

REACHING HALFWAY



'Girls Night In'
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No.894
Friday 29th October 2021
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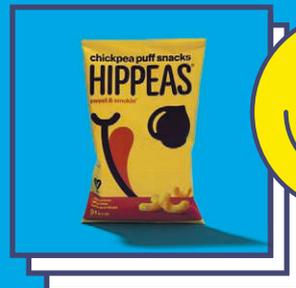
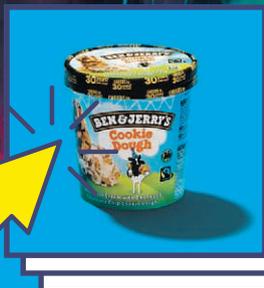

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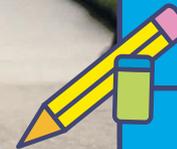
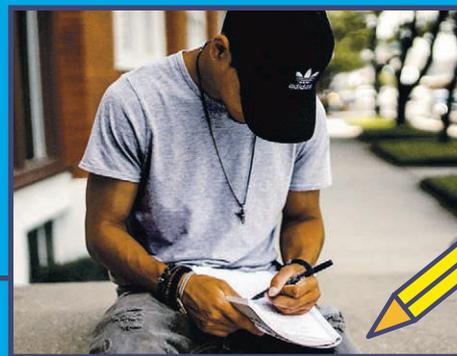


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Homerton Library announces use of trigger warnings on select children's books

Esmé Kenney
News Correspondent

The archives of Homerton College will use trigger warnings on children's books with "harmful content relating to slavery, colonialism and racism".

More than 10,000 books and magazines will be reviewed by the college, as part of a move to make its archives accessible online.

The college said that adding trigger warnings at the start of any text containing offensive images, words or phrases, "will make their digital archives "less harmful in the context of a canonical literary heritage that is shaped by, and continues, a history of oppression."

The funding bid for the project stated that trigger warnings will prevent "intersectional identities" from being hurt by insensitive content when browsing the archives.

Homerton says: "Problems are encountered continually with respect to the history of demeaning terms associated with disability and indigenous cultures, as well as the immigrants who have shaped modern America and Britain.

"Trigger warnings, with indications of harmful content for intersectional identities, will protect researchers, children, and general readers from offensiveness or hurt that can emerge in otherwise safe search queries or acts of browsing."

A research paper by UK Research and Innovation on the project stated that it

Story continued page 2 ▶

'Stop Cambridge Killer Robots' campaign launched following lethal autonomous weapons investigation

Lorna Kimmins
News Correspondent

A student campaign to '#StopCambridgeKillerRobots' has been launched in response to a report linking Cambridge University research to the development of lethal autonomous weapons (LAWs).

The campaign was officially launched at a Cambridge Tech and Society event on Tuesday 26th October, following the release of an open letter whose signatories include St Catharine's College JCR, Cambridge University China Forum and Extinction Rebellion Cambridge Universities.

The letter, addressed to Vice-Chancellor Professor Stephen Toope, responds to the findings of a report conducted alongside the Stop Killer Robots campaign, states that their research found the University to be "contributing to the development of LAWs through military-funded research collaborations, close

relationships with commercial LAWs developers, and through the encouragement of student recruitment to LAWs developers."

The report, which has been seen by *Varsity* and was compiled by Cambridge Tech and Society in conjunction with the Stop Killer Robots Campaign, states that Cambridge University has received research funding from several organisations linked to the development of LAWs. Among these include Silicon Microgravity, a "sensor technology spin-out" of the University, which has granted £567,000 in research funding to Cambridge during the period 2015-19. The report links the company to LAWs due to its development of gyroscope and accelerometer technology; a statement taken from the company's website states that this 'will be integrated into a wide range of inertial navigation systems delivering MEMS based tactical and navigation

▲ A student campaign to '#StopCambridgeKillerRobots' was launched on Tuesday (26/10) (Minkus Unsplash)

grade sensing', and lists areas such as 'defence, aerospace, autonomous vehicles and robotics' as possible areas of application.

