Welfare Reps has been more signposted than in recent years."

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Similarly, Emmanuel has better publicised the role of their welfare officers via the FREPs' Instagram and the welfare officers will be present at events "so that people know there is somewhere to go' if they are struggling.

Selwyn's FREPs shared their concerns about student loneliness, particularly "if freshers are unhappy with the people in their households." They outlined solutions such as a 'joiners book,' where "freshers can voluntarily fill in with their interests and contact details for other freshers to contact them." Selwyn's FREPs have also created "a form that people can fill in if they're feeling unhappy so that we can work with them to ensure that they access the right support and networks."

Murray Edwards has increased their welfare budget so that "welfare provisions can be provided throughout the term, not just in freshers' week and Week Caple also highlighted an ongoing "considerable problem with the freshers' accommodation:" the lack of access to communal spaces. With this year's focus on socialising in college whenever possible, the college has remedied the issue by "introducing a coffee shop in the Dome (Murray Edwards cafeteria) outside of mealtimes so that students can take a break from studying or grab a coffee whilst staying inside the college."

Being a Freshers' Representative

Regarding her personal experience as a Freshers' Representative, Beckett described having to adapt to the changing nature of government and University guidelines as "frustrating and full of uncertainty."

She continued that while her duties have been "stressful and overwhelming at times [...] I've learnt a lot, how to time manage and handle lots of different things at the same time as well as negotiating and calling up companies to ask for things, which before I would have been terrified to do! It's all flowing into my development as an adult so it'll have positive effects in the long run.

Mann described his "frustrating" experience of organising Freshers' Week with "plans cancelled and essentially starting from scratch." He added that it has been "a lot more work than usual because normally you just follow previous years" but that Corpus "have been mostly onboard with [the JCR's] plans."

For Pozniak, the organisation of Freshers' Week has been an "annoying" process of constant adaptation, but "while it has been really tough and frustrating at times [...] [the re-organised events mean] everybody is safe and that's the most important thing."

While Pozniak humorously revealed she had previously believed her duties as a Freshers' Representative would include "copying the timetable from last year, calling up the punting company and having some chats with [the manager of] Cindies and it'd all be hunky dory," she

admitted that she "has probably got[ten] more out of it."

FREPs' communication with college

FREPs have been in constant communication with colleges, often having to change plans as soon as they have been finalised due to the alterations in government guidelines.

Beckett shared that college guidelines had led her and the Male Freshers' Representative "to believe that freshers will be living in the same household and [that] most of their socialising will be done in that household." She therefore expressed concern at information she received that revealed "that a couple of freshers will be living in households with students in other years [and] there are households with only 1 or 2 freshers in them," which could potentially hamper the accessibility of Freshers' Week for some of Christs' incoming students. Nonetheless, Beckett is "very happy with the job that [shel and the other Freshers' Rep have done," and said she was "excited to share the event with the Freshers."

Pozniak commended St Catharine's liaising as "really good and understanding in keeping [her] in the loop" with "lots of Zoom calls," and highlighted that "we have to appreciate that as a college we can offer more activities than [...] at a big university."

The Emmanuel FREPs felt that while "the college wasn't great at communication at first" they have recently had "some really constructive meetings and they're really aware of the need to balance physical and mental health." The FREPs also detailed that the college has been "really trusting" of their risk assessments and has given them "a lot of confidence going forward."

▼ Emmanuel's Freshers' Reps have been preparing for the term remotely (SAWEN ALI)





VARSITY FRIDAY 2ND OCTOBER 2020

News



▲ Cambridge Zero Carbon has led a five-year campaign calling on the University to divest (LOUIS ASHWORTH)

► Continued from front page

asset classes by 2030.

Cambridge Defend Education thanked Zero Carbon for their efforts in heading the divestment campaign and applauded them for "a massive, historic victory."

This was echoed by Cambridge Students' Union (SU) Ethical Affairs Campaign who said "we hope that all organisers involved with Zero Carbon's phenomenal campaign are hugely proud of themselves today. As campaigners we must now focus on holding the University to this statement, lobbying the colleges to follow suit and push for Cambridge to reject all ties with extractivist industries."

Meanwhile, Extinction Rebellion (XR) Cambridge, whose activists were present outside the Senate House during

Thursday morning's address by the Vice-Chancellor Stephen Toope described the announcement as "long-awaited".

However, XR expressed concern, stating that they are "devastated to hear that divestment will not take place until 2030 - and that net zero across its investments will not be reached until 2038. Wildfires are burning across the globe, ecosystems are dying, and temperatures records are smashed again and again. People are dying; this is an emergency."

XR Cambridge pledged to continue to press for the University to divest, telling *Varsity* "The University is moving in the right direction, but despite all the talk, their actions are still nowhere near proportionate to the crisis we face... We need immediate and drastic action, not distant targets to please fund managers and serve business as usual... It is time

for them to do the right thing and divest now - not in 10 years' time".

Similarly, Cambridge Zero Carbon, commented that "this announcement comes five years too late and we'll be pushing for the 2030 commitment to be brought forward" and Ethical Affairs added "the University must examine why its own net zero emissions target is as late as 2048".

Cambridge's Students' Union responded to the divestment announcement, acknowledging the "five years of dedicated campaigning by students, staff and the Students' Union at the University" and highlighting that the decision "is a testament to the power of grassroots campaigning and should be recognised as such"

The Vice Chancellor's announcement also noted Cambridge will not accept

funding from sources that are incompatible with its sustainability ambitions. This signals a major break with companies that have long held close ties to Cambridge; for example, in 2000, BP donated £20 million to the University to found the BP Institute after a Cambridge University Professor Dan McKenzie developed a theory of sedimentary basins that in McKenzie's own words "caught on with the oil companies instantly... and has probably saved the oil companies, you know, £5 billion, something like that".

After the University formally rejected divestment in 2018, a Guardian investigation demonstrated conflicts of interest in the decision, with key decision-makers simultaneously overseeing multi million pound donations from BP and BHP Billiton.

Meanwhile in November 2019, Cambridge accepted a £6 million donation from Royal Dutch Shell, and a Zero Carbon report published a month earlier found that the BP Institute's research was worth between \$300 million and \$3bn per year to oil production companies.

Zero Carbon commented on this, describing how: "last year, we exposed the extensive entanglement of the fossil fuel industry within the workings of the University, well beyond their investments. By taking research funding, extending invitations to careers fairs and naming their buildings after these companies, the University is clearly still in the oily clutches of this dirty industry.

The SU's statement similarly recognised the decision as "a historic break between the University and the fossil fuel industry" but stressed that "Cambridge has deep-seated links with the fossil fuel industry which extend beyond merely financial investment to include the acceptance of research funding and sponsorship for professorships, as well as the undertaking of extractivist research."

The statement continued: "These ties must be cut if the University is to truly commit to meaningful climate action. The immediacy of the climate crisis must be recognised and higher education institutions have a crucial role to play in proactively reducing the social licence of damaging industries."

While the University has committed to fully divest this decision does not mean Cambridge's independent colleges will follow suit. As it stands only two colleges - Clare Hall and Queens - are fully divested with a further nine colleges partially divested. The SU's Ethical Affairs Campaign commented on the diversity of colleges' divestment policies, urging for campaigners to now focus their attention on "lobbying the colleges to follow suit."

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Meanwhile in
November 2019,
Cambridge accepted a
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Varsity investigates: the differences between college Covid-19 regulations

Christopher Dorrell

Senior News Editor

As the start of term begins and students return to drastically changed colleges, *Varsity* investigates the differences in regulations between colleges, and colleges' attempts to keep things as normal as possible.

The introduction of 'households' is the biggest single change that students living in college accomodation will face this year. The University defines a 'household' as any "College accommodation that includes a shared bathroom/shower and/or toilet and/or kitchen area."

Every college has divided students into households, although there are differences in the size of a household depending on space in the college.

Generally, students do not have to practice social distancing in their households. Wolfson, however, has taken an unusual approach to households, and in an email sent to students this week asked "all residents to practice social distancing...even in your accommodation block/household until after the first 14

days of term

This, they explained, was due to "new students arriv[ing] from across the country (and indeed from across the world)". While Wolfson admitted the policy "cannot be monitored or enforced...[it] is the best way to prevent a 'spike' of infections in a household at the start of term".

With the introduction of households, as well as the government's 'rule of six', all colleges are having to strictly regulate socialising between households. Almost all have a ban, at least for the first two weeks, on non-household members entering college households.

Some colleges have adopted a more liberal approach, like Downing, which allows guests into a household if it is agreed "with other members of your Household which guests will come and when they will visit." Unusually, Downing is also allowing overnight guests, saying: "overnight guests should be agreed in advance with other members of the Household Group."

St John's operates a slightly different policy, allowing any student or fellow to invite up to two people "who also reside on the main College site to visit them in

their room." Queens' takes a similar approach, writing "only College members are permitted onto the main site or into Owlstone Croft and the outside houses" but also says, for college members, "if you are meeting in a household space, you should agree, in advance, with other members of your household which guests will come and when they will visit." However, Queens' have specified that "there will be no overnight guests permitted in college households."

Other colleges, such as Murray Edwards, have a ban on visitors from other households until 20th October. The rule will then be reviewed with the intention of "taking a progressive approach as soon as we can." Girton, too, has "elected to have visitors to the households for the first 2 weeks of term, to allow households to establish, and then to determine what changes might be possible within the guidelines at the end of that period."

Homerton, on the other hand, states: "no guests are permitted on site and/or in accommodation rooms." The college also requires students to get consent from the college for any overnight stays outside of college. Similarly, Churchill says "no

visitors or overnight guests from other households [are allowed] within college", nor "visitors or overnight guests from outside of college."

With these restrictions in place, students have to do all of their inter-household socialising outside in groups of six or less. Some colleges have been more proactive than others in establishing suitable outdoor socialising areas for students.

Downing, for example, have built an extension to the college bar called the Butterfield Taverna. "The Taverna features ten socially-distanced, covered seating areas." This will allow "the regular music, comedy and quiz nights...[to] take place in an intimate, walled and tree-lined enclosure that also meets the essential health guidelines necessary for our mutual wellbeing."

They have also established a "new open-air performance space, the Downing Amphitheatre." This features "one hundred and fifty circles marked on the ground, radiating outwards in a fan-shape from a raised, outdoor stage area. Each circle will be two metres in diameter and two metres away from any other." Each circle will also have a deckchair.

Sidney Sussex are trialling a 'barquee' – the college bar moved into a marquee – with a limited capacity but with the possibility of opening it up to larger groups of people if the trial proves successful. Groups of ten are permitted if they are all from the same household, and up to six from three households can book to sit together at one of the tables in the 'barquee'.

Selwyn have also placed a large marquee in Old Court, "providing extra space near to the servery and Hall. It will also allow for socially distanced meetings: for instance, some of the freshers' welcome

While students are unable to socialise in groups of larger than six unless they are all members of the same household, colleges are able to organise 'official' events that allow larger groups to socialise providing social distancing is

maintained.

For example, Corpus Christi, in a statement detailing the college's regulations, explain that "the College, as a COVID-secure organisation, is able to organise events for larger groups, subject to COVID-secure regulations and provided they are reasonably necessary for the purposes of education.

"Therefore, any event or activity planned by the JCR or MCR, any College Society or any individual student, must either be limited to a maximum of six people (or one household) as described in Section 6, or it must be organised as a College event."

All of the new policies that colleges have developed have raised questions about how they will be enforced. Many colleges have suggested that students must police each other and have thus established anonymous reporting systems through which students can report on breaches.

Churchill, for example, have confirmed they "expect that students report observed breaches of the guidelines in confidence to their tutors or to the JCR/MCR welfare officers."

Fitzwilliam College is taking a slightly more conciliatory approach, saying "if you notice that someone has made a mistake and overlooked guidelines, please let them know in a friendly and polite way. Or if someone else reminds you of your own slip, please don't be offended as we're all just trying to keep everyone safe."

However, it seems some colleges are not confident that this policy will always be effective. In an email sent to students at Jesus, for example, it was revealed that "porters will be doing spot checks on communal areas in households to enforce the College's approach."

While the rules established by all the colleges will be under constant review, it is clear from the beginning that some are taking a more relaxed approach to Covid-19 restrictions than others. Whether that will remain the case through the duration of the term remains to be seen.



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▼ An artist's impresion of what Downing's outdoor socialising space will look like (STEPHEN BENNETT)



Students turn to private renting as the future of life in college grows uncertain

William Hunter

Deputy News Editor

Returning to Cambridge amidst a pandemic, an increasing number of students are making the move from college-owned halls of residence to privately-rented accommodation. Varsity has spoken to some of these students, to gain an insight into why so many are making the

Due to the necessities of social distancing, colleges have been forced to change and update their accommodation policies to reflect the latest government guidelines. Speaking to Varsity, it seems these policies also provided the final push for many who had previously considered living out of college.

"Although there may be different secondary reasons for wanting to move out' one student from Churchill told Varsity. "I think ultimately the inevitability of Covid policies in colleges made people want to consider alternative options."

At Clare College, students entering their third year were informed that they would not be able to ballot for rooms as normal and would instead have to remain in the room where they have been for second year.

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One student going into their third year at Clare told Varsity that "my room in 2nd year was awful, really small and no natural light" and that the decision to cancel the ballot was "the main reason" for them choosing to move out.

Another student from Clare told Varsity that it was "mostly the college's response" which informed their decision. They went on to say that "if I had been moved I wouldn't have thought about it in the slightest but I'm so much happier living out", and "I think it's [living out] going to be so much more common now. Clare College did not respond to Varsity's request for comment.

At Queens' College, students are also being driven out of college accommodation by Covid-19 related accommodation policies. Normally, Queens' uses the quarterly payment scheme under which students can opt in to pay an additional 20% on their rent in exchange for being able to remain in college over

However, students at Queens' have now been informed that the quarterly payment scheme will no longer be an opt-in system but will be mandatory for all students in college accommodation. Whether or not students remain in college over the holidays, their rent will be inflated by 20%.

One student at Queens' told Varsity that even before the rent increase he had been paying "£1000 per month, and the [license] was only 6 months (during term)." Whereas by living out "I'm paying for the smallest room in my house for 11 months. At £455/month. So £5005 in total and almost double the amount of time in tenancy."

Although Varsity understands that Queens' has made funds available for students who are unable to pay rent, these increases have still encouraged students to move out of college and into private renting. Queens' did not respond to Varsity's request for comment.

It is not only changes to housing policy that have raised concerns. Students have also told Varsity that they no longer believe that life in college will be enjoyable or safe for them as the pandemic

"One of the main concerns for me was about what college are calling 'households'," one student at Homerton told Varsity. "Essentially, you are grouped with 14 other students and share a kitchen. If one of them gets sick or has symptoms, the entire household has to quarantine. I was worried this could happen frequently throughout my final year, disrupting both my studies and what's left of my social life in a pandemic.

"Instead, I'm living with three close friends outside of college. I wouldn't be as frustrated if I had to isolate if one of them was ill and the likelihood of that happening is (hopefully) smaller. I also was worried about the potential atmosphere inside college - with people being very stressed about the virus and distrustful of each other or alternately not following the rules." Homerton did not respond to Varsity's request for com-

Students from different colleges share the concern that college social distancing measures will either fail or restrict them unnecessarily. A student from Oueens' said that it was "way safer" to be in an out-of-college house of six people rather than in college accomodation., "as college social distancing measures will inevitably fail." They went on to say that they would "prefer to police ourselves and have genuine commitment to government guidelines rather than be at the whim of college.

Even the University announced in a recent email that, "the risk of outbreaks is expected to be higher in College accommodation, where the density of students and potential for interactions are greater." It appears this rationale has made many students feel it is safer to avoid college accommodation all to-

This comes as universities across the country begin to experience severe outbreaks of Covid-19 with the return of students for the academic year.

At Manchester Metropolitan University, 1,700 students have been told to self isolate as 127 students test positive for the virus. Students at St Andrews University are being urged to remain at home to avoid a potentially deadly surge of new cases.

Safety aside, many students simply feel that the freedom of life outside of college makes the move worth it. One student at Homerton told Varsity that "we felt we had outgrown being at college - we often found they treated us like kids when it suited them and adults when it suited them, so it's been nice to have our own space to make our own decisions.

Whether it is for reasons of safety, security, or simply freedom, the move away from college accommodation appears to be a growing trend. As more students choose to rent privately, the pressure will be on colleges to adapt to the changing demands of the pandemic and ensure that those who do choose to remain can do so safely and with minimum disruption to their lives.

The University has not responded to Varsity's request for comment.



▲ A number of students at Clare College are privately renting this year amid uncertainties about the nature of college life during the Covid-19 pandemic (LOUIS ASHWORTH)





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FRIDAY 2ND OCTOBER 2020 VARSITY

News

Exclusive Interview with the Vice Chancellor

Stephen Toope talks newfound (Camfess) fame, Freshers' Week escapades and why Oxford was never an option

Rich Bartlett

Editor-in-Chief

In light of the news of redundancies at many colleges, including Downing, Trinity and Queens', as well as a continuing frustration with the University's handling of Covid-19, Varsity thought it was important to remind everyone that Cambridge under covid-19 is not all doom and gloom. To do this, we secured an exclusive interview with your favourite purveyor of fine emails, Stephen Toope, and discovered more about our Vice Chancellor as well as the coming academic year.

Most importantly, we found out whether Toope did indeed know about the inspiration which he gives to many of our students to create, among many things, memes and bingo games for our amusement. To our surprise, Toope did, and he, in fact, had a favourite made by a student last term which was a bingo game to be used in tandem with the Vice Chancellor's regular Covid-19 emails. On that note, he encourages people to reenage with this bingo game, as he told Varsity that "happily" his regular emails would continue this term, with the first being sent out right after our interview.

On a more serious topic, we asked Toope about whether he thought about applying for Oxford for his PHD, but Toope was quick to say, "I didn't think of Oxford...It was actually a really easy choice". He was drawn to Cambridge's

"incredible tradition in international law", especially its members of faculty such as Sir Derrick Bowett who was renowned for his work. Toope actually wrote to Sir Bowett to ask him whether he would supervise him, if he was successful in his application. When the former President of Queens' responded that he would, it was reinforced for Toope that Cambridge "was a great choice".

As we moved the conversation to Freshers' Week, Toope emphasized that the best thing to do "is to take advantage of all the opportunities which are on offer". In particular, he stressed that making new friends is so important. As a fresher at Harvard, Toope recalled the best part of his Freshers' Week, a party on the third night, where he met three people with whom he is still close today. Whilst the first week for freshers will sadly not include going to parties, the sentiment remains that going out "there to try and meet new people" is crucial.

Turning conversation to a more practical note, we discussed the University's attempts to make staff and students feel both excited and confident to return for the coming year. To this, Toope mentioned that "the community has pulled together" and addressed "all the incredible challenges which Covid has bought". He particularly wanted to thank all his "colleagues across the University who have worked incredibly hard" to create change quickly. As we know, "Cambridge

is not always known for doing things quickly" but, in this case, the response was swift. This has allowed for a lot of time and preparation to get many things right, so students "should also feel confident...as people have worked so hard to create systems which are designed to keep people safe." Whilst Toope did concede that "we can't eliminate all risk and that they're going to be outbreaks", he did say that he has hope to "contain outbreaks and that we shall keep people as safe as possible".

Although the responses by the University and colleges are far from perfect, as Varsity has detailed over the summer, Varsity agrees with Toope's closing remarks that "it is going to be a hard time for everyone," making it even more essential for everyone to "be a little kinder...and not expect the impossible." Over the coming weeks and terms, it will be important to follow the latest advice about keeping safe in Cambridge both from the University and colleges, as guidelines continue to change. In order to keep up to date, continue to follow the latest advice on the University's

website.



Cambridge UCU issue 'Keep Cambridge Safe' open letter amid Covid-19 outbreaks in other university towns

Christopher Dorrell

Senior News Edito

Cambridge UCU (CUCU) have launched an open letter, addressed to Vice Chancellor Stephen Toope, demanding that the University 'Keep Cambridge Safe' as students begin to return to Cambridge.

The UCU is the largest trade union for academic and academic-related staff working in Further and Higher Education in the UK.

The University is asked to "step up and play its part" as Cambridge faces "the possibility of a second wave which could lead to an even greater loss of life unless measures are put in place immediately to protect the health and safety of the public."

The open letter, which has been signed by over 140 individuals and groups such as Cambridge Defend Education and Keep Our NHS Public, says that although "Cambridge has so far managed to avoid the worst of the pandemic...we, as local residents, are concerned that the movement of students into our community will see a sudden escalation of cases, leading to a public health emergency".

It goes on to express concern that "the University and its constituent colleges have not adequately consulted the wider community over how to minimise the potential for community-wide outbreaks or how to respond in a timely manner to university- or college-based outbreaks to prevent the need for a localised lockdown."

The open letter also drew attention to "reports from staff unions that health and safety procedures remain inadequate, haphazardly and partially developed, and lacking transparency, and that rigorous health and safety procedures recommended by Independent SAGE have not been developed uniformly across the University."

Independent SAGE raised concerns at

the end of August over the mass migration of students to universities across the UK which will potentially heighten health risks in both the local communities and the universities themselves.

These concerns, the open letter argues, were echoed by the Government's official SAGE report which suggested that students returning home at the end of term may spread the virus back into vulnerable groups. Since those reports were published, cases across the UK have only increased.

In light of these worries the 'Keep Cambridge Safe' initiative demands that the University and its colleges "immediately implement the recommendations developed by Independent SAGE, including moving all teaching that does not require practical or lab work to remote online learning, and implementing a rigorous and mandatory testing system for all staff and students on arrival in Cambridge."

Furthermore, the letter demands that the University "make publicly available all risk assessments and local contingency plans for how a local outbreak will be controlled and contained and plans for protecting the wider community from potential spread of the virus outside of University and college grounds."

Beyond that the University was asked to ensure that all college accommodation is COVID-secure" and to "publish regular and publicly available statistics on case numbers as they occur."

The open letter forms part of the wider #SafetyFirst campaign, launched on Friday 18th September, calling on the University to move all teaching online wherever possible.

CUCU cite the rise in Covid-19 cases and hospital admissions as evidence in support of their campaign.

They also point to the example of universities which have opened and already gone into lockdown due to Covid-19

outbreaks, such as Manchester, where over 1700 students have been told to self-isolate. As a result of these recent Covid-spikes, 57% of residents in university towns think the influx of students will contribute to further lockdown measures being imposed.

When contacted for comment a University spokesperson said: "The University, Colleges and student representatives have spent the summer months putting in place Stay Safe measures designed to keep everyone in our community as safe as possible from the start of the coming term."

The spokesperson continued: "The guidance has been tested and refined in consultation with hundreds of students and staff. The University would like this collaborative dialogue to continue as these measures are updated in line with the latest public health and government guidance for Higher Education Institutions."



News

University urged to make Covid-19 vaccine accessible for all

Christopher Dorrell Senior News Editor

Any medicine developed at Cambridge for tackling Covid-19 should be made "accessible to everyone worldwide," a recently released open letter by Universities Allied for Essential Medicines (UAEM) demands.

UAEM is an international student-led organisation with members in over 20 countries who believe that "universities have an opportunity and a responsibility

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to improve global access to public health and necessary medicines."

The open letter calls on the Univeristy to make "Covid-19 related vaccines, therapeutics and diagnostics developed at the University of Cambridge accessible and affordable to everyone worldwide,

regardless of socio-economic status or country of residence."

The letter highlights various different research projects going on at the University which have the potential to "provide great benefits to society during the Covid-19 pandemic and beyond."

Foremost amongst these projects is the vaccine candidate being developed by the Department of Veterinary Medicine in collaboration with DIOSynVax. The letter stresses that "this research can only alter the course of the pandemic IF global equitable access is prioritised."

However, according to UAEM Cambridge's "current policy for intellectual property licensing through Cambridge Enterprise Limited is not sufficient for ensuring that the products of Covid-19 research at the University will be accessible to all members of the public."

Licensing relates to the terms under which the owner of the Intellectual Property (IP) grants permission to a licensee to manufacture, adapt or sell the IP. In this case it would likely be the University granting permission to a pharmaceutical company to manufacture and sell a product developed as a result of research by the University.

This is in contrast, UAEM argues, to the University of Oxford, who announced that they will "expedite access to Oxford IP to enable global deployment at scale of associated products and services to address the COVID-19 pandemic."

"The default approach of the University and OUI (Oxford University Innovation)...will be to offer non-exclusive, royalty-free licences to support free of charge, at-cost or cost + limited margin supply as appropriate, and only for the duration of the pandemic, as defined by the WHO."

Meanwhile Cambridge University's intellectual property licensing rules are accused by UAEM of failing to adhere to Articles 12 and 15 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights: that everyone has the rights "to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health" and "to enjoy the benefits of scientific progress and its applications."

The open letter goes on to demand that the University "support global coordination to improve global and public capacity for vaccines therapeutics, and diagnostics production and ensure that public health priorities drive the production and distribution of any new Covid-19 vaccines, therapeutics and diagnostics."

It also asks the University to commit to socially responsible licensing, improving the transparency of licensing IP, and ensuring transparency in clinical trials.

The open letter forms part of the wider 'Free the Vaccine' campaign targeting universities and other institutions across the world - including UCL, Imperial and Oxford - in an attempt to secure equitable access for Covid-19 health technologies.

One aspect of the campaign is mapping public funding of Covid-19 research in universities. According to UAEM, the University of Cambridge received at least £4,816,600 of public funds from UKResearch and Innovation.

UAEM said to *The Cherwell* that the "contribution of the public is virtually never reflected in the pricing, accessibility, and affordability of the final drug."

"The public deserves a return on public investment by ensuring that COVID-19 vaccines are the global public goods which the UK public want – there was a recent survey by [the Wellcome Trust] which supported the overwhelming public majority behind universal equitable access to a vaccine."

The University has been contacted for comment.



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News

A-level results uproar, Black Lives Matter and Covid-19: what went down in Cambridge this summer?

Gaby Vides

Senior News Editor

Content note: this article contains mention of racism and domestic violence

Algorithm Errors

Following this year's A-level results day controversy, whereby students were awarded their grades based on an algorithm which disadvantaged state-school students from under-performing schools, Cambridge was forced to respond to calls to #HonourTheOffer.

In total, over 18,000 students, staff and alumni signed a number of open letters demanding the University to relax their admissions policies.

While a number of Oxford colleges committed to giving all offer-holders their place, Cambridge did not follow suit and only admitted students who had met the conditions of their offer.

However, after the government's striking U-turn, which saw students given their centre assessed grades, Cambridge accepted students for 2020 entry who had not initially met their offer but subsequently met their offer based on their centre assessed grade.

Despite this year's fiasco, Cambridge welcomed their largest ever undergraduate intake with a record 70% of incoming freshers' hailing from state-school backgrounds. The University also required no student to defer their entry.

Strike while it's hot

Extinction Rebellion Cambridge (XRC) and Extinction Rebellion Youth Cambridge (XRYC) promised a "fresh wave of action" against the University and its non-divested colleges after the climate activist groups' divestment deadline of the end of July was missed.

XRC and XRYC issued their demands at the beginning of July, including calls for the University and colleges to fully divest from fossil fuels, the arms trade and other "ecocidal companies."

The first week of the groups' campaign involved a theatrical protest outside of Darwin, dinosaurs marching between St Catharine's and Sidney Sussex and activists playing croquet on Senate House Lawn. The week culminated with protestors stripping on King's College lawns in order to "expose the naked truth" of the climate emergency.

Extinction Rebellion also marked the beginning of their 'Summer Rebellion' on August 28th by marching through Cambridge demanding that the University divests. At the end of the 'oily handed divestment' march a number of protestors were arrested for using black chalk spray to stencil their hands on the outside of Trinity College and Senate House.

Covid-19

While the Oxford vaccine candidate has enjoyed media attention, the Cambridge vaccine candidate has developed more quietly and could potentially be ready for clinical trials by Autumn after the University received £1.9 million in funding from the government.

The Cambridge vaccine candidate



does not have to be stored at low temperatures nor does it have to be administered via a needle.

The University also joined a coalition of 22 institutions to join the Trinity Challenge, which will work to "promote actions to ensure the world is better protected against health emergencies".

The Challenge was convened by Trinity's current Master and applicants, who can win an initial prize fund of £10 million will be asked to focus on at least one of identification, response and recovery in health policy.

Fellowship controversy

Fitzwilliam College and Wolfson College lost controversial Honorary Fellows this summer, with David Starkev of Fitzwilliam, and Carrie Lam, of Wolfson, both leaving their positions.

Starkey, who was appointed an Honorary Fellow at Fitzwilliam College in 2006, had his honorary position removed in July following his comment in an interview that "slavery was not genocide". The comments were condemned 'in the strongest possible terms" by the Fitzwilliam JCR while the Cambridge BME Campaign labelled Starkey a "white

The removal of Starkey's fellowship follows years of frustration after Fitzwilliam refused to revoke his position in 2011 when Starkey made similarly bigoted comments about the London riots.

Meanwhile, from the beginning of July Wolfson considered removing the Honorary Fellowship of Carrie Lam, Hong Kong's Chief Executive, following the enactment of a controversial National Security Law, which many regard as threatening autonomy in the city.

Lam, who was given the honorary position in 2017, was contacted with concerns by Wolfson's President Professor Jane Clarke in November 2019 yet the College decided not "to take any action" over Lam's Fellowship.

However, in a stunning role reversal, Lam renounced her Honorary position in August. Announcing the decision, she expressed her disappointment with the College's "besmirching without factual basis and a reliance on hearsay", regarding Wolfson's inquiry into her fellow-

Black Lives Matter

The murder of George Floyd, a black man in America, sparked a wave of discussions, activism and anguish about the state of racism and institutional violence facing people of colour in the United States and across the world.

Cambridge was and is not immune from these injustices, with numerous open letters demanding the University and departments show a greater commitment to anti-racism.

A Cambridge Black Lives Matter protest in June attracted thousands of protestors who stood in solidarity with ongoing demonstrations in the United States over police killings and systemic brutality.

In response to Black Lives Matter. Cambridge University Press provided free access to books on racism and discrimination while mounting pressure forced Gonville and Cauis to remove a window pane honouring a college alumni and eugenicist, Ronald Fisher.

Dr Priyamvada Gopal, a Professor in the English Faculty, faced racist attacks in response to a tweet she posted about white privilege.

Later police investigated threats made against her after racist posters were left on King's Parade - the University condemned the abuse and reaffirmed its academics' right to express their own opinions.

Fuelling change

Newnham, Robinson, St John's and Fitzwilliam have all publicly announced for the first time that they are partially divested from fossil fuels.

This means that while the colleges hold no direct investments in fossil fuels they may still hold indirect investments investments through an intermediary fund - in them.

St John's and Fitzwilliam both confirmed that they have been partially divested since 2013 and 2016 respectively. Similarly, Newnham on their website detailed that they "have been partially divested for several years."

Newnham, Robinson, St John's and Fitzwilliam join a further five colleges Selwyn, Emmanuel, Downing, Peterhouse and Jesus - who are partially divested while Queen's and Clare Hall

Gown helps town King's and St Catharine's have both

are entirely divested.

participated and arranged projects to support the local community amid the Covid-19 pandemic. Bene't Street Hostel, King's accommodation ordinarily used to house third-year undergraduate students, provided residence for rough sleepers from 23rd April until 31st August.

continue to be the only colleges who

The scheme to use the Hostel was arranged as part of a collaborative effort between King's and Cambridge City Council, following the Council's commitment to guarantee accommodation for every rough sleeper in Cambridge. Meanwhile St Catharine's, in partnership with Cambridge Women's Aid, provided a total of 1456 nights of accommodation for women and children escaping domestic violence. The College housed 23 women and children between April 27th and September 3rd.



anti-racism demonstrations

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Features

Just be yourself

"Approach Cambridge with an open mind, and just be you" Elizabeth Haigh advises in her letter to freshers

inspired and extremely nervous. Going away to university felt like a fresh start for me; a chance to leave all my past worries and problems behind, and I was determined to make the most of it. But, as happens so often in life, this is not how things turned out. From Fresher's week, half of which I spent locked up ill in my room, to the huge culture shock, to the homophobic comments spoken to me in my first week of term, my first year was not off to a good start.

Despite rather rocky beginnings, I soon found my feet. I made amazing friends, had fantastic experiences and, of course, the odd essay crisis. But as the first few weeks wore on, I began to move past this relative comfort and dig beneath the glossy surface that Cambridge has to offer, leading to an identity crisis that I am only now coming to terms with.

In my hometown, attending Oxbridge is almost unheard of. With an ageing population, it is strongly conservative; and, it has real issues with racism and homophobia. As a child from a single parent, low income household, I have always been fiercely independent (perhaps too much so), particularly after I was forced to shoulder greater responsibility after my parent's divorce at

I therefore believed myself to be well-equipped for anything that university had to throw at me.

What I was not prepared for though was the difficulty of fitting in, of overcoming the infamous imposter syndrome, which manifests in many students with feelings of self-doubt and fear that they have somehow gotten into Cambridge by accident, without truly deserving a place. I have loved Cambridge and the time I've spent there from the first moment I arrived: but there is no escaping the wealth and privilege that exudes from it. It is hard to feel at home when everything around you seems alien, as if you've been magically transported into an alternate universe where you do not belong.

I would enter a formal hall and not recognise most of the food on the menu, or fall quiet in conversation about schools or holidays as friends shared exciting stories of trips abroad. I somehow felt that admitting how conflicted I felt would make me weaker, proving the voice in my head right: that as much as I was enjoying myself. Cambridge was just not meant for me.

Returning home was just as tricky, as it felt like I no longer fit in there either. Outside of my immediate family, terms like "formal" and "matriculation" were words of a foreign language, and I would deliberately refrain from mentioning my studies to avoid the assumptions of money and upper-class privilege which people in the Midlands automatically ascribe to Oxbridge. I felt constantly on edge, wondering to what degree I could express myself, being careful to act unchanged from the person who first left for university.

In short, I was living a double life and not being myself in either. I was so desperate to look the part of a Cambridge student when in fact it was as if the walls were closing in on all sides. I felt like I had to be studious and fit in seamlessly to Cambridge life, but still somehow represent my working-class roots and be myself. I had to be the "right" amount of gay, the "right" amount of straight, the "right" amount of feminist, the "right" amount of leftwing. I was so caught up in trying to construct the perfect self, that I lost the real me.

But if there's one thing I've learned at Cambridge, it's that there is always hope. Over time, and mainly thanks to the patience and reassurance of those around me, I came to the realisation that the only person

who cared about this complex algorithm of personality was myself. It was only when I realised this and stopped questioning every little thing I did and said that I truly felt at home. You will never get on with everyone at university, and this shouldn't perturb you. Just because those around you have different upbringings, does not mean that they are judging you or that they will exclude you. Compared to my conservative hometown, Cambridge is a haven of freedom - an opportunity to be simply yourself. It doesn't matter what background you are from: there are more people with similar experiences to you than you think.