Other major funding sources include ARM Ltd. and Trimble Europe, who both have links to the defence industry and whose grants to University research amount to £455,000 between 2017-19 and £193,000 between 2016-19 respectively.

The open letter criticises the facilitation of student recruitment by LAWs developers via the Computer Science Department 'Supporters Club', which allows companies to have contact with students in return for a fee. Members include AI specialists Rebellion Defence and Xilinx, both of whom the report describes as "explicitly developing LAWs"; Rebellion Defence's main areas of AI development are listed as "comprehensive battlespace awareness" "autonomous mission execution", and "cyber readi-

ness", while Xilinx are reported to have worked with "Turkish drone manufacturer Baykar Makina, who have supplied drones deployed in Armenia, Syria and Libya". The campaign objects to these companies taking part in student recruitment activities such as talks and the advertisement of internships via mailing lists.

Other key points from the report include revelations around a collaboration between the Whittle Laboratory (based in Cambridge's Department of Engineering) and Blue Bear Systems Research on a project called 'Project InCEPTion', which aims to "develop a novel all-electric propulsion module" for aircraft. Regarding this partnership, the report states: "The involvement of Blue Bear Systems Research, a leading unmanned aerial systems developer, indicates this project will contribute to the development of LAWs."

Story continued page 2 ▶

News

EDITORIAL

Reaching halfway

Most of us seem to have put the fresher flu behind us as we edge nearer to the midpoint of the term whilst those of us whose bins continue to overflow with snotty tissues resign ourselves to the reality of Cambridge's harsh autumn weather.

In a positive step towards reconciling the colonial past with the present, Jesus College announced the return of a Benin Bronze to Nigeria. This week Cambridge University, alongside many other universities across the nation, participated in the 'Girls Night In' campaign in a bid to combat the increasing frequency of drink spiking at clubs and bars. On Page 3 we provide an analysis of the problem, citing the BBC's recently published statistics which place the number of incidents of spiking in Cambridge at 25.

In a related Opinions piece on Page 13, Meg Byron criticises the slow response of universities, arguing that the ineffective uptake of support forced the burden of the responsibility onto students. On the adjacent page, Jess Ingle, after submitting a freedom of information (FOI) request to the university, and uncovering some particularly damning data, shows the discrepancy in first class honours between male and female maths students at the university.

In Interviews, we profile Dr Jason Scott-Warren, an English lecturer and research fellow at Gonville & Caius, who straddles the line between activist and academic. Scott-Warren was arrested in Extinction Rebellion's (XR) 'April Rebellion' in London in 2019, however, the incident has done little to puncture his motivation.

Emma Husle has anticipated the rush to remain indoors as the weather deteriorates; on Page 22 of Arts she collates an autumnal reading list for all of our Varsity resident book worms.

In Fashion, Columnist Eliane Bedu illuminates the distinctive individual empowerment which rides beneath the pervasive hyper-sexualisation of lingerie. On the following page, section editor, Olivia Rhodes, traces the legacy of Princess Diana's iconic wardrobe.

Liv Robinson rounds out this week's print edition with an overview of the musical, cultural and political impacts of Afrobeats, devising her own playlist at the bottom of the article which features Fela Kuti, Nina Simone, Beyoncé and Dave.

We hope this week's edition proves as stimulating as much as it is relaxing and pleasurable. Whether its after a dreary Friday afternoon supervision, alongside a steaming mug of English breakfast or in the midst of a violent Saturday morning hangover, pick up a copy and enjoy!

Isabel and Nick

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Jesus College first global institution to return a Benin Bronze to Nigeria



▲ Master Sonita Alleyne OBE called the handover “morally the correct thing to do” (Jesus College Cambridge)

Caitlin Farrell
Deputy News Editor

Serge Isman
Deputy News Editor

On Wednesday (27/10) Jesus College became the first institution in the world to return a Benin Bronze, presenting it to Nigeria's National Commission for Museums and Monuments.