So, I intend to step into my final year with renewed confidence. Through this journey, Cambridge has given me the opportunity to really get to know and accept myself for who I am. But it has also taught me to accept others for who they are. and look past my first impressions to the person beneath. Ultimately, I feel that it is important to approach Cambridge with an open mind, and to just be you. Speak your truth, be open to new experiences, make mistakes, mend them. As the saving goes, you can't make an omelette without breaking some eggs.

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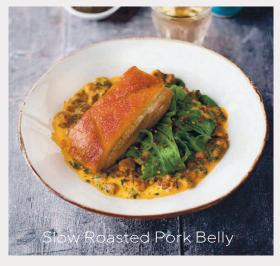




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A different kind of Freshers' Week

"This Freshers' Week: you are in charge." **Scarlet Rowe** offers some words of reassurance as she remembers her unconventional first week at Cambridge

'm sure I won't be alone in saying that I've spent a lot of time thinking about Cambridge recently. As the dreaded, yet promising (maybe even exciting?) October draws close, I find myself thinking of where I was a year ago. I remember feeling nervous, enthusiastic, and mildly confused as to how I'd ever got an offer in the first place. Going into second year, I feel a little less nervous and just as confused. Some things never change.

I was a rather atypical fresher in that I didn't drink and still don't. This means that, unlike some friends, I can actually remember my freshers week as if it were yesterday. I, rather uneventfully, spent most of it drinking tea and reading cosy novels. Surprisingly, I'm not actually massively antisocial, I just didn't fancy going out most evenings. This put me into a minority, but not an unhappy one.

Freshers week did feel a little daunting at points if I'm honest. It's bound to be strange, though, because you're in a brand new place with brand new people. First impressions can be intimidating, and if you're anything like me you'll probably not have met 99.9% of the student population before arriving at Cambridge. Given these circumstances, slowing down and taking things at your own pace is completely acceptable. I recall spending a lot of time talking with my 'neighbours' in the 'gyp' (I still find that term weird!). We chatted about almost everything, putting the world to



Remember that you're not crazy
if you don't fall in love with
Cambridge straight away. You're
not crazy if you never do



▲ "In the spirit of taking things at my own pace, I dawdled around Cambridge a lot during freshers week." (@vheath)

rights with our late-night conversations. I also spent some evenings alone, either reading, or absolutely exhausted and flatout asleep. University can be strangely tiring, even if you feel as though you've achieved nothing during the day, as is often the case.

In the spirit of taking things at my own pace, I dawdled around Cambridge a lot during freshers week. I used to treat myself to a hot chocolate or a little cake (or two) whilst wandering around the town. I think I got to know Cambridge quite well this way, and on my own terms. I remember being struck by the vibrance of it all as I walked around the different colleges, hearing the ringing laughter and muffled conversations that characterise the streets, and breathing in the frosty scent of the sprawling gardens. I'm conscious that I sound like a woeful wannabe novelist here, so I'll leave it at that.

Going in, I was wary of the Cambridge portrayed by media horror-stories. However, while Cambridge isn't perfect (nowhere is), hundreds of students are dedicated to making it a better place. I was the only student in my school year to get into Cambridge, and I've fit in just fine. Sure, I couldn't play lacrosse or quidditch before I went to university (and I still can't now) but this places me in a comfortable majority. Apparent cultural-codes can sometimes feel confusing, but you'll find your own way around things. Remember that it is fine to challenge a 'culture' of Cambridge

that makes you feel uncomfortable. Remember that there are people who feel the same way as you. Remember that you're not crazy if you don't fall in love with Cambridge straight away. You're not crazy if you never do.

I'm going into 2nd year now, and I've still got a lot to learn about Cambridge. I don't have hundreds of friends, but I do have good friends who I know I can rely on. I haven't got straight firsts throughout the year, but I've made good progress. I'm not a member of countless societies, just like most other students. I spent a lot of first year feeling inadequate, having convinced myself that everybody was doing more than me. Don't fall into this trap! The truth is, most people are just getting by themselves and Facebook feeds very rarely give you the full picture.

This freshers week: you are in charge. Settling back into real work is going to be challenging, I'm trembling just thinking of it now! Just try to remember that most of us are in the same boat, and it may take a few weeks to get those cogs whirring again. Your supervisors aren't evil and they don't expect a perfect essay or assignment from you straight away (or ever, really). You will soon fill Cambridge with countless memories of your own: some incredible, some saddening, some remarkably unremarkable. Don't forget, in the midst of all this upheaval, Freshers is just one week. You've got years to look forward to.

Balancing academic and political responsibilities

"My activism flagged in year 13, but I revived my passion during this break, and am determined not to forget the political responsibilities I have," writes incoming fresher Safa Al-Azami

n an era of political turmoil such as ours, nobody can afford to be complacent — least of all young people, who are often unfairly labelled apathetic by those in power. Faced with the inequalities that the pandemic has exposed, the looming climate crisis, and ongoing struggles against racism, it is often exhausting to keep engaged. Even when I'm mercifully free from academic responsibilities, as I am now, the constant flurry of alarming news stories can become overwhelming. Returning to, or — if vou're a Fresher like me — starting university, will inevitably take over our lives to the point where it becomes difficult to keep up to date with the depressing march of the news.

Before the pandemic, I envisaged getting involved with as many student politics groups or student campaigns as I could. I imagined that the many opportunities to pursue activism within university would enrich my social life rather than clashing with it. Of course, these avenues still exist, but the pandemic has forced many events to move to Zoom and other online platforms. 'Zoom fa-

tigue,' and the difficulty of staying attentive and maintaining momentum over a video call, make activism a more tiring process than ever.

During A-levels, I found it difficult to keep myself informed and engaged. Still, to keep up with current affairs had become an obligation; a necessary demand of the HSPS admissions process. After December, I barely had time to do anything but put my head down and get through my exams. My engagement with my usual extra-curriculars - my local political party, youth council and my schools politics society — began to slip. Since politics is my main interest, I was able to stay up to date much more easily than my friends who were inclined towards other routes, but I understand how difficult it is to strike a balance.

This pandemic opened many eyes to the need for activism. All over social media, young people were increasingly sharing petitions, places to donate, vital information, and more to keep everyone aware. This came largely as a result of the Black Lives Matter movement, but continued to reach almost every area of activism. There were dangers, of course, such as the spread of false information and the worry that activism was becoming performative. But for the most part, I saw a general rise in the engagement and passion of young people with respect to issues that mattered to them, be it racism, climate change, or anything else. And this had monumental impacts. As people across the world gathered to protest against racism, those who had experienced it were inspired to speak up. to challenge the institutions which have failed to confront discrimination. Young people became tremendously politically engaged, and it is important that this momentum continues even as we start returning to a 'new normal.'

Often, the huge problems we've identified seem impossible to solve, and this makes our activism seem pointless. To tackle this, we have to ensure we make our mental health our first priority. Instead of burning ourselves out, we'll be more productive when we feel healthy and confident about the impact we can have. Even if we are unable to see it

immediately, we should not be defeatist, because we can have an impact. Almost every great movement for change and equality began as protests, composed of ordinary individuals like ourselves. These protests should not be underestimated as tools for change.

Other times, there are so many places to focus our passion that we become overwhelmed and do not have the energy to invest our hopes into all the necessary issues. This is why it is useful to channel most of our activism into one or a few areas. This doesn't mean we become complacent on everything else, but it means we can direct our energies to the causes we are more passionate about and can advocate for more effectively. As a Bengali immigrant, I know that one of the issues I will speak out about the most is racism, particularly as I move from the diverse city of Manchester to the less multicultural Cambridge. As students, we can make real and direct changes by getting involved in university-specific campaigns. This is one of the best and easiest ways of getting involved when under academic pressure. Often, smaller, more local changes can have an influence elsewhere and create a ripple effect that leads to wider change.

Over lockdown, I've been inspired to take action in numerous ways. I spoke to my school about how they can combat racism. I resumed involvement in a youth voice organisation of which I am a part, YouthPolitics UK, where I gave an online workshop on effective activism. I started speaking out about pervasive issues I'd stayed silent about in the past, such as classism and inequality. My activism flagged in year 13, but I revived my passion during this break, and am determined not to forget the political responsibilities I have.

While it seems that being involved in politics is getting more difficult and will continue to do so as the academic year begins, there is always something you can do. This can be as simple as informing yourself on an issue, or starting a conversation on a subject that needs to be addressed. 2020 has brought many of these issues to light, and it is important that we use this to channel our passion and indignation into positive change.

Friday 2nd October 2020 VARSITY

Features

Rethinking the 'perfect' student

Vulture Editor, Georgina Buckle, writes on the sacrifices that are and aren't worth making as a Cambridge fresher

oing up to the Cambridge University Open Day I had prepared a list of questions, most of which were answered by smiling students and reassuring academics. There was only one answer that I remember inciting apprehension in me, from a professor of English. Naturally concerned given Oxbridge's notorious reputation of heavy workloads, I had asked him "realistically, would I be able to have hobbies and time to socialise as well as staying on top of my studies?"

His answer wasn't particularly heartening. "Well, if you are very careful with your time, and don't get distracted by Facebook, you'll perhaps be able to manage your taekwondo on top of your studies." Although not inherently wrong, his response seemed to be a firm way of saying: if you're able to manage vour time like a machine and robotically disconnect from any distractions, then yes, you'll have room for exactly one extra-curricular activity (with time for socialising worryingly excluded). I applied nonetheless, knowing full well that I wasn't the machine-like student he described, despite being a keen and hard-working one.

Throughout my education, I've always – shock horror – liked studying. My A Levels proved to me that I could be a 'good' student by working hard, even if I saw my friends often and gave time

to non-academic activities. I can procrastinate work, or inefficiently spend far too long trying to perfect one task, or simply be distracted – as I said, I'm not a machine.

In spite of all of this, I had enough time to put in my hours of studying during the week. I thought I was a 'good' student because I was never usually forced to work late, or last minute and my teachers' praise and good marks affirmed this. It's therefore unsurprising that the professor's response made me nervous that I'd have to severely change who I was and what I liked doing outside of academics in order to fulfil my wish of still being the 'perfect' student. In retrospect, I had to change my preconceived ideas of what the 'perfect' student was.

Coming to Cambridge was certainly a shock to my previous routine. The heavy workload was expected – two essays and multiple other tasks on only the second day of being a fresher – but was still challenging to get used to. I was adamant to keep time for relaxing or socialising, even just for spontaneous nights chatting late with my flatmates, but had to face the consequence of this. In my first term, I found myself spending nights in the library until 4am. Working so late and being forced to do tasks last minute – simply because of the sheer workload

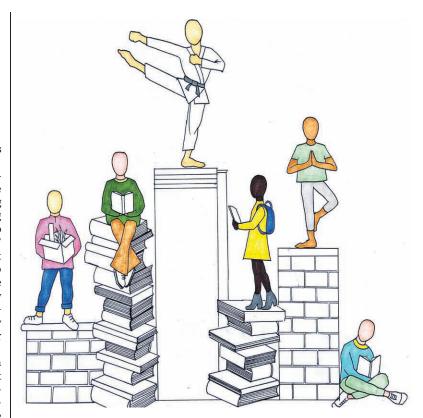
- made me feel guilty that I was a 'bad'

student, despite still putting in the hours and finishing my work.

I was adamant I wouldn't wholly sacrifice doing 'normal' student things, like going to see shows at the ADC, trying out a sports class, doing yoga, or getting involved with *Varsity*. So instead I had to shift my focus onto what the 'perfect' student was. It seems a simple thing, but I had to realise that it was justified to change routine in the midst of a huge life transition. You're balancing living away from home with adapting to a demanding academic course, and people do truly mean it when they say that the first year is full of trial and error.

As well as this, I had to adapt to an entirely different understanding about essays. During A Levels, homework essays were the pinnacle of hours of inclass and at-home learning; they were supposed to be polished, finished products. At Cambridge, I realised professors see them as germinating ideas still being worked out and tested - the first step of learning, rather than the last. This encouraged me in later terms to spend less time inefficiently trying to be a 'perfectionist' on topics that I would never be truly finished learning about. Even the nicest professors will never tell you that you have done enough work, or learnt enough, and that's normal - you're paying to be a student, not a teacher.

This is all far easier written in hind-



▲ "In retrospect, I had to change my preconceived ideas of what the 'perfect' student was" (ILLUSTRATION BY FLO BROCKMAN FOR VARSITY)

sight than felt during the time, when the change can be overwhelming. Turning to the people in the years above helped, like making use of the bizarre college family set-up to ask my two wonderful Mums for guidance. But my main advice to freshers that are in the position I was in, is simply to allow change to happen – including a change to how you perceive the 'perfect' student.

The professor at the Open Day was

right in some respects. In order to stay afloat of the work and try to avoid late nights in the library, I have learnt to be better at prioritisation, and efficient working. At the same time, I know I will never wholly bend my student routine to fit a rigid, mechanical mould – if I have some late nights studying as a result, maybe that's a sacrifice worth making. I'm not a machine, but that never made my first year impossible.

Lockdown: the experience of an estranged student

"What happens if I can't go home?" An anonymous student discusses the precarious situation of having no home to return to during the pandemic

s whisperings of the dreaded "lockdown" turned into a harsh reality, I quickly saw my sofasurfing, bartending summer plans scattered by the wave of uncertainty that struck the UK at the beginning of the pandemic. Amidst a flurry of hasty plans and packing bags, colleges closed their libraries, sent students home, and prepared for an "unprecedented" online exam term. We all have different stories of fear and anxiety during this time, of asking questions no one had answers to. But as it became increasingly clear that this was not going to be over anytime soon, the question I was left asking was: what happens if I can't go home?

Estranged students are young people studying without the support from their parents (or family) due to a breakdown in the relationship, meaning they have needed to remove themselves from an unstable home environment without the intervention of local authorities. Research by the University of Cambridge, in collaboration with organisation 'Stand Alone', has suggested that estrangement can result from cases of abuse (often emotional), family alienation (for example of LGBTQI+ students) or mismatched expectations about family values.

In the initial stages of the outbreak I was more fortunate than most students in my position, both in Cambridge and across the UK. I will be

eternally grateful to my college, who were quick to reassure me that I would be able to stay in my room for as long as I remained a student, and that I could reach out to them if I had any financial worries. There are, however, many students across the country in my position who were dealing with private landlords less sympathetic to postponing the payment of bills or rent.

In the lead up to exams, the content I should have been learning was pushed firmly to the margins of my consciousness. Any dwindling focus on revision gave way to worry for my younger siblings, locked-down in the toxic home from which I had escaped, and guilt that I couldn't offer any more support than daily phone calls. Had I gone home during lockdown. I can quite definitively say that I would have failed my exams, and that would have been the least of my problems. But what was perhaps an even greater source of anxiety was the question of what would happen to me after exams. The pandemic had made it almost impossible to couch-hop and take on temporary work; two options that many estranged students rely on in order to get by during holidays and after graduation. Removing this safety net made my exam results ever more important- achieving the grades required to continue with a masters – was the only option.

Without the luxury of being able to return home, save money and take time to prepare for future job opportunities, I knew I would find myself in a precarious position. Despite the generous offers of support from my incredible circle of friends (who I am

The concept of 'home' is emotionally loaded for most students who are living away from their family

forever indebted to), which meant that I would at least have accommodation in the short term, this was a double edged sword, as I had to struggle with explaining my situation again and again. Even then, the pandemic meant that there was no guarantee I would find a job and be on my feet in a couple of weeks, nor that I could spend a week here and there in different places for fear of spreading the virus, nor that

there wouldn't be another lockdown. After all, however generous the person, I know that when people say "you're welcome to stay as long as you like" or "you've always got a home with me", no one is really signing up to adopting an extra family member.

Between the anxiety of feeling like a burden and the guilt for relying on close friends, whose own circumstances are so uncertain at a time like this, the emotional impact of not having a place to call "home" was undoubtedly heightened during lockdown. Not having somewhere to settle is always a worry in the back of my head, and the fact that most students do not have this concern makes it all the more isolating. Stand Alone has reported that "Student accommodation is about more than cost. The concept of 'home' is emotionally loaded for most students who are living away from their family... it is likely to be a much more anxietyevoking concept for young people who have experienced a problematic or traumatic home and family.'

As a final thought of the colleges already seem to have forgotten about students like myself, who are unable to "have prepared travel plans to leave accommodation at their own expense, at very short notice", as Trinity College assumes. In my situation, even receiving such an a final though experiences will me university more a students within and, if nothing elfore asking why students within their summer in than going home.

email would induce extreme levels of anxiety, as I would worry whether my circumstances were considered to be "truly exceptional" enough for fellows in their committees to deem me worthy of alternative accommodation. This kind of correspondence is extremely irresponsible, as it pressurises vulnerable students to reconsider returning to the toxic, and potentially dangerous, home environments from which aathey have left.

Estrangement amongst the student population is often a forgotten narrative. However, with the onset of COV-ID-19, estranged students in particular are increasingly vulnerable, and thus will require additional support over the coming academic year, as well as during the transition phase after graduation. As well as taking health precautions to prevent COVID-19 outbreaks in the coming months, colleges should be preparing to support students who have been emotionally, socially and economically impacted during lockdown.

As a final thought, I hope that my experiences will make members of the university more aware of estranged students within their community, and, if nothing else, think twice before asking why someone has spent their summer in Cambridge, rather than going home.