Delegates from Nigeria and Benin took part in a ceremony held at Jesus College to celebrate the rightful return of the Bronze after a long period of discussion following demands in 2016 that the statue be repatriated. Until 2016, the statue was displayed in the College dining hall.

The Benin Bronzes, a group of over a thousand pieces of Benin artworks dating from the thirteenth century onwards, were looted from the Court of Benin, now part of Nigeria, by the 1897 British Expedition to Benin. Jesus College has held Okukor, a bronze statue of a cockerel, since 1905, when the College received it as a gift from the father of a student.

In 2019, at the beginning of current Master Sonita Alleyne OBE's term, it was decided that the Bronze would be returned to Nigeria. The date for the

handover ceremony was set in December 2020 after the Charity Commission of England and Wales authorised the statue's transfer to the Oba of Benin.

His Royal Highness Prince Aghatise Erediauwa, the younger brother of the Oba of Benin, said: “For coming to the conclusion that it's immoral to retain such items, Jesus College is challenging the erroneous argument that stolen art cannot be returned.

“We are grateful for the student body who initiated the efforts for the return of the bronze. We are also grateful for the work of the Legacy of Slavery Working Party and most importantly we must thank Sonita for the promptness with which she decided Okukor is a royal ancestral heirloom.”

In an exclusive interview with *Varsity*, Ms Alleyne celebrated the “historic occasion” of the handover ceremony, which has been delayed by the Covid-19 pandemic, after the 2019 decision to return the statue by the College's Legacies of Slavery Working Party (LSWP).

She told *Varsity*, “In my first couple of weeks as Master, we held a society meeting of all the Fellows [...] and had the interim report for the Legacies of Slavery Working Party. It was a pretty much unanimous decision that this was morally the correct thing to do, so it was a very swift decision, and we then went about getting permissions from the Charity Commission, and then Covid struck.

“These few days are the first days that the delegation from the National Commission for Museums and Monuments in Nigeria, and the delegation from the Royal Palace of Benin, have been able to travel to the UK to engage further.”

The handover ceremony featured music and speakers such as Professor Abba Isa Tijani, the Director General of the National Commission for Museums and Monuments of Nigeria, and Jesus Fellow Dr Veronique Mottier, who chairs the Legacies of Slavery Working Party.

Jesus College's LSWP was established in May 2019 to explore the historical, legal and moral status of the College's ownership of the Bronze. The Party, consisting of Fellows, staff and Jesus students, examined evidence of the Bronze's provenance which showed that it was looted directly from the Court of Benin.

Professor Tijani said, “It's an honour to be here at Jesus College and to be part of this ceremony to do what's right. We are very happy to be part of this process.

“We want to enable Nigerians to see what belongs to them – objects of their history, of cultural and religious importance, that have been away for so long. We would like other museums and institutions across the world to take this opportunity and follow suit.”

Dr Véronique Mottier, Chair of the LSWP, said: “I think I can speak for the entire LSWP when I say that this is a moment of mixed emotions. We are all thrilled at seeing this day arrive, when the Bronze is finally returning home, but we are also painfully aware of having deprived its rightful owners for so long of its presence, and offer our heartfelt apologies for this historic wrong.”

During the delegation's visit to the UK, Aberdeen University's museum will also return to Nigeria a Bronze it currently holds. Hundreds of bronzes remain in public and private collections across Britain, with the British Museum holding 900 objects, the largest collection of Benin bronzes in the world.

George Neville, who led the 1897 attack, donated Okukor to Jesus College in 1905 as the cockerel is a symbol of the College, appearing three times on the crest of its founder Bishop John Alcock.

The bronze was displayed in the College's hall until March 2016, when, following a campaign by the Jesus College Students' Union, the College announced it would be repatriated.

“We just want to do justice to this moment,” Ms Alleyne told *Varsity*.