VARSITY FRIDAY 2ND OCTOBER 2020

Opinion

The road to isolation - Boris's Internal Market Bill

Lara Brown warns that Britain risks its international legitimacy by backtracking on the Internal Market Bill, adding to the chaos of an already uncertain future.



he 12th of December 2019 was a day of jubilation for the Conservative Party. It is rare for parties in their tenth year of government to be in such a strong position; Boris Johnson, whose first months in Downing Street were defined by instability and chaos, surely felt overwhelmingly relieved to be the Prime Minister commanding the biggest parliamentary majority since 2005.

To what should we attribute his historic victory? One factor prevailed: Johnson's 'oven-ready' Brexit deal. It was the Brexit election; Brexit was the ground on which Johnson wanted to fight, and it was the ground on which he won. Johnson had moved his way out of the quagmire by appealing to Leavers in the Red Wall, and to Remainers fed up with Brexit dominating their newsfeeds. Johnson's biggest achievement was a deal that proved palatable to the majority of the British public, a deal that now lies in tatters.

Johnson threw out the backstop and replaced it with the Northern Ireland Protocol, a supposedly "great deal". And yet, on the 9th September, the Prime Minister told us that he had no choice but to throw out the Protocol and to break international law by defying the Withdrawal Agreement. The deal for

Northern Ireland was no longer "great" but "terrible". The Internal Market Bill was tabled.

After Brexit, Northern Ireland will not be required to follow EU regulations. With this, the question will arise as to how the EU can maintain free movement in Ireland and avoid the erection of a hard border. The Irish border is currently entirely open. This is not only politically crucial – the dismantling of militarised border points was a key requirement of the Good Friday Agreement – but also a logistical necessity, as the border straddles many houses and farms.

There are currently no countries bordering the EU where customs checks have been eliminated. The Protocol agreed that all Northern Irish goods must conform to some EU rules, allowing products to move freely into the republic. There would therefore be customs checks on the border between Great Britain and Ireland. The proposed rules would allow Northern Ireland to remain part of both UK customs territory and the customs union (subjecting them to around 200 EU product regulations).

This seemed elegant in 2019, but now Johnson condemns it. He claims the EU is attempting to "leverage the Northern Ireland Protocol" , threatening to ban the sale of UK agri-foods anywhere in the EU and therefore creating a food blockade between the UK and Northern Ireland. The trouble is that the Internal Market Bill does not prevent a food blockade in Northern Ireland, as Ed Miliband highlighted, "This bill does precisely nothing to address the transport of food from Great Britain to Northern Ireland". He requested that the Prime Minister point to the part of the Bill which will protect Northern Ireland, but was met with silence. Theresa May, who has been very reticent to criticise her successor, described Jonson as acting "recklessly and irresponsibly" putting the UK at risk of "untold damage": Blair and Major have called the legislations "shameful" and "embarrassing".

Johnson has forced a bill through Parliament without any explanation of how it will help Northern Ireland. When reading from the government script, The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Brandon Lewis, offered a measly defence of the bill, asserting that it breaks international law only in a "specific and limited way". The draft legislation currently states that ministers might "disapply" previously agreed-upon rules on the movement of goods. It also allows ministers to provide financial assistance

to any person or company, overriding EU state aid laws. State aid is defined as any use of taxpayer funds which gives certain organisations advantages over others and thus distorts competition and trade laws.

By breaking state aid laws, we put the EU at risk of having their markets flooded with Northern Irish goods which have benefited from State Aid. The EU have stated that in violating the Withdrawal Agreement, the UK will "break international law, undermine trust and put at risk the ongoing future relationship negotiations". If the bill is implemented, the EU will face a choice between allowing the single market to be compromised, or taking steps to secure their frontiers by erecting a hard border. Mick Mulvaney, Donald Trump's special envoy to Northern Ireland, has already identified the risk of creating a hard "border by accident".

When Michael Howard spoke against the Internal Market Bill in the House of Lords, he focused on one particular aspect: that in breaking international law, even in a "specific and limited way", the United Kingdom would cause irreparable damage to its reputation. "How can we reproach Russia, or China, or Iran when their conduct falls below internationally accepted standards when we

are showing such scant regard for our treaty obligations?" In the aftermath of Brexit, Britain needs to negotiate every one of the trade deals it profited from when in the EU. However, in the wake of Johnson's mismanagement, it now seems that we will begin these negotiations with a reputation as a government with no regard for legality, which also gladly renegades on its commitments.

The bill raises an array of additional problems. Aside from reigniting tensions in Northern Ireland, it also threatens relations with America. Whoever wins the White House in November, the House of Representatives is unlikely to flip, and Nancy Pelosi is clear that House Democrats will obstruct all mooted free trade deals with the UK if Johnson reneges on his commitments to the EU and to peace in Ireland. The EU will likewise be reluctant to cooperate with the UK once we have a reputation for breaking international law. The current state of national affairs seems even worse than if we had simply left with no deal this time last year. Since then, we have made commitments which we simply cannot adhere to. No surprise that five former prime ministers have joined 30 Conservative MPs in objecting to the Internal Market Bill.

Opinion

Trump, and the history of political gaslighting

What role does gaslighting play in America's broken political debate?

n the 2020 election and throughout his administration Trump has led a sustained campaign of political gaslighting. Gaslighting is defined as an "elaborate and insidious technique of deception and psychological manipulation" used to "undermine the victim's confidence in his own ability to falsehood, right from wrong, or reality from appearance, thereby rendering him psychologically dependent on the gaslighter". Trump uses gaslighting to make American voters doubt their memory of his past actions and positions, refute basic facts and distrust reliable sources of information. The ultimate aim is to give himself a monopoly on truth.

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In the last few weeks he has spread conspiracies of mail-in voting fraud and the 'deep state', claiming Democrat presidential nominee Joe Biden is secretly controlled by "people that are in the dark shadows" and describing a mysterious plane "completely loaded with thugs wearing... dark uniforms". He has also accused leading Democrats of forging Ruth Bader Ginsberg's dying wishes for her Supreme Court replacement to be chosen after the November election, suggesting Nancy Pelosi, Chuck Schumer, or Adam "shifty" Schiff are responsible At a campaign rally last week, Trump told supporters that Covid-19 affects "virtually nobody", just as its US death toll passed 200,000, and August's Republican National Convention saw him lead a charm offensive aimed at African American voters, trying to uphold his claim that he has done more for the black community than any President since Lincoln. To help maintain this alternate reality, in a militant, polarised America gripped by racial justice protests and

the world's most Covid deaths, he has continued his attacks on the 'fake news media' that challenges it.

Trump's gaslighting has been regularly commented on, perhaps due to abuse and mental health being more widely discussed, and terms like gaslighting entering popular use. Some of these accounts are more allegorical: therapist Stephanie Sarkis described Trump as "a classic gaslighter in an abusive relationship with America". However, political gaslighting has deeper historical roots as a means of authoritarian control.

Throughout history, those in power have often sought to mislead and deceive people, but political gaslighting only meaningfully emerged in a modern, psychological sense under the authoritarian states of the 1930s and 40s. morbidly satirised by George Orwell in 1984. Orwell's protagonist Winston Smith works at the 'Ministry of Truth', rewriting and deleting historical documents to fit the ever-changing party line.

Gaslighting was refined as a science in East Berlin, in an unassuming brown office building off Normannenstraße: the Stasi headquarters was emblematic of what Hannah Arendt called the "banality of evil". The Stasi used Zersetzung (decomposition) tactics to psychologically break dissidents: they moved objects in their homes, stole things, turned lights on and off, wrote fake letters from and to them and disrupted their relationship and work lives. For those not targeted by Zersetzung, surveillance and the threat of informants among friends and family, along with disparities between regime propaganda and economic realities forced GDR citizens to suppress their own rationality and question their

Today, Putin's Russia is the pioneer of political gaslighting — not surprising considering Putin's own past working for the USSR's KGB in East Germany. Putin's Russia is a country of maddening multiple realities, its regime ostensibly democratic and peace-seeking, but prone to poisoning political opponents and curbing civil liberties. In Russia, internet technology enables political gaslighting on an industrial scale; Kurowska and Reshetnikov have shown how Putin's regime uses 'troll factories' of intelligence agents and thousands of computer-programmed bots to overload online discourse with anger, noise and misinformation, to defuse any constructive effort at opposing the regime. With useful or earnest content drowned out by conspiracy theories and vitriol, users disengage and become apathetic.

These troll factories have targeted American social media, aiding Donald Trump's candidacy and polarization in general in the 2016 Presidential Election. It would be disrespectful to equate Trump's political gaslighting. often chaotically tweeted from his own smartphone, with ruthless government oppression in Russia or the GDR, and Trump lacks the state apparatus that made these regimes possible. However, he benefits from an enthusiastic army of volunteers in social media. TV and punditry who help him lie, disseminate conspiracy theories and defame his crit-

Trump's gaslighting is also helped by the surreal, uncertain conditions of America today, sufficient to make anyone feel insane. The once inconceivable fact of Trump being president, wildfires on

the West Coast, a global pandemic and armed militias in the streets contribute to a sense of surreal dystopia, a glitched simulation, yet in many ways life goes on as normal: Starbucks is still open, football is back on and the 'apocalypse' is nihilistically Twitter. In worki n g out how to frame reality, voters face wildly incom. patible views Ameri-

white supremacist police state, corrupt and unequal, but ultimately redeemable system, or the best, freest, greatest country in history. The final goal of gaslighting is to create dependency on the abuser. When people are paranoid, angry and dis- (WIKIMEDIA COMMONS)

why we locked down in the first place.

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'Keep Calm and Carry C

We should learn from the wartime generation by keeping calm and carrying on throughout the COVID-19 crisis

ust before the outbreak of the Second World War, the British Ministry of Information was given the unenviable task of creating a phrase to rouse the nation into action against the threat of Nazism. Their words, 'Keep Calm and Carry On', although later retired, became synonymous with the nation's famously resilient wartime spirit. Nowadays, the once powerful words languish on the front of tacky tote bags and teapots sold in the shadow of the Tower of London, perhaps the time has come to get the well-loved words back out of retirement.

In March of this year, Downing Street came up with various phrases to try and spur the nation into action against the threat of Covid-19. Their early demands to 'Stay home. Protect the NHS. Save lives.' were probably not cheery enough to be plastered onto a tea towel but were wholly appropriate given that the country needed a clear message amid so much uncertainty.

However, half a year later, a new rallying cry is needed. The new normal centres on the idea that cancellations and restrictions are something we must learn to live with. But this is another phrase designed for the first lockdown, when the government required silence and obedience while experts scrambled to understand the nature of the virus. As our knowledge grows, we need to move away from our 'snowflake generation' meekness and return to the stoicism of wartime Britain. The words 'Keep Calm

and Carry On' seem more appropriate now, when we need to focus on the importance of keeping our fear of coronavirus from eclipsing all else.

Of course, it's not easy. The new normal has become a comforting scapegoat, a way of avoiding the nightmarish reality of combatting the risk of Covid-19. It is infinitely simpler to zone out as a Zoom meeting stutters its way into the third hour of unproductive brainstorming, than it is to spend time and money investing in precautions that could get us back into real life. Moves to virtual living and learning were a short term response to an unfamiliar situation - but their sustained use is not the way forward.

Some activities are inherently incompatible with Covid-19 - the closure of nightclubs in March was a decision that felt inevitable and entirely rational. But now even seemingly Covid-safe activities seem to be off-limits. At a university level, the annual Cambridge Freshers' Fair on Parker's Piece has had to be cancelled; an event that is always held outside, with people eating their free pizza slices at a distance of 2m away from society representatives. On the national scale, organisers have simply given up with the idea of trying to hold London's New Year's Eve fireworks. Surely, with the necessary precautions, the people of London could have joined together to celebrate the end of what has been an incredibly challenging year.

The driving force behind the transition of these events to online alternatives is the ever-tightening grip of government restrictions. But these strict new rules seem driven by news reports that are promoting fear and blind tolerance, rather than providing the level-headed analysis of the facts we so desperately need. The latest 'predictions of 50,000 cases a day' fail to point out the important differences between the Easter outbreak and the situation now. Case numbers are rising for many reasons, partly because they can't be adjusted for the fact that testing is so much more extensive now than it was earlier in the year. In late April, we were running 30,000 tests a day, but 6 months later, that number sits at 220,000 and is still rising. We must remember that the raw data used by the media cannot be used to make retrospective comparisons, and neither can it justify responding to this wave in exactly the same way as the last. As Professor Carl Heneghan of Oxford University says. "We need to slow down our thinking, But every time the government sees a rise in cases it seems to panic."

This does not mean we should be complacent about risk. But we should take heart from the contrast to the height of the pandemic, when research suggested there may have been almost 100,000 cases a day, a far cry from the 5,000 or so we picked up at the time. It's easy to trust statistics, but the truth is the data we keep quoting from the first wave only ever represented the tip of

It's also important to hold sight of

We needed to flatten the peak to protect the NHS. But now the picture is a lot less clear. Currently, there are 600 people in hospital with coronavirus, compared to 17,000 in April, so the NHS is a long way from being overwhelmed. We have to concede that cases must rise as the last days of summer draw to a close and Without a flu season rears its ugly head. Our aim national now is surely to prevent excess deaths effort to in the vulnerable, rather than holding onto unrealistic hopes for a day with find ways no new cases. to return to Our attitude at the start of the panreality, we risk watch-

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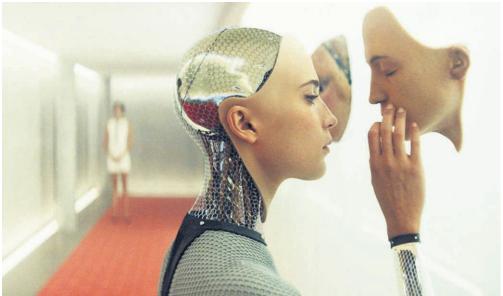
demic centred on the falsehood that this would be a challenging but brief period that simply had to be endured. But the bottom line is Covid-19 is here to stay. Even with vaccines being pushed through trials at breakneck speed, mass production, inoculation and herd immunity are a very long way off. Without a national effort to find ways to return to reality, we risk watching an entire academic year slide by as we resignedly type in the next Meeting ID.

Fear is an easy emotion to evoke but a hard one to contain. Our response to this pandemic must not be driven by an attitude of weary acceptance or a disproportionate response to clickbait headlines. We should of course stay alert, control the virus and continue saving lives. But we must rid ourselves of this attitude of tired defeat and instead, keep calm and look for Covid-safe ways of

VARSITY Friday 2nd October 2020

Science Round-up

Grace Blackshaw and **Yan-Yi Lee** explore some of the latest scientific research from the University of Cambridge

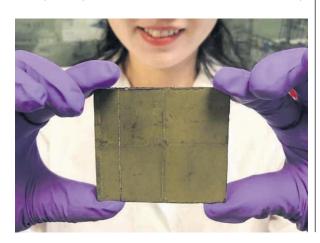


▲ Alicia Vikander as Ava in Ex Machina, a typical portrayal of AI in film. (TWITTER/AESTHETIC MOVIES)

Decolonising Artificial Intelligence

Researchers from Cambridge's Leverhulme Centre for the Future of Intelligence have launched an initiative to "decolonise AI". They argue that the overwhelming Whiteness of AI, in humanoid robots, virtual assistants, stock images and portrayals of AI in film and TV, allows for the "erasure people of colour from the White utopian imaginary." Dr Dihal, who leads the project, explains, "it is unsurprising that a society which has promoted the association of intelligence with White Europeans for centuries would imagine machine intelligence also as White." They also suggest the racialisation of AI has the potential to further exacerbate bias and racial inequality.

▼ Researchers have developed a photocatalyst sheet that can turn carbon dioxide and water into oxygen and formate (TWITTER/SUSTAINABILITY DESPADED BY INNOVATION CONCERSS)



A device for artificial photosynthesis

Imagine if we could make fuel from carbon dioxide and sunlight, without using any electricity? A research group in the Department of Chemistry has developed a device that does exactly that. They've developed a photocatalyst sheet that converts CO2 and H2O into O2 and formate, a fuel that can either be used directly or converted into hydrogen. This device builds on the team's earlier work developing an "artificial leaf," which produces another fuel syngas, without releasing any carbon dioxide. The challenge now is to scale up the technology from the 20 square centimetre test unit to several square metres.

Choosing the veggie option

Most people know that the veggie option is better for their health and for the planet, but it can still be hard to break old habits and chose the veggie option. In an effort to overcome this, Cambridge researchers carried out experiments in the cafeterias of two Cambridge colleges to see if they could "nudge" people's behaviour by changing the position of veggie options. Over two years, the team collected and analysed data from 105,143 meal selections. Crucially, they found that placing the vegetarian options first on the counter only increased their sales when there was more than 1.5m between choices. There was no increase in sales when there was less than 1.0m between choices

The prevention of heart disease can begin... in the womb?

Cardiovascular diseases are not necessarily the result of smoking and obesity. In fact, research has shown that low oxygen levels in the womb ("oxidative stress") may increase a child's chances of developing heart disease later in life. In response, Professor Dino Giussani and his team examined the performance of mitochondrial therapy on women with complicated pregnancies and found that MitoQ (a specialised antioxidant) reduces oxidative stress in the mitochondria, leading to a healthier development of the fetus and lessening the risk of developing cardiovascular diseases in adulthood.