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The
Benin
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► Continued from front page

The report also describes projects associated with the Centre for Photonic Systems based in the University's Department of Engineering which involve collaboration with companies linked to the defence industry, such as Arquit and Tethered Drone Systems.

The campaign describes links with these organisations as an “active endorsement of lethal autonomous weapons systems” and calls upon the the University to take action: their demands include halting all activities “directly contributing” to LAWs development, greater transparency regarding the potential applications of researchers and students' work, and endorsing the prohibition of LAWs by signing the Future of Life Pledge.

Laying out the basis for their objection to the development of lethal autonomous weapons, the campaign's letter states:

“The decision to take life cannot be delegated to algorithms. Such a decision lacks the intention, understanding and moral reasoning necessary to evaluate the proportionality of an attack, where human life is reduced to merely a factor within a predetermined computation.”

It continues: “A machine is incapable of exercising discretion, and lacks the

compassion and empathy needed to make morally complex decisions.”

The letter goes on to state that LAWs are “incompatible with international human rights law, namely, the Right to Life (‘no one shall be arbitrarily deprived of life’), the Right to a Remedy and Reparation, and the principle of human dignity.”

They also cite concerns regarding “a lack of a clear line of accountability for unlawful civilian deaths” and the potential for bias to be coded into LAWs, where “where people of colour, women and non-binary people are at greater risk of misidentification and unlawful killing.”

A University spokesperson told *Varsity* that it has a “robust system for reviewing strategic relationships and donations.”

They continued: “The University of Cambridge Committee on Benefactions, External and Legal Affairs (CBELA) scrutinises sources of funding that might be inappropriate on ethical grounds or pose a reputational risk to the University.”

Cambridge Tech and Society's campaign forms a part of the global Stop Killer Robots movement, which comprises more than 180 NGOs across 66 countries. The calls for change come against the backdrop of the UN Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, which is currently debating an international ban on lethal autonomous weapons.

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► Continued from front page

would be “a dereliction of our duty as gatekeepers to allow such casual racism to go unchecked”.

However, critics have called the trigger warnings unnecessary and “woke-afflicted”.

Chris McGovern, the leader of the right-wing pressure group Campaign for Real Education, argued that “the whole point of much of children's literature is to introduce them to alternative worlds.”

He added that fairy tales are “saturated with scary characters”, and that “only woke-afflicted adults have such silly notions as trigger warnings.”

Children's author Judy Blume said: “All books, then, need trigger warnings because in any book there could be something to bother somebody.”

The works of children's authors such as Enid Blyton, Roald Dahl, and JM Barrie have previously faced criticism for their racist and insensitive content, and are expected to be labelled with trigger warnings in the project.

The digitisation of Homerton's archives will be funded by a £80,633 grant from the UK Arts and Humanities Research Council. The University of Florida is also participating in the project with funding from the US National Endowment for the Humanities.

Partnership secures government funding to accommodate Cambridge rough sleepers



▲ “The project demonstrates the positive, lasting changes that can be achieved when communities come together in mutual aid” (Varsity)

Georgia Goble
Senior News Editor

It Takes a City, a homelessness partnership in Cambridge, has received government funding which it will use to accommodate at-risk rough sleepers over the winter months.

The funds come from the Homelessness Winter Transformation Fund

2021/22, supported by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities, Housing Justice and Homeless Link.

The partnership has used the funding, alongside City Council resources to secure a lease on a facility to provide “privacy, dignity and safety” for rough sleepers. The facility, which includes 20 en-suite rooms, will open from Novem-

ber through to the end of March 2022, on a 24/7 basis.

The new funding provides an “opportunity”, according to the partnership, to try a different approach to the ‘communal floors’ model.

It Takes a City will also provide welfare, resettlement support, practical help, and meals.

The partnership was a key operating partner last winter at Masters House, which provided emergency accommodation during extreme weather.

It explained that Masters House “demonstrated the power of partnerships and how positive outcomes can be achieved for those on the journey from street to home. The [new] project again demonstrates the positive, lasting changes that can be achieved when communities come together in mutual aid.”

Mike Todd-Jones, Executive Councillor for Housing said that the project “marks a significant step-up in the level and quality of winter provision for Cambridge rough sleepers.”

“Building on last year’s successful ‘Everyone In’ campaign”, he added, “which saw all Cambridge rough sleepers offered a place where they can be safe from Covid, the Crossways project will run continuously throughout the winter, providing all guests with a safe and warm room of their own.”

Chris Jenkins, Chair of It Takes a City, said in a statement: “It Takes a City is delighted to work once again with Cambridge City Council to provide additional capacity for rough sleepers during the coming winter.”

He continued: “Building on the partnerships established in the ‘Everyone In’ project from March 2020, our aim is not just to keep people safe but to help them move on into the right accommodation, so that everyone has somewhere to call home.”

INTERVIEWS

Interview with XR Activist Dr Jason Scott-Warren

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Three happy years later...



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“Girls night in”: why are university students taking on the spiking epidemic themselves?

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Demystifying intersexuality



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Becoming a sell out ...

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Cambridge continue winning ways: CURFC 29-14 against Exeter Chiefs U23s



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Analysis: drink spiking in clubs remains a cause for concern



▲ Cambridgeshire Police registered 25 reports of drink spiking since July 2021 (UNSPLASH)

Serge Isman
Deputy News Editor

A student boycott of Cambridge’s nightclubs took place on Wednesday this week (27/10) as part of a national response to a reported increase in spiking. The boycott was complemented by a Nightclub Safety Appeal drawn up by the students’ unions of Cambridge and Anglia Ruskin universities, as well as college JCRs, demanding that clubs take additional steps to protect revellers.

Cambridgeshire Police registered 25

reports of drink spiking since July 2021. Nationally, police recorded 198 confirmed reports of drink spiking, and 24 reports of spiking via needle injection that have received huge media coverage.

In a statement on spiking released on Tuesday (26/10), Cambridge SU Women’s officer Milo Eyre-Morgan addressed the issue of spiking by injection, writing that while “these reports have understandably been extremely frightening for many students [...] there is also a lot of misinformation,” which they wished to dispel and “provide some reassurance.”

25 reports of drink spiking in Cambridgeshire

198 confirmed reports of spiking nationally

24 reports of spiking via needle injection nationally

Eyre-Morgan encouraged students to read an article published by VICE News featuring interviews with scientists, doctors, and nurses all saying that spiking via needle injection was “unlikely [to be] a widespread phenomenon” due to the technical difficulties involved.

David Caldicott, an emergency medicine consultant, said that the reports were “disconcerting” because “the technical and medical knowledge required to perform this would make this deeply improbable,” while adding that it was essentially to take the reports “seriously and investigate to the hilt.”

Meanwhile, Helena Conibear, CEO of the Alcohol Education Trust, a charity that works to keep young people safe around alcohol, suggested that the recent reported rise in spiking may be correlated with freshers week. Conibear indicated that the rise in drink spiking reports correlates with a rise in drink spiking “during freshers’ week in the autumn.”