Electronic printing inspired by coffee stains

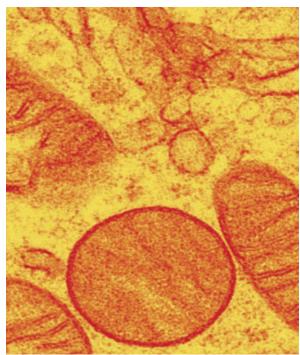
Ever spilt your coffee and noticed a distinctive ring-like deposit along the perimeter of the spill? Perhaps unsurprisingly, this is called the coffee ring effect and it forms when the liquid evaporates quicker at the edges, causing solid particles to accumulate. It has long hindered the development of functional inks with graphene and nanoparticles because it makes electronic devices behave irregularly. But fear not, Cambridge researchers recently came up with a unique solution to tackle this. Using a specific mixture of isopropyl alcohol and 2-butanol, ink particles distribute more evenly across droplets.



(TWITTER/CANCER RESEARCH UK)

Predicting oesophageal cancer eight years prior to diagnosis

With awareness of cancer prevention on the rise, it is common to ask: how can cancer be predicted, and how long in advance? In an attempt to answer these questions, researchers at Cambridge and the European Bioinformatics



▲ For women with complicated pregnancies, mitochondrial therapy may reduce the chance of heart problems for the offspring. (TWITTER/GONVILLE & CAIUS COLLEGE)

Institute have been hard at work, looking specifically at the case of oesophageal cancer. With the help of whole-genome sequencing, the team examined DNA samples of patients with Barrett's oesophagus and compared them to a control group. The team then searched for DNA differences between those who gradually developed oesophageal cancer and those who did not. Ultimately, the researchers were able to devise a statistical model that predicted oesophageal cancer eight years prior to diagnosis for around half of the patients involved.

Does the colour of tinted solar panels matter for agriculture?

When it comes to farming, tinted solar panels can help generate energy and cultivate crops at the same time. While this technique ("agrivoltaics") itself isn't new, Cambridge scientists have found that orange solar panels produce more clean energy, while also stimulating the growth of more nutritious crops. This is not a fashion statement, but a good use of wavelengths - red and orange wavelengths are particularly beneficial for crop growth so the installation of orange solar panels allows a good concentration of these red and orange wavelengths to pass through to the crops planted underneath.

Friday 2nd October 2020 VARSITY

Science

'The key to the highest truths': Primo Levi and the beauty of chemistry

Nathanael Smalley reflects on the life and writing of Primo Levi, and his own experience as a Natural Sciences Student

Content Note: This article contains discussion of Levi's imprisonment in Auschwitz.

rimo Levi wasn't a great scientist. There are no chemical reactions named after him; he published no ground-breaking papers; he made no revolutionary contributions to the paint and lacquer industry. However, through his book, *The Periodic Table*, Levi contributed something unique to the scientific community.

First published in Italian in 1975, The Periodic Table consists of 21 chapters, each the name of a chemical element and a story (in roughly chronological order) somehow connected to it. Levi was a chemist, graduating from the University of Turin in 1941 under Mussolini's Fascist government and racial laws. Soon after the collapse of the regime on 25th July 1943 came the Nazi occupation only a few months later on 5th September. Fleeing the occupation, Levi and his peers joined an ill-equipped partisan group in Piedmont. However, he was soon captured and deported to Auschwitz. where he was imprisoned until the end of the war. Finally, after a lengthy journey through Europe, Levi returned to Italy as an industrial chemist.

Throughout the book, Levi speaks both openly and eloquently about his life. In the second chapter, Hydrogen, Levi remembers experimenting in a back-yard laboratory. Indeed, which NatSci hasn't pursued, naïvely or not, to "dredge the bowels of the mystery with our strength, our talent...", or to "watch the buds swell in spring, the mica glint in the granite, my own hands...[and to say] "I will understand this, too, I will understand everything, but not the way they want me to?"." And then, at University, to have

these dreams of omniscience frustrated when "chemistry itself...did not answer my questions...Did chemistry theorems exist? No: therefore you had to go further, not be satisfied with the *quia*, go back to the origins, to mathematics and physics." Or, as one's sphere of scientific knowledge becomes more specialised, to observe those academics who have tied their "destiny, indelibly, to bromine or polypropylene, or the -NCO group, or glutamic acid"?

It is Levi's application of such rich, descriptive language to the otherwise mundane of the scientific world which makes this book special. "Distilling is beautiful", states Levi in Potassium. "When you set about distilling, you acquire the consciousness of repeating a ritual consecrated by the centuries, almost a religious act, from which imperfect material you obtain the essence, the usia, the spirit..." Levi's understanding of chemistry's beauty is found throughout the book: whether it be the "pretty structure" of alloxan in Nitrogen, or his rich description of phosphorus as "not an emotionally neutral element". It was van Gogh himself who noted that "if you truly love nature, you will find beauty everywhere." Levi seems to have understood this to an intimate degree.

Despite this, *The Periodic Table* is much more than simply an autobiography; in fact, Levi asserts that it is *not* that. In 2006, the Royal Institution voted it the best science book ever written from a shortlist including works by Konrad Lenz and Berthold Brecht, but it is more than that too. Any first-year biologist would have no problem in pointing out some of the dodgy science in the final chapter, *Carbon*, which is nevertheless Levi's *tour de force* of a literary description of the

Calvin Cycle of photosynthesis. Neither is it a moralistic, Aesopian collection of tales and musings, nor a mere anthropomorphism of the elements and their characteristics. Instead, Levi refers to his creation as "in some fashion a history... of a trade and its defeats, victories and miseries, such as everyone wants to tell when he feels close to concluding the arc of his career." Levi's compelling grasp of humanity is what shines through the pages: no character is a hero nor a villain, not even Dr. Müller, his boss at the Buna Rubber factory at Auschwitz. After all, for Levi, "reality is always more complex than invention...it rarely lies on

one level." Yet when reading The Periodic Table, it's hard not to reflect on its powerful lessons and warnings. Levi's Judaism is deeply personal: from the chapter Argon, detailing his "inert" Piedmontese Jewish relatives, to the chapter Cerium, detailing his exploits in making contraband lighter flints in Auschwitz. Levi speaks of his pride in being "impure," drawing the allusion to the unreactivity of pure zinc to acid and the need for a drop of copper sulfate to begin the reaction: "In order for the wheel to turn, for life to be lived, impurities are needed: Fascism does not

them, forbids them, and that's why you're not a Fascist; it wants everybody to be the same, and you are not."

From my own experience, I found myself somewhat dismayed to be handed back my first biological essay to discover that florid language had no place in scientific writing: one friend was rebuked for using the word "created" in an essay, lest it be implied was in fact achieved by some sort of divine intervention. "Precise and concise", our first-year supervisor told us. And yet, Levi's style could not be further removed from the starchy text of academic journals and scientific essays, describing his trade as "brutally incompatible with writing." In fact, as a chemist, it is rare that I ever have the chance to read a "proper" book; truthfully, I seldom have an attention span greater than a couple of pages of the "Green Bible" of Organic Chemistry.

that this particular metabolic reaction

Nonetheless, reading Levi's writing over lockdown, I was reminded that he also witnessed chemistry's most detestable side at Auschwitz, as part of the Chemical Kommando transporting magnesium chloride, and at the IG-Farben laboratory. Despite this, Levi never lost sight of the beauty of chemistry: for me, found in the sublimation of brilliant emerald-green crystals of nickelocene; in the jagged, imperfect trace of an action potential on the electromyograph; in the faint rainbow of lines emitted by potassium under a sodium discharge lamp. If Levi were to observe us in these practical classes, complete with our rash deductions, amateurish mistakes and

shattered glassware, I like to think he would be pleased.



Coronavirus is mutating – should we be worried?

Rachel Ibbott discusses the negative and positive impacts of coronavirus mutations, and how they could affect the race for a vaccine.

evelopment of a vaccination could be the solution to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, September's rollercoaster of vaccine news has failed to acknowledge a potential major barrier: mutation. SARS-CoV-2's genome is already changing, possibly wreaking havoc on the precarious task of returning to normality.

Mutations are often seen as drastic, perhaps owing to their randomness, or to their superhuman portrayal in popular culture (such as the X-men). In fact, most have no effect on an organism, though others could confer evolutionary advantages – for a virus, this may mean boosting transmission and infection. Scientists have been continually monitoring viral genomes since the start of the pandemic, uploaded onto databases such as GISAID, COG-UK, and Nextstrain. But are coronavirus mutations really frequent or drastic enough to derail pandemic exit strategies?

Genetic mutations can alter protein shape and therefore viral properties. Of

concern are increasing mutations in the nucleocapsid protein and 3a ciroporins, which enable new viruses to be released from an infected cell and transmit the virus to other cells. Another example is the D614G mutation, a single-base amino acid substitution from aspartate (D) to glycine (G) at position 614 in the coronavirus spike protein (which controls virus entry into human cells). This mutation spread across the world as the pandemic worsened, perhaps even aiding spread to Europe, quickly becoming ubiquitous. Patients with the D614G mutation have higher viral loads, and the mutated virus has higher infectious titres in the lab. Tentative evidence from population genetic modelling indicates that the mutation could have contributed to high infection rates in the UK. Luckily, multiple studies have reassured that D614G-mutated COVID-19 does not increase the severity of symptoms, though they might differ in how they present. The spike protein is additionally of importance for several vaccine trials, being deemed one of the most important

targets for antibodies. Whilst the D614G mutation is not directly in the antibody binding domain, any further mutations in this domain would render several key vaccine trials useless.

These all sound like significant causes for alarm. Luckily, it seems that the coronavirus mutates more slowly than other dangerous viruses such as influenza. Even when mutations do arise, evolutionary theory predicts that most will be short-lived. Furthermore, common mutations such as D614G might not be caused by evolutionary advantage as many have feared. If a new cluster of cases was seeded by only a few viruses, any mutations present are replicated by default, not necessarily because they help transmission - this is known as the founder effect. Furthermore, mutations aren't necessarily on the increase as SARS-CoV-2 adapts to its new human hosts - the same study concerned about mutations in nucleocapsid proteins found that the protein nsp12 is becoming more stable as the pandemic goes on, making it a good potential target for new

drug candidates such as Remdesivir. Research from University College London has identified several other unchanging regions of the genome which may also prove useful.

Mutations could even actively help us to control the pandemic. Analysis of different mutations in different genomes has the power to trace outbreaks back to their source. For example, the open source bank of sequences 'Nextstrain' provides analysis of subtypes of coronavirus emerging in different geographical locations - their August analysis displayed the contrast between mini-clusters in Europe (mostly local and within-country transmission) with various genetic mixtures in the US (lots of interstate transmission). This knowledge could inform policy and control measures, such as distinguishing between the need for local or more widespread lockdowns in the coming autumn.

More good news comes from researchers in Pennsylvania, USA, finding that the D614G mutated virus is more susceptible to antibody neutralisation – far from being a mutation enhancing escape from the immune response! Vaccines to the spike protein aim to elicit a specific immune response towards the virus, with the production of memory cells that will be on hand to quickly respond if the spike protein is encountered again. D614G spike proteins are better at attracting antibodies, meaning that the efficacy of vaccines currently being developed will likely be even greater against mutated forms of the virus.

So how worried about mutations should we be? While there is evidence that they could be both a threat and an aid, it's important to recognise how little we know about the virus – our knowledge is shifting all the time. Early interpretations of data and sampling biases mean that conclusions from studies should be treated tentatively. Scientists globally are preparing for anything the pandemic can throw at us – careful monitoring of mutations over the next few years will be hugely important to spot signs of drug or vaccine resistance once these technologies are in use.



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A less than ideal start to university: how are freshers feeling?

Tiffany Tsoi collects freshers' thoughts, fears, and first impressions of Cambridge amid uncertainty concerning their first academic year



▲ It is evident that mental health will be a particular concern this year, especially amongst freshers. (LEONI BOYLE)

very October, thousands of freshers arrive at Cambridge starry-eved and eager, many with far too much luggage and an inflated sense of opportunity (speaking from personal experience). As the story goes, halcyon days of partying, drinking, and general mistake-making lie ahead: equal parts magical and notorious, depending on who you ask, This year things are different. When Chloe Gommichon, an incoming first year at Magdalene from America, landed two weeks early for her mandatory quarantine, her arrival at the porter's lodge was instead met with alarming confusion, the porter muttering: "Do we have a room for her?"

"On the spot I panicked and thought they had not registered my arrival on that day," Chloe said. Things eventually turned out fine. She was put in a room at college to carry out her quarantine, but the incident has nonetheless set the tone for her arrival. "I'm disappointed. I've been told countless times that your first year of university, and especially freshers, is amazing. Now that I'm locked in a room for two weeks, I have no distractions and not much to look forward to. It makes dealing with homesickness more complicated."

These feelings are echoed by many of her peers who have been preparing for a less than ideal start to university. As the second wave continues to worsen, what was hoped to be a week of safe and socially distanced mingling is looking increasingly precarious. "I'm just concerned about even moving into college. given the rising cases and the very real possibility of a second lockdown," said Flo Brockman, an incoming fresher at Murray Edwards. And with growing emphasis from colleges on the importance of socialising within allocated household bubbles, many are feeling frustrated at the prospect. One fresher at Pembroke described being put in a household with only one other first year. "When I found this out I became so anxious that it made me not actually want to go to Cambridge at all," she said. She later requested to have this changed successfully, but the overall anxiety has prevailed. "I guess it's just really not going to be what I imagined."

It is evident that mental health will be a particular concern this year, especially amongst freshers. This has been a focus of Alice Gilderdale's work as the Welfare and Community Officer at the Cambridge Students' Union (SU). "For a fresher arriving in a city they've never lived in, knowing few or no other students and then having to maintain strict social distancing, by isolating themselves in rooms or households - it isn't an ideal situation." The SU has launched a #De mandSafeCambridge Campaign calling for the University to commit to basic assurances, such as providing accommodation for students who would prefer to remain in college in the case of a second lockdown, and adopting a compassionate approach to student discipline. "We hope this campaign lays the basic red lines we wish to see the collegiate UniA
reduced
price for
the
reduced
experience
would
have
been nice

versity committing to in order to support students returning - particularly those who may be nervous coming to Cambridge as freshers."

Despite this, a lack of clarity and inconsistencies in college policies have added to the stress and worry. The information that students have received about events planned for Freshers' Week have varied widely across colleges; a socially distanced matriculation dinner, for example, is happening at Murray Edwards, but still up in the air at other colleges. People have been planning what to wear as if it's going forwards as normal, but I don't think we've heard anything about how that's going to work," said a fresher from Pembroke.

Along with the closure of most social areas in college, like common rooms, cafes, and halls, this has fed into a shared sense that Cambridge this year is a bad deal financially. "I'm not even sure how accessible the library, both in college, or the faculty's, will be," said Flo. Many other students expressed the same sentiment, although some have acknowledged that staff must be paid regardless of whether learning becomes online. 'My dad is a lecturer so I have seen how much effort he has put into making his online lectures as smooth and useful as possible. It's far more work than he normally would need to do," said one fresher. But she conceded: "a reduced price for the reduced experience would have been nice." Kevin Du, an international fresher hailing from Shanghai, felt the same: "going to lectures, attending

supervisions, and having a face to face social life - these are necessary elements of college life, especially for a university known for its supervision system."

Yet there is something to be said for the resilience and optimism that freshers have shown. Group chats and virtual events have been a source of solace and camaraderie, wherein freshers have experienced the warmth and solidarity of the student community. "I definitely doubted choosing Cambridge during lockdown, but the people I've met through social media have reassured me that I have made the right choice. Despite the circumstances, I am really excited to move in," said Flo. Chloe is feeling similarly positive about the future. "Freshers' Week is not a once in a lifetime type of experience, and once we're allowed to properly go out with our friends, we'll have just as much, or even more fun, than we would've had in freshers.

There's no skirting around the fact that we will be arriving at a very different Cambridge this year: one that we had not expected; one that we might not recognise; and one that we probably weren't hoping for. Still, David Quan, entering his first year at Clare studying education, is nothing short of sanguine: "Everybody I've met online so far has been so kind, caring, and encouraging. We all have a shared understanding that we will be relying on one another in the coming weeks and months – I'm just excited to finally be a part of the Cambridge community."

I'm just excited to finally be a part of the Cambridge commu-

nity



Lifestyle

Putting down my reading list, picking up Percy Jackson

Even though a Cambridge term is crowded by deadlines, coffee trips, and ominious academic emails, Film and Tv Editor Alexandra Jarvis writes that reading for pleasure is a necessity



▲ "Indulging in this kind of reading is in no way beneficial to my degree, but it's not supposed to be"

our time in Cambridge is more : in the same boat as me. than your Tripos reading. I can confirm that it's helpful to know what's going on in lectures, and it makes supervisions much less awkward to know the topic. But it's not the be-all and end-all. I found the idea of open, self-guided study a difficult concept to grasp when transitioning from A-level to Cambridge (with a year abroad in between to boot); imposter syndrome was something I felt long before I knew about its infamous name, and I attempted to resort to the security of a comprehensive syllabus and reading list. As I quickly learnt, though, there was no such thing as a single reading list. It turns out that a Cambridge degree doesn't begin and end with having read everything on your subject in the library, cover to cover.

In September last year, I sat down to do a diagnostic test for my ab initio Russian course, only to realise I was supposed to have done the first six units of a grammar book that I'd never heard of beforehand. Cue utter panic. I then trawled through the MML website for other things I had missed — the core reading lists — and got through a fair amount of it through sheer stress before arriving. I reached Cambridge distinctly more stressed than necessary, only to discover that most people were

After starting the year in this brilliant fashion, I continued to feel overwhelmed by the amount of reading there was expected for each lecture (primary and secondary), and then the additional suggested readings for essays. The amount of literature involved in a language course did, admittedly, surprise me. I hadn't investigated the course in detail before applying, and got quickly used to feeling an acute sense of panic when, for instance, faced with 12 chapters of a book to read before bed, and the supervision the next day.

I was haunted by the sensation that I had to be constantly reading relevant books to my course



I was haunted by the sensation that I had to be constantly reading relevant books to my course. I thought I had the solution in Lent, reading books for Tripos in bed at night to relax. However, I now have the sneaking suspicion that this wasn't helpful in the slightest; I wasn't relaxing, nor was I actually taking in anything useful.

I eventually realised that driving myself into the ground for several months at a time can have iffy consequences for my health (I lost my voice twice, in both Michaelmas and Lent; something my housemates enjoy bringing up). Even if the pressure never lets up, you have to. During lockdown, I put aside the ominous emails from the Russian department comparing our language skills to a demanding houseplant (i.e. needing constant attention) and instead made the effort to read completely irrelevant things, from a discovery of Percy Jackson (legendary) to The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo (problematic).

Indulging in this kind of reading is in no way beneficial to my degree, but it's not supposed to be. I can get lost in these books in a way I can't with dry Russian history tomes. Far from worrying about which dates to remember, I can instead consider whether Stieg Larsson meant to sexualise the mundane in women in every other sentence. This wonderfully unproductive bedtime reading will, I imagine, last until the first night back in college. Nevertheless, having taken time off during lockdown stands me in better stead to face the chaos of term.



I can get lost in these books in a way I can't with dry Russian history tomes



You will need to remind yourself frequently of why you committed to your degree, especially when submerged, mid-term, in a coffee-fuelled essay crisis, disassociating to the Mamma Mia soundtrack (or maybe that's just me). Similarly, remind yourself to take time away from your work. This separation between your course and interests is vital, and there are hundreds of other things to fill your time around your reading — reading that you can adjust to suit your interests. Ronsard's million-or-so sonnets and I parted ways in Michaelmas, never to reconvene, and I was all the better for it. This highly individualised approach to learning only benefits your time at Cambridge. Make sure to mix this with a handful of sports, social events, and the odd spot of soul-searching (all not productive for your course, but very far from counter-pro-

Reading for pleasure may fall somewhat by the wayside in term, but it can provide the opportunity to take time on your own during the whirlwind of the infamous 8-week term. You certainly can love what you study, but having some long-cherished YA books on hand for downtime is never a bad thing, even especially — if it doesn't relate to your Tripos in the slightest.

First term Bucket

Whether its a dinky UFO, teleportation machine or a shop of curiosities, Cambridge really seems to have it all. This term, go on a walk and find all 9 Dinky Doors - a fun way to explore Cambridge and its alternative 'street-art scene'

A night out in Cambridge is not complete without the inevitable trip to Gardies or Van of Life for some chips. Whilst dancing at Cindies (and other clubs) might not be possible, the chips are still there and ready to be eaten.

Cambridge is rich with culture to be explored: whether its a museum full of antiquities, a cozy cottage filled with art, or stylish contemporary gallery. Check out our map on page 26, to see where to go for some of the best art in Cambridge.

Need some evening entertainment? A budding thespian wanting to act? Cambridge is sure to fulfil your every theatre craving. Whilst live-performances may not go ahead this term, keep an eye out for virtual productions by Cam's various theatre groups.

If you wake up at 5am to go rowing, we respect you deeply. For us normal people, a walk along the Cam will suffice. On the next sunny day, take this beautiful, green walk and enjoy a momentary break from Cambridge busyness.

Feeling peckish? Try a chelsea bun and coffee at the original Fitzbillies in Trumpington Street. Fitzbillies is a quintessential place for students to meet and procrastinate work. Whilst it is expensive, it's worth going for a special treat! FRIDAY 2ND OCTOBER 2020 _______ Vulture 21

Ask Vulture.

Ask Vulture columinist Lottie Swainston imparts some wisdom on how to maintain a long distance relationship at Cambridge

66

I've been waiting to start at Cambridge for two years now and am so excited! The only downside is it means I have to move away from my long term boyfriend who been with for a year now. We will only be 3 hours away, but he works as a chef, so finds it difficult to take time off. Any advice on keeping the romance alive in a long distance relationship whilst at university?!

f I received a pound for every worried look I got after telling people that my boyfriend and I are at different universities, I could probably retire comfortably right now – at the grand old age of 18. Friends and family seem concerned, arguments are prophesied, and it seems to be the consensus that you'll drift apart before you've even said your goodbyes. But in truth, every relationship is different – there's room for all shapes and sizes in this world, and at the end of the day, there isn't really an ideal relationship



You are presented with the perfect opportunity to achieve a balance between your own life and your relationship blueprint – so just go with the flow! Maintaining a long-distance relationship is just like maintaining any other.

It's easy to only see the negatives: you're apart, living drastically different lifestyles, and unable to share experiences. But this comes with has a host of positives which are easy to forget. You are presented with the perfect opportunity to achieve a balance between your own life and your relationship; the separation will naturally prevent you from losing your own identity to your partner's. You won't wake up one day and suddenly wonder where the hell all your own hobbies and life went.

Maintain closeness and connect over your experiences by making regular time to call: maybe once a day, or every other day – but be spontaneous! Suddenly see something that reminds you of a hilarious inside joke? Give them a call! This means you can really throw yourself into life at Cambridge, guilt free. Get creative and find new experiences you can share at a distance – you may not be able to bring your partner along to the

university orchestra, but you can definitely watch a film on Netflix party together.

You say he's a chef - why not cook a meal together over facetime? You and your flatmates can only benefit from his cooking expertise. And



finally, cherish all your dates during term; your partner won't be part and parcel of day to day student life, but maybe that's a blessing in disguise. Every time you see them it will feel like a wonderful opportunity to forget the stress of the Cambridge workload, and reconnect with the person you love – and that's a pretty special feeling.

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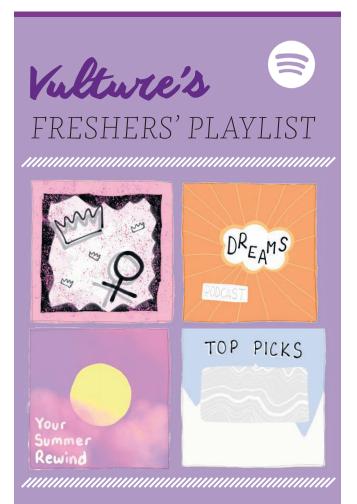
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Music





It might be a different kind of Freshers' week in Cambridge this year, but the music plays on. Here's a playlist to get you through!

to get pumped for the Zoom lecture...

Bitch, Don't Kill My Vibe Kendrick Lamar

for when you need some human connection...

Smack That

Come Together (Urban Dawn remix) The Beatles

for your government-mandated daily

Physical Dua Lipa

for the essay crisis...

What You Waiting For?

Gwen Stefani



for the 2pm lull.. Wake Up Arcade Fire

◀ Kendrick Lamar

Backing Track: Memories of classical guitar at Cambridge

Harry Taunton reminisces on how learning the classical guitar transformed his musical outlook

he guitar held very little place in my life until I unwrapped one on my thirteenth birthday.

Music had, until then, meant a year of piano lessons, or a pleasant noise to hum along to in the car or through an iPod. But now it had become something tangible and creatable. And it was this addictive satisfaction of making music and improving every time I picked up the instrument which carried me through my first eighteen months of self-instruction: mastering Wonderwall with Marty Schwartz, developing calluses and braving barre chords.

However, when I found myself ready to progress beyond the stage I had reached independently, I was unsure how best to develop my newfound skill and which musical genre to opt for. Upon hearing a recording of the late, great Julian Bream playing Tárrega's Recuerdos de la Alhambra, I decided to find a teacher would could introduce me to the music of the classical guitar: Bach's Minuet in G, Tárrega's Lágrima and Adelita, Sor's Study in A minor, John Williams' Cavatina... Grades and thousands of hours of practice followed, and my motivation and enjoyment never flagging. I was hooked.

My motivation and enjoyment never flagged

A few years later, now in the throes of university life, and having already played in my first concert at Downing, I had the opportunity to play in a masterclass held by world-renowned classical guitarist Ana Vidovic. There were seven or so other amateur players like myself, each with prepared pieces to play for Ana. I chose to perform the same tricky, tremolo-based, Tárregan tune with which Bream had wowed me five years previously - an endeavour made doubly daunting by a room full of music enthusiasts, fellow performers and, of course, Ana herself.

After one recital of the piece, Ana and I discussed it at length before delving into issues of interpretation and technique, but principally of volume and tempo. Having only practised this piece alone, I was not used to playing in front of an audience and my little beginner's guitar sounded like cardboard and string compared to Ana Vidovic's custom-made, Jim Redgate model.

We went about remedying my mousey sound, paying close attention to increasing the power and control of my right hand. This involved slowing my pace considerably and focusing on pressing the strings into the guitar instead of scratching the surface of them - a bit like pushing a piano key down into the keyboard, rather



▲ Harry and his Alhambra 5P (HARRY TAUNTON)

than just literally 'tickling the ivories'.

The masterclass inspired a real vigour and meticulousness in my practice, as well as an increased sensitivity to the relationship between the production and reception of the music itself. But the class also left me questioning the quality of the guitar I had unwrapped six years before. To achieve the quality of sound, tone and colour that I wanted and needed to progress, I felt a new guitar was needed. So, after copious research, abacus adjustment, and advice from my guitar teacher, I visited the London Guitar Studio in July 2020 and (protective mask on) purchased my first bona fide classical guitar for my twenty-first birthday. I can now say that my new Alhambra 5P spruce model has ballooned my ability, confidence and love for the instrument and its music.

My future with the classical guitar looks bright. My repertoire has grown even since July and I am composing my own pieces as often as time-off from work permits. One of these compositions was inspired by losing my grandfather in Spring 2019. The month before he passed away, my family and I went over to Spain to say our final goodbyes and six months later, while in Paris on my year abroad, I had completed a piece in his memory.

I find the process of composition enormously rewarding. When I first started I would scribble the notes down pell-mell on bits of paper. Nowadays, I draft online using free score-writing software and then write up the final drafts on fresh sheet music. I hope to do my grandfather's piece justice, along with my other musical doodles, by recording them properly and releasing them in album form at some point.

Until then, I am still enjoying the everyday process of learning and improving. Throughout quarantine and beyond, the classical guitar has been a very welcome escape, even if I am just listening to my favourites: Barrios' Un Sueño en la Floresta (in fact, the entire album John Williams Plays Barrios is incredible); Quique Sinesi's El Abrazo (played particularly well by Carles Herràiz); and Isaac Albéniz's Granada from his Suite Española op.47. Apart from these, my 'tolearn' list includes a piece by one man whose music I have not yet braved beyond one or two simpler pieces - Bach. Segovia's transcription of his Chaconne in D minor is definitely on my bucket list. However, this will have to wait its turn behind those pieces mentioned above and, of course, all the university work piling up in the corner next to my guitar stand.

Film & TV

Oxbridge on film: debauchery, decadence and The Riot Club

A second look at 2014's The Riot Club reveals that profligate reality can be stranger than sordid fiction, writes Charlotte To

first watched The Riot Club in 2014, three 🗄 I had no access to anyone who could provide 🗄 years before I would submit my application to Cambridge. Six years later, when watching it again, I couldn't make it past half-way.

With a cast list decorated with the likes of Sam Claflin, Douglas Booth, and Max Irons, my education was not particularly at the forefront of my 15-year-old mind when watching the film. The strange costumes (what I now know to be white tie), the formal dining, and the bizarre traditions merely struck me as dramatic plot devices. Not once did I flinch at the violence. You do not need me to point out the hundreds of films with more insidious and grotesque scenes than that which takes place in The Bull's Head pub, and I did not think for a minute that people really returned to their rooms completely destroyed in the name of club initiations.

I can't decide if this was the naivety of a shielded teenage girl, or wilful ignorance. Whatever it was, watching this dramatic portrayal of the Bullingdon Club played no conscious part in my decision to apply to Cambridge. Although

legitimate insight into the lived reality of attending Oxford or Cambridge, I didn't look towards films like The Riot Club to fill in the blanks.

In fact, I didn't think to even consider what the ins and outs of everyday life would be like. on (what I felt to be) the very slim chance that I might somehow be offered a place. This didn't occur to me at all, before the day I arrived in 2018. Instead, I had conjured up my own version of reality; a wholly fictitious world which I wanted to be a part of so badly that it nearly killed me pursuing it. And yet the dream was eroded with each day I actually spent in Cam-

For the great number of people with absolutely no idea what they are getting themselves into when they apply to Oxbridge, the fiction which we create is both the greatest motivator to earn the place, and the thing which makes adjusting to the reality so hard. As I became accustomed to this reality, I came back to that film which my 15-year-old self barely gave a second thought to. At the end of my first year I watched it again. When it reached that pub scene, and as to turn it off. It wasn't the violence itself which disturbed me, but the understanding I now had that this *did* bear a resemblance to reality.

The dinners, the supervisions, and the endless Freshers' Week question of 'where did you go to school, then?' were familiar in a mildly funny and reassuring way. We often look for ourselves, parallels with our own lives, in fiction and take comfort in that familiarity. But there was nothing comforting about recognising the people and the culture of the club in the world around me. I turned it off because, watching it this time around, it was not only familiar but felt completely plausible. This isn't about the persistence of drinking and dining societies in Oxbridge, but rather the culture which they are inseparable from. This culture is embedded in The Riot Club and it took my own experiences of feeling uncomfortable, misled by my own fabricated notion of what I was applying for, to unlock this part of the film.

This forms a small part of big conversations which we need to have about access, and a recent Varsity article noting the difficulties faced

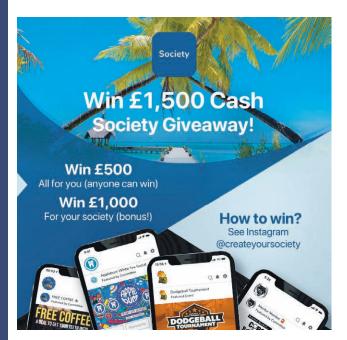
the club began to attack the pub owner, I had : by state-educated applicants is part of this picture. Another part, however, is the number of state-educated students who arrive at an Oxford or Cambridge very different to the one they had initially set their sights on.

> The Higher Education Statistics Agency found that 1% of Cambridge students drop out of their degree. No data has been published on the proportion of them who were state-educated, but I would be unsurprised if it was high. Even if this data did exist, it could never reveal those who stick it out, but never quite feel part of the world we worked so hard to gain entrance to.

> In a way, I wish that I had seen the film for what it was the first time around. Maybe it would have helped to inform my decision to apply. Laura Wade, the playwright of POSH, which The Riot Club is based on, insists that the characters are fictional. Perhaps if those of us who experience this particular brand of imposter syndrome were more vocal and honest about the far-from-fictional persistence of characters and cultures like those in The Riot Club, we could go some way towards dismantling the structures of privilege which underpin them.

Commercial Feature

Society® app success in 117 Universities for Freshers Week



There are now 117 Universities signed up to the free Society® app as student unions, clubs and societies prepare both social distanced and virtual events for Freshers Week in order to offer first year students the highly anticipated freshers experience.

The Society® app made its debut at King's College London when the then President of KCL Dental Society decided to revolutionize the way that its society was run. Several months later, Society® is now the leading university app in over 117

universities. Clubs and societies from Cambridge, Oxford, LSE, Edinburgh, Queen Mary, Aston, Royal Holloway, Leicester, Leeds, Liverpool, Cardiff and Bristol, just to name a few, are all registered on the app. The app is free for students to enjoy a free branded app experience for their university or college club, group or organization.

The 22 year old Co-Founder of the Society app Matthew Billington recalls: "When I entered my 4th year as a dental student at King's College London, I soon discovered that being elected President of the KCL Dental Society came with its fair share of problems. After engaging with Presidents from other dental schools I soon discovered that nearly every new President of a university society is in the same boat, re-creating the wheel, each and every year."

He originally came up with the idea of an app to have a profound and positive impact on committees and society members. Helping committees to save time through automating event management, certificates, ticketing/e- tickets for events, whilst having the committee displayed and available for all members to directly contact through the chat. A great way to interconnect all the societies in a university.

Matthew explains, "As years go by, we are finding Facebook is becoming increasingly outdated, seeing a progressive decline in engagement with university students. Society® is a fresh new app available for all of us to use, evolving new levels of engagement."

With popular event booking platforms such as Eventbrite and Fatsoma, having high transaction fees. Matthew also wanted to create a platform with the lowest possible ticket transaction fees for students, whilst remaining free for free events.

Matthew continues, "We now have a university society platform which allows everyone to engage in multiple societies and events are all in one place. No more lost links on WhatsApp chat groups!"

That's why Matthew decided to create a free, all-inone app, to increase engagement and productivity for all Presidents and Committees of student societies. The idea: to save time for committees while connecting students on a whole new level. His vision is to automate, digitize and revolutionize university societies and college clubs, groups and organizations.

Matthew is also proud to announce a great opportunity, "I'm totally excited to invite all University students and University societies to enter the huge Society competition because you can now win £1,500 cash. Tell all your friends to enter now on Instagram @createyoursociety. You can win £500 all for yourself and also win an extra £1,000 for your society or club!". Visit: www.createyoursociety.com

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FRIDAY 2ND OCTOBER 2020

Fashion

What would Varsity wear?

In celebration of the start of a new academic year, the Varsity team share the pieces they're most excited to wear around Cambridge this Michaelmas

longside the return of college brunch and reuniting with friends, finally getting a chance to flaunt your new wardrobe is undoubtedly one of the most exciting elements of the start of the academic year; as students, King's Parade is our catwalk. Before it inevitably falls apart by week 3, when we all find ourselves unwilling to wear anything but tracksuit bottoms and pyjama tops, we spoke to the *Varsity* editorial team to find out what items they were most looking forward to wearing in Cambridge this term.

Multi-coloured fleece

Rich Bartlett, Editor-in-Chief

I'm looking forward to wearing my multicoloured quarter zip which was my standard jumper for a night out, as it kept me warm and made me easy to spot in a crowd. Whilst I will no longer be using it for clubbing, it's the perfect item to put on to see friends during the evening after a solid day of work. I also love wearing it at home in Melbourne because it reminds me of when I bought it with college friends at a vintage kilo sale in Cambridge.



1980s Blouse

Esmee Wright, Arts Editor

They always say nice white shirt can't go wrong. A handmade 1980s Princess Diana blouse with more ruffles than shirt and a sailor's collar that I stole from my mother might be slightly more excessive than most people expect, but it is a staple of my wardrobe. My friends have christened this shirt the sad pirate shirt, and it does make me look a bit like a member of Adam and the Ants, but that doesn't stop me from wearing it all the time. It might look excessive, but no one can tell you a good white shirt isn't appropriate.



A classic pair of sliders

Olivia Emily, Associate Editor

Sliders: the perfect all-rounder. The ideal shoe if you don't want to catch a verruca from your new shared shower, or if you dread entering your gyp barefooted. Easy to slip on and off when you want to cross your legs in the library. Low commitment if you just want to nip to plodge to collect your post, and look low-maintenance, edgy and care-free whilst doing it. (Disclaimer: not the perfect shoe for rain).

Tote bags galore

Isabel Sebode, Deputy Vulture Editor

Walk down Sidgwick site or sit in The Locker Café for more than 1 minute and you will come across a wide variety of tote bags – for good reason. The canvas tote bag can vary from your standard Penguin or New Yorker merch to some obscure gallery bag or some other graphic design. Whether you are popping into Mainsbury's for some pesto, going into a café for a study break, or hypothetically, going to a lecture: the tote bag is your best friend.

A corduroy shirt

Nich Bartlett, Deputy Features Editor

Tigger was one of my childhood heroes relentlessly optimistic, goofy and friendly, he was simultaneously a liability and a reassurance in the life of Winnie the Pooh. When I wear my corduroy shirt, adorned with miniature Tiggers across the breast pocket, I am reminded of my own insignificance in the world.

Long skirts

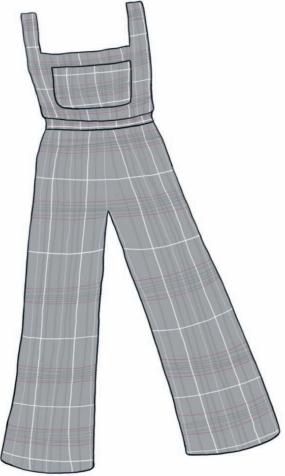
Alex Jarvis, Film & TV Editor

I'm the first to admit I'm far from a style icon, but there's just something about studying on Sidgwick site that gets to you..! My long flared skirts are my go-to pieces. I already began to branch out with long skirts in Lent term, as part of a pact with a few of my Russianist friends (inspired by the Soviet-era fashion icons within the Russian department), and I'm so excited to seek out some more and wear them around Cambridge this term.

A woolen jumpsuit

Hatty Willmoth, Senior Features Editor

I absolutely love this jumpsuit, it's currently my favourite item of clothing, and I got it second-hand from Depop a few weeks ago. It's mostly made of wool so it has a fairly sturdy construction, and it cinches me in at the waist (which I LOVE) and then has really long, wide legs. The shape is really fun and kinda extra, and makes me feel like a long-legged goddess. I can't wait to strut around Sidge in this, or just dance around my room in Queens'.



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A beaded jacket

Martha French, Fashion Editor

I just bought this jacket for a fiver (!) as part of a sale at my local vintage shop. It's got these ridiculous shoulder pads and the most gorgeous bead detailing that gives it such a beautiful - and slightly mad - shape and finish. Admittedly it's not an item fit for essay crises or Sainsbury's trips, but fingers crossed I'll have a chance to wear it at some kind of formal event this term, even if it is via Zoom!



Second-hand Zara dress

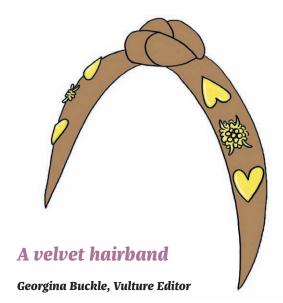
Helen Turner-Smyth, Theatre Editor

During lockdown I found a great green and yellow floral midi dress from Zara on Depop. It's such a versatile piece and can be easily dressed up or down: with trainers or sandals in Summer or with knitwear, tights and boots in Winter. I love the cut and pattern and I'm really excited to bring it with me for Michaelmas!

A knitted jumper

Nadya Miryanova, Music Editor

Being one of the youngest in my family, I'm very lucky to receive several hand-medown items of clothing. A personal favourite is a light blue jumper that my mother knitted when she was at university in Russia, as a present for my great-grandmother. Over the years, it's been passed down to my grand-mother, mother, sister, and finally myself. When I was in Cambridge last year, I wore it on a regular basis, and am looking forward to wearing it once more as the winter months approach!



Ever since my Granny presented me with her treasured collection of hairbands, they have been a consistent feature of my outfits. Wherever I go, I always bring one of my favourites with me: a velvet, copper-brown headband with golden adornments. It instantly enhances a look with minimal effort, harmonising with other accessories and even my makeup. It adds flair when I go to classes in outfits that I've worn countless times, and for a 'going out' look (aka: pre-10pm pub trip), the copper colour makes a red lip pop. It's a small item, but a special one!



A Vintage dress

Nell Burnham, Theatre Editor

I go in for vintage clothes, and this red and white belted dress is definitely my favourite non-formal dress. I bought it second hand from Ebay and since then have mended it multiple times, and it just keeps going. It's also a flex on anyone who says gingers can't wear red.



A cropped cardi

Lara Zand, Fashion Editor

I'd be lying if I tried to pass anything off as my Cambridge staple that wasn't my trusty colour-block cardigan. It's loud. It's unapologetic. The fabric is not particularly comfortable. It takes 'pop of colour' so far that I struggle to find other clothes it can be matched with. And yet, I can be easily identified in a crowd on a night out by this very garment. Wear over Black Going Out Top for a fail-safe clubbing outfit, or pair with baggy jeans for a Sidgwick lecture look that screams I Put Thought Into This. You can't go wrong with statement knitwear.



A leather jacket

Sawen Ali, Senior Opinion Editor

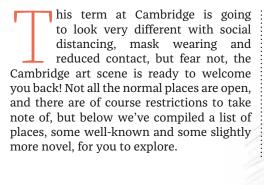
This is an old leather jacket I got from Depop and is a staple of my wardrobe. It makes any outfit feel 100x more 'bad bitch' and I feel like everyone at Emma has seen me in it far too much... It also has impeccable Matrix vibes! 26 Vulture _______ FRIDAY 2ND OCTOBER 202

Arts

A Guide to Cambridge Arts

Vulture's **Arts team** give us a rundown of Cambridge's cultural landscape

Mapped: a snapshot of Cambridge's galleries



Kettle's Yard

What? Kettle's Yard comprises of the gallery section, with an exhibition currently on the diverse artistic practices of Linder, artist, musician and feminist of punk and post-punk influence, and 'The House', former residence of Jim and Helen Ede, friends and collectors of many artists of the 20th century. It also has a very nice café attached.

Where? Castle Street, Cambridge (halfway up the hill)

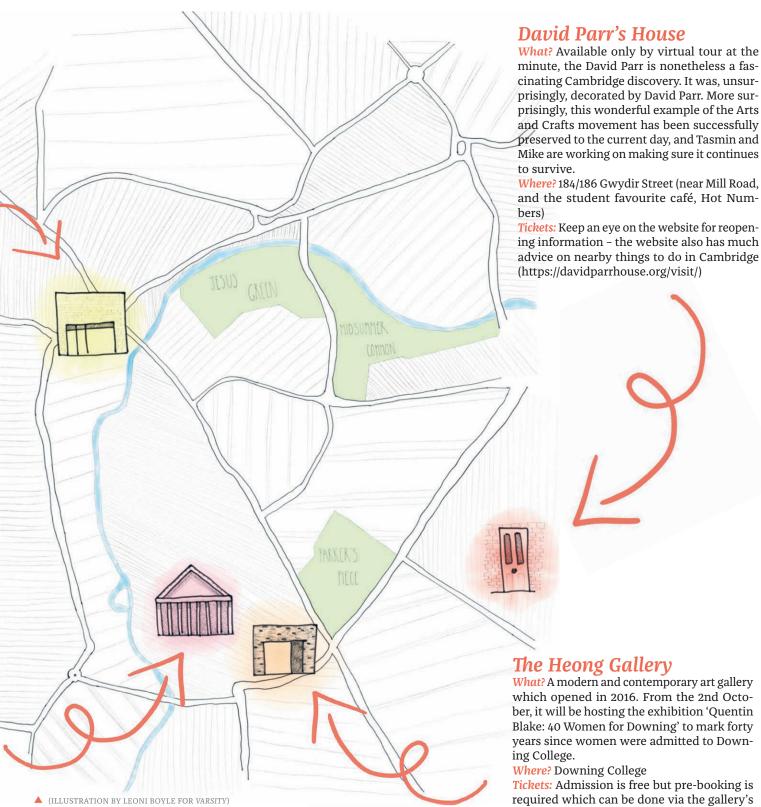
Tickets: Free, but timed. Tickets can be booked via the gallery website, which gives details on group sizes. Face masks are required and due to its size, no bags or large coats are allowed in the house – either leave them at home or store them behind the desk.

Fitzwilliam Museum

What? The university's art and antiquities museum which houses a large collection of over half a million artworks dating as far back as 2,500 BC.

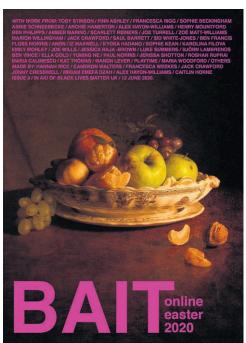
Where? Trumpington Street, just along from the Engineering Department.

Tickets: A free timed ticket must be booked in advance, which can be done through the museum's website. Face masks are also required.

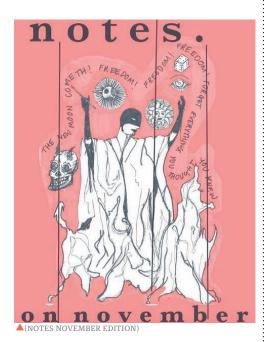


website. Groups of more than three people are not permitted and face masks must be FRIDAY 2ND OCTOBER 2020 Vulture 2 (

An introduction to the Cambridge zine scene



(BAIT EASTER 2020 COVER





COVER)

2020

house, there are plenty of ways to get involved in the Cambridge art scene. We've invited some of the Cambridge zines to introduce themselves and give an outline of what they are looking for, if you want inspiration and a way of sharing your art with the world!

ven if you can't make it out of the

BAIT

Bait is a termly arts magazine, based on creativity, personal expression and activist spirit. The profit from each coffee-table-worthy issue is donated to a cause close to our hearts — including Cambridge homelessness support, refugee aid, and most recently Black Lives Matter UK.

Our Michaelmas 2020 issue is on Borders, and we'd love you to send in any kind of creative submissions: poetry, short stories, photography, doodles, manifestos, comics — anything under the sun, really. Opportunities to join our tight-knit editorial team for the next year will be opening soon — and freshers are especially welcome to apply. If you're interested, the best way to keep up to date is to find BAIT on Facebook and Instagram. If you follow the links to our submitters' group and website, you can find prompts for your work, browse old issues and get involved. It'd be fab to have you on board!

Find the BAIT submissions group on Facebook, or visit baitzine.com for more info.



Freshers are especially welcome to apply

Notes

Notes is a magazine of poetry, short fiction, essays, art and photography that publishes twice per term. We're one of the more elderly zines on the scene, having been around since 2012, and we take submissions from anyone - not just Cambridge students.

We try to live up to our name, in the sense that a piece doesn't need to be completely refined and finalized for us to publish it; whilst we love to see polished work, we're equally happy to take works-in-progress, fragments, scrawls and sketches. Plus, we always give feedback to our contributors, regardless of whether or not their work has made it into

Every time we publish, we hold a magazine launch, in which contributors have a chance to socialize with one another and read out their work. These have generally taken place in pubs, cafes, galleries, or college spaces, but will likely migrate online for the foreseeable future.

We're currently taking submissions for our next issue, which will be on the theme of 'renewal', and we'd love to see some contributions from freshers. You can find out about submission guidelines, see some writing prompts, and keep up with us via our Facebook page or Instagram (both @notespublication).

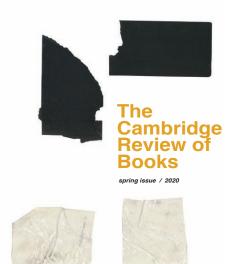
The Cambridge Review of Books (CROB)

CROB is a relatively new addition to the Cambridge arts scene, having published our first issue at the end of Lent 2020. As a termly magazine with a strong emphasis on the continued importance of print journalism, the Review allows a unique opportunity for student writers.

Articles are commissioned on the basis of pitches submitted just before the start of each term and written specifically for that issue, allowing writers to engage critically with their subject matter and work closely with an editor to bring the best out of their writing. Though a 'Review of Books', the content of the articles included is by no means limited to literary analysis. The ultimate aim of the Review is to allow student writers to discuss those subjects about which they are deeply passionate, but that they may not have the opportunity to explore in the course of their regular studies.

Interspersed with the longform articles is also an eclectic range of poetry, short fiction, and diaries, and each piece of writing is accompanied by a bespoke illustration done

by one of the many talented student artists in Cambridge. This year, we aim to expand, and welcome the queries and contributions of anyone who might be interested in this new and growing publication!

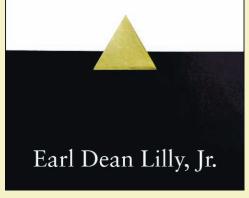


companied by a bespoke illustration done : (THE CAMBRIDGE REVIEW OF BOOKS SPRING 2020 COVER)

On Sale Now at Amazon.co.uk, BN.com, Barnes and Noble, AbeBooks.co.uk and also available from the publisher.



From Shakespeare With Love



A Modern Corporal Nym, explains: why Uncle Sam's Capitol has mostly NW Avenues; why a German-American was appointed C-in-C of Allied Forces in Europe in WW2; what are the origins of Uncle Sam's White Five Pointed Star and the Red Star of Communism; the Code of the Craft - the Pole Lease Ship of State; the works of R. Wagner and others having forecasted the course of the Animal Ark of the Western World for the 20th Century; why the Allies were deliberately negligent in enforcing the Treaty of Versailles to ensure a WW2! Shakespeare today?

Vulture — FRIDAY 2ND OCTOBER 2020

Theatre

A New Season at the ADC Theatre

Theatre Editor, Helen Turner-Smyth, interviews Jamie Rycroft, the playhouse's current manager, about upcoming shows



▲ Publicity image for 'Last Summer at Bluefish Cove' (WEBSITE/ADC)

he pandemic has hit the performing arts industry hard, but the ADC Theatre's current manager reveals how, and why, shows are continuing.

Helen: How long have the production processes been for the performances on your up-coming programme?

Jamie: Some of the shows were carried over from the Summer season that we had to cancel, so there has been preparation by the Director happening since April (for instance, How to Disappear Completely and Never Be Found).

Other shows have been preparing by auditioning and rehearsing remotely since we announced in early September that we could do shows again in Autumn. A few of our shows, like our Footlights Smoker, will be looking for performers nearer the time, so if you are new to theatre and want to get involved, I would recommend

looking out for auditions and other availabilities on Camdram (www.camdram.net) or the Cambridge Theatre Facebook group (bit.ly/cam-theatre).

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Freshers should get involved with plays at the ADC because there is no other place that will allow you to get in any and all aspects of staging a show

Helen: How has Covid affected rehearsal and staging?

Jamie: Rehearsals have to take place as much virtually as possible, with some run-throughs of the show happening on-stage and in our dressing rooms in a socially distanced manner.

In terms of staging, all of our shows will comply with the government's guidelines for performers and technicians. That means that performers on-stage won't be able to get closer than 1m to each other, and won't be able to get closer than 2m without additional precautions like a face covering or a barrier between them.

This has obvious implications for the kinds of shows we can stage — it means people have to get creative when staging intimate scenes or fight scenes — but I think the student community will come up with interesting ways to work within these limitations.

Helen: Do you envision live-streaming becoming a more permanent part of the way audiences enjoy works at the ADC in future? Jamie: Very much so. Even if social distancing loosens down the line, I expect that we will be able to offer live-streaming

for at least our biggest shows. This would allow people who aren't yet comfortable with returning to the theatre to still be able to access our shows, even if they're not in Cambridge or are outside of the UK.

the UK.
Also, livestreaming our
shows gives
students the
rtunity
to work with
the medium
of film as
well as with
theatre. I can
only expect

◆ In rehearsal for 'Guys and Dolls'

(LUCIA REVEL-CHION)

that for the foreseeable future, the medium of theatre will contain a lot more filmed aspects, as venues work with the current situation.

By joining the theatres across the country that will be livestreaming their plays, I hope that the ADC can continue to prepare students for working in the arts after they graduate.

"

It means people have to get creative when staging intimate scenes or fight scenes

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Helen: Are there any particular shows we should be looking forward to?

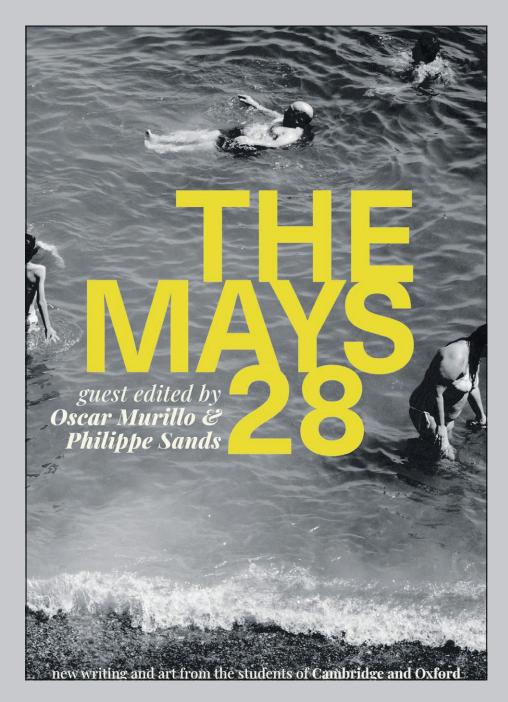
Jamie: The season opens with the student-written comedy musical Survival Strategies, about a support group preparing themselves to survive any apocalyptic situation, who then get locked down in a bunker together. We're staging Shakespeare's Macbeth and the play Last Summer at Bluefish Cove, notable for being the first mainstream lesbian play. Our season of Lateshows will be live-streamed at 11pm, and include the Footlights Smoker, which is a combination of sketch and stand-up comedy, and Cambridge's premiere student drag troupe, Dragtime.

Helen: How and why should freshers be looking to get involved at the ADC next term?

Jamie: Freshers should get involved with plays at the ADC because there is no other place that will allow you to get in any and all aspects of staging a show: as an actor, writer, director, backstage technician, designer, and much more. We have two Freshers' plays that will take place in mid-November, which will be entirely produced and performed by those new to theatre. Details about how to get involved will be published on adctheatre.com/getinvolved nearer the time, or you can contact me (at jamie@adctheatre. com) if you have any questions about how to get involved with a show.

The Mays 28

A book of the best new student writing and art from the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge.



Guest editors:

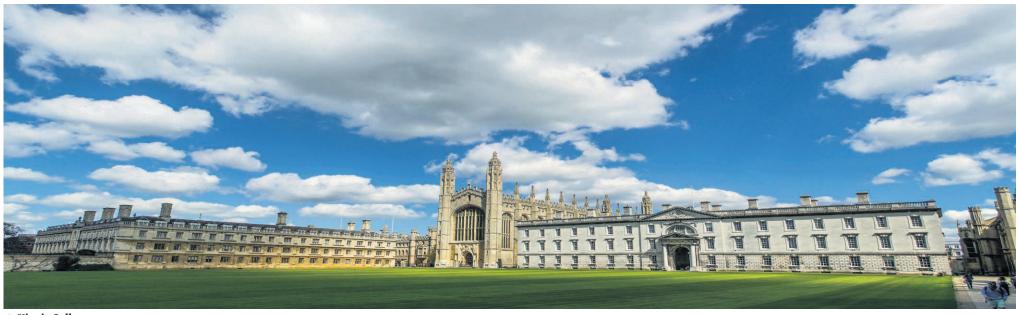
Oscar Murillo & Philippe Sands.

On sale in all good book shops and available to order online now: www.themaysanthology.co.uk/purchase/

Friday 2nd October 2020 VARSITY

Violet A wonderfully unreliable guide to By VARSITY a socially distanced Cambridge

Violet's latest columinist, **Scarlet Rowe**, tells us about her favourite places of tranquility in this prophetic guide to a new, socially distanced Cambridge



▲ King's College (LOUIS ASHWORTH)

irst and foremost, I am no expert on Cambridge. However, I am going to write as though I am. If you don't heed my warning and continue anyway, then don't say you weren't warned. You most certainly were.

Writing a guide to a socially distanced Cambridge is somewhat challenging. This is because I have not experienced it yet, so I don't have a clue what it will be like. Nevertheless, I have a few recommendations of places which I really hope will be open. The whole of Cambridge can't be closed, after all. However, if my list turns out to be inaccurate, then it will go hand in hand with my essays which have met the same fate.

Waterstones Cafe

In first place is Waterstones Cafe (or more specifically, a window seat on the top floor of Waterstones Cafe). Life does

not get much better than that. You're in the midst of the hustle and bustle and have the perfect opportunity to treat yourself to an overpriced hot chocolate. There are plugs for when your laptop inevitably dies too (mine seems to permanently survive at around the 1% mark).

"

Plus, you can easily saunter around the bookshelves if you fancy a break, and admire all of the books that you can't afford

Plus, you can easily saunter around the bookshelves if you fancy a break, and admire all of the books that you can't afford. I even became acquainted with the cookery section last year, though I am not quite Deliah Smith yet.

Though the cafe can be a little loud at times, there's nothing wrong with a distraction every so often. We have silent libraries for the serious revision. Maybe Waterstones cafe is best for a revision date: 50% catch-up, 40% hot chocolate, and 10% essay. Perfect.

Caius' Library

In second place we have Gonville and Caius' library. If you're not a Caian, you're forfeiting the best library. It is possibly the most perfect place in Cambridge. Studiers can be found at all kinds of ridiculous hours with their heads buried in a book (or asleep) whilst the stars twinkle outside. Sneezing becomes illegal and

Gonville and Caius College (LOUIS ASHWORTH) \blacktriangledown



will be met with some quite terrifying stares. The stairs creak if you have the audacity to walk up them and break the sublime silence. And in the meantime, library dwellers tip-toe gently across the carpet, parading their newest outfit to the procrastinating population. I've gathered quite a few style tips whilst there, though the puffer coats do somewhat steal the show in winter.

King's College

I think it is difficult to be indifferent about the walk through King's. Even though it is not as good as Caius, it's not so bad really. Being located in Harvey Court last year (which feels like last century by this point), I walked through King's every morning when I woke up on time for lectures. So that's about 3 days a week (which, may I add, is over 50%).

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During winter I enjoyed hurrying across the bridge and gazing at the river glazed with ice

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During winter I enjoyed hurrying across the bridge and gazing at the river glazed with ice. I liked admiring the perfectly polished grass which makes clear that nobody bar the chosen ones are welcome in its wake. I am not a chosen one unfortunately, so must walk the long way through the treacherous green gates. You can't win them all, I guess.

Newnham

4th place goes to a very deserving Newnham college. I stumbled upon its red bricked glory on one of my rare runs in 1st year. Its gardens are quite breathtaking. They'd fit perfectly into a cosy novel as the home of tea-parties and summer bongares.

"

I can imagine their garden parties are quite spectacular

"

I can imagine their garden parties are quite spectacular. And tucked away in a quiet corner of town, they make for a perfect strolling place. Don't forget to bring a flask of tea with you. Or if you are feeling particularly adventurous, make your way to the cafe. It's always quite busy and has quite a pleasant hum about it.

Night Walks

This isn't a place exactly, but night time walks around Cambridge are a splendid idea. I can't say with full conviction that they are better than their morning counterparts though, as I am never awake to make a just comparison. Walking through town in the dark has quite a special feel about it.

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Walking through town in the dark has quite a special feel about it.

"

You catch snippets of laughter and conversations as you traverse through the singing streets. Leaving town, you can walk along the winding river and listen to the quiet rustle of the trees (I'll stop trying to be a second rate poet now, promise). Such walks, morning or night, should be made a compulsory part of our degree.

I'll finish here at 5 as it is quite a satisfactorily round number, don't you think? The thought of going back to Cambridge is both terribly daunting and wonderfully exciting. At any rate, after having spent over half a year at home, I think most of us are more than ready to return.

VARSITY Friday 2nd October 2020

Sport

The niche sport of ultramarathon running

Edward Cator reminisces on the highs, the lows, and the downright plunges of the niche sporting trend of Ultramarathons.



▲ The Lake District (@JOSKI WHYLE)

Until a few years ago, ultramarathon running (races which are longer than the conventional marathon distance of 26.2 miles) was an extremely niche sport limited to uber-fit nutcases and Forrest Gump. However, the number

of people attempting ultras has shot up recently. It's hard to pinpoint the attraction. Maybe it's the crippling loneliness, the excruciating fatigue, or perhaps the devastating dehydration. In any case, I've always enjoyed physical challenges, so I decided to leap on the bandwagon. The Frog Graham Round, set in the Lake District, is an ultra with a difference: over the 42-mile self-navigated mountain course, there's a few miles of swimming spread over four lakes. It's not a race but an individual challenge which people can attempt at any time and then submit their GPS evidence for ratification.

The vast majority of people who do the Round have companions who jog along alongside intermittently. The only person mad enough to do this with me, however, was busy herself, running the Pennine Way. So, at 3:30am on September 10th, I duly pitched up to the Keswick Moot Hall start line alone. Before I could begin, the single greatest tragedy of modern times befell me: I had forgotten my Kendal Mint Cake. It was too late to go back. Fighting bitter tears, I set off into the night.

Even though I'd mapped the route in stages beforehand, everything looked different in the dark. Luckily, my girl-friend had made me a stack of Yorkshire puddings which I nibbled on to keep the doubts at bay, and so after 90 minutes of fumbling my way through thick cloud I reached the summit of the first

fell. It was at this point I learned that beyond forgetting my Kendal Mint, I'd also managed to lose my water bottle along the way. I contemplated giving up altogether but figured I hadn't climbed up Skiddaw at 4am just to go back to bed. And so (bravely or foolishly) I marched on, slaking my thirst at the brook like Frankenstein's monster. The next minor calamity was about an hour later when the strap on my head-torch detached itself. No matter, I'll get all the bad bits out of the way in the first couple of hours, and everything else will go well right? Well, not quite.

I'd been warned to expect misery at Mellbreak, and misery is what I got. The lack of a tangible path means the hike entails half an hour of crawling up a steep face made of heather and moss. By the time I'd dragged myself up the side my legs had deserted me. A short swim across Buttermere refreshed my senses, but this proved to be my undoing. Racing up Robinson like a rat up an aqueduct, an hour and twenty minutes ahead of schedule, fatigue hit. The weather was closing in, the running wetsuit was chafing dreadfully, my stomach was cramping, and I was drowning in a wave of

nausea. For the first time I regretted not having anyone to push me on, as my own motivation was vanishing at a rate of knots.

Forcing down a flapjack, I felt slightly better and I knew I was nearly there as I descended Catbells. The final swim of the Round is the longest and involves fully exiting the water and climbing onto each of the three islands as you cross the lake. Each time I hauled myself over the slippery rocks, lost balance and fell back into the water my tiredness increased and my shivering got more violent. After what seemed like several years, I finally made it to the other side where my Grandad and a very tasty pint kindly offered by The Round pub were waiting for me. Final time: 14 hours, 41 minutes and 25 seconds, the 14th fastest of the 97 who have ever completed the Round.

So, if you find yourself at a loose end and have 14 hours to spare, why not give ultramarathon running a try? It gets you out and about, it gives you the chance to meet new people and the agonising pain is purely temporary. Marathons are so last year...

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60 STATION ROAD CAMBRIDGE

FRIDAY 2ND OCTOBER 2020 VARSITY

Sport

• In this new weekly feature, **Thom Harris** casts an eye over the weekend's Premier League action, addressing the main talking points and picking out some of the key performances from the opening fortnight of the 2020/21 season.

Varsity's Premier League round-up: the season begins...

winners and even the odd kungfu kick to the face - the Premier League exploded back onto the scene this September, as we were treated to a historic 43-goal weekend to help us through the COVID drag.

With so much to talk about - even having to skip over Tottenham's Heung-Min Son's four-goal masterclass and Leeds United enjoying their first Premier League points in over 16 years - I've picked out three major talking points from the opening fortnight of Premier League madness.

City and Liverpool - still streets ahead?

The titanic tussle between Manchester City and Liverpool has produced some of the best football the Premier League has ever seen over the past few seasons, and the undisputed top two look set to slog it out for England's top prize once again this year.

Pep Guardiola and Jurgen Klopp have raised the footballing bar to levels that most didn't even know existed a few years ago, obliterating record after record over three ridiculously good campaigns. Their extraordinary battle has seen the long-standing Premier League record of 95 points, set in 2005 by Chelsea, broken THREE times since 2017, as City smashed 100 in Guardiola's second season and pipped their rivals by 98 to 97 in his third, before Klopp claimed Liverpool's first Premier League crown last season, with 99. Yet, while many anticipated a return to Earth for the two stratospheric super-clubs this season, the early signs suggest that there are still very few, if any, who can catch them. Liverpool, despite scraping through a

chaotic opening day encounter with Leeds, comfortably dispatched of Chelsea last weekend: a team who, after splurging nearly £200 million in the summer, have been tipped by many to disrupt the Manc-Mersey dynasty. However, after a red card for defender Andreas Christensen and with the help of yet another Kepa clanger, they were easily swept aside by the Champions, who, despite being far from their best, never really looked troubled in their 2-0 triumph.

City, on the other hand, having started the season a week later than their title rivals, picked up an impressive three points at Wolves - a result not to be sniffed at, considering their recent troubles against Nuno Esperito Santo's side. The Blues were scintillating in the opening 45 minutes, as their relentless pressing and electric passing and movement produced a dominant firsthalf performance that culminated in a fabulous team goal to put them twoup after 32 minutes, leaving the game just out of the reach of a resurgent Wolves in the second-half. We may only be two weeks in, but with Liverpool adding the ter

The titanic tussle between Manchester City and Liverpool has produced some of the best football the Premier League has ever seen



rific Thiago and Diogo Jota to Jurgen Klopp's winning machine, and a riledup Manchester City, determined to wrestle back their crown, it's already hard to see anybody else catching the Premier League's modern-day footballing juggernauts.

Crystal Palace and Brighton show that the League's mere mortals are more competitive than ever.

As more and more money is pumped into the Premier League, clubs with smaller budgets have been forced to not only look for the bargains in the transfer market, but also to develop and perfect a system to make them 'hard to beat'. No mid-table team has done so better than Crystal Palace. As a smarting Gary Neville remarked on Saturday, watching his beloved Manchester United as they were dismantled by Palace, Roy Hodgson's team are extremely "awkward" to play against. And, while United were admittedly poor, their underdog opponents still possessed the quality to pounce on their mistakes, ripping the Red Devils apart as if they were the ones with the £500 million squad. It was a sensational counter-attacking performance from Palace, who used the pace of Andros Townsend and Wilfried Zaha to expertly cut through United time and time again. Welldrilled, fit and hungry, the Londoners, if anything, will be disappointed that they didn't win by more than three

goals to one. Alongside Palace, Graham Potter

looks to be building a very exciting side at Brighton, with a similarly impressive performance at New castle showing them to be equally organised and incisive. In particular, 19-year-old full-back Tariq Lamptey was unstoppable, epitomising Potter's expansive brand of football - a meticulous young manager who is also able to rely on the quality of exciting young centre-back Ben White, alongside the attacking firepower of Leandro Trossard and Neal Maupay. Potential dark horses this season, definitely keep an eye out for Brighton in the weeks and months

And lastly, can Everton finally push for Europe?

It's hard to believe that just under two years ago, Everton had just appointed relegation-specialist Sam Allardyce, in a desperate attempt to stop The Toffees from slipping and sliding towards the bottom

Now, with one of the greatest managers of the modern era at the helm, and off the back of a sensational transfer window, the Merseysiders look set to ruffle a few feathers amongst the Premier League's elite this season. Carlo Ancelotti's new-look team

▲ Old Trafford Stadium (@

JALEEL_AKBASH)

It's hard to believe that just under two years ago, Everton had just appointed relegationspecialist Sam Allardyce

"

middle.

began their campaign with an impressive 1-0 away win at Tottenham. ending a miserable run of 40 games without an away win against the traditional "big six", with a classy performance to shut down José Mourinho's Spurs. They followed that up with a stylish 5-2 thrashing of West Brom last weekend, as Dominic Calvert-Lewin grabbed a poacher's hat-trick. While a red card for their opponents naturally helped The Toffee's cause, there is a serious buzz of optimism down on Merseyside after two eyebrow-raising performances so far. The trio of new signings in midfield,

powerhouse Abdoulaye Doucouré, workhorse Allan and superstar James Rodriguez, have completely transformed the mood down at Everton, with James in particular providing attacking quality that hasn't been seen at Goodison for quite some time. With a wand of a left foot and a keen eve for a penetrating pass, he's helped to provide plenty of chances, alongside the busy Richarlison and the devastating delivery of Lucas Digne, for the free-scoring Calvert-Lewin down the

Despite a lingering defensive frailty, laid bare by Yerry Mina in particular on the weekend, Everton will be hopeful that James' magic can keep this run of form going, with the Merseyside Derby on the horizon. For the season, though, it's definitely worth keeping a look out for The Toffees, as their shiny, brand new all-star midfield will certainly excite throughout.