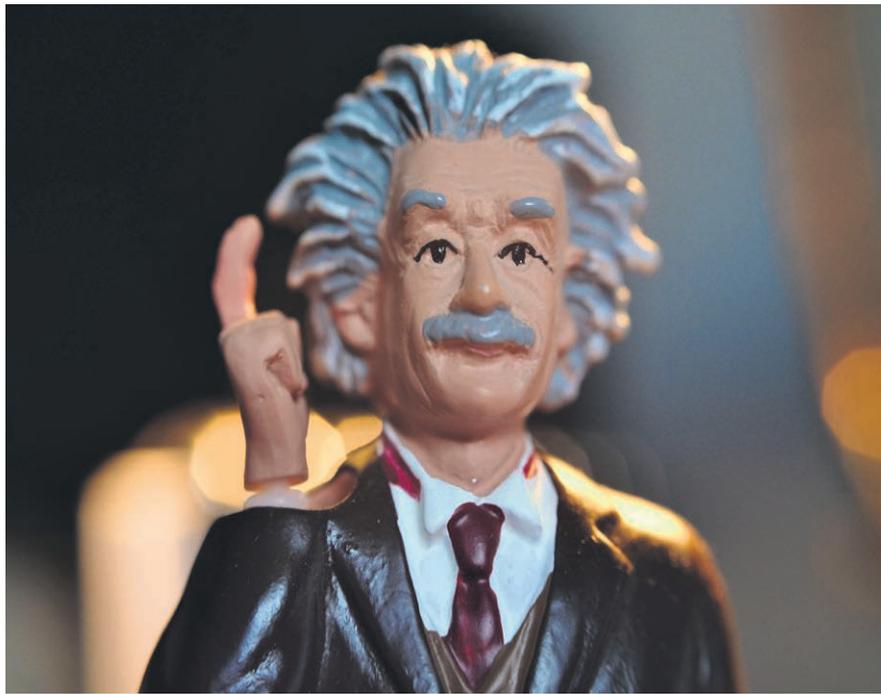
Varsity spoke to students about the reported rise in cases, some of whom were skeptical about the impact of these week’s boycotts.

One Homerton student said that she doesn’t really go to clubs anymore, because “spiking is unavoidable in these places” but that “the clubs could be doing more, and a boycott might kick them into gear.”

An anonymous King’s student informed Varsity that she thinks that the boycott “isn’t enough to enact change, because clubs can easily make up profits on Halloween.”

News

This week in research...



▲ In March 2020, evidence emerged that defied the current laws of physics - this evidence has now been replicated (ANDREW GEORGE/UNSPLASH)

Louis Hodgson
Senior News Editor

Death-defying prehistoric monkeys

If an asteroid, a monkey and a Tyrannosaurus-rex were pitted against each other in a brutal but epic fight, who would you back to win? Recent research suggests that your money should be on the monkey.

66 million years ago, a meteor collid-

ed with Earth, and a devastating mass-extinction event ensued. Roughly 75% of animal and plant species were wiped out, including all non-avian dinosaurs.

Until now, research has suggested that ground-dwelling mammals were the best placed to survive the meteor's aftermath. However, Cambridge scientists have recently discovered that some early tree-dwelling primates may have endured the event.

How these animals survived is un-

clear; the authors suggest that some forest fragments may have survived the cataclysm.

Senior author Dr Daniel Field, from Cambridge's Department of Earth Sciences, said that the study drew on previous work at Cambridge that also investigated the mass extinction.

Co-lead author Jacob Berv added that "[the] study takes advantage of an ongoing revolution in our understanding of the tree of life." Berv explained that "by integrating data from such collections with modern statistical techniques, we can address new questions about major transitions in evolutionary history."

Is Big Brother watching you?

In other news, researchers at the University's Department of Computer Science and Technology are launching a year-long investigation into the legality of smart devices.

Smart devices come in all shapes and sizes: from enhanced-security doorbells to interactive toys. This technology is constantly collecting data and exchanging it with other computer systems.

Leader of a research group into compliant and accountable systems, Dr Jat Singh is concerned with how our personal information is being used, so he has launched a project looking to "shed light" on current commercial data practices.

Singh wants to ensure that data practices are compliant with current regulations and laws. He commented: "Problems with the data practices of the consumer smart devices have been

suspected for some time, but not fully examined - from both a technical and legal perspective."

Singh stated that the study will create a "better, fairer and more compliant Internet of Things." The Internet of Things is a widely-used term referring to smart devices that collect and distribute data.

Have physicists discovered a new force?

Everyone agrees that the world is bound by the laws of physics, right? There are certain things in life that are simply impossible: humans can't walk on water, pigs can't fly and you can't lick your elbow (go on, try!). These unfeasible feats are thwarted by scientific laws: laws that everything abides by, or so we thought.

Our current understanding of fundamental physics is known as the Standard Model: this details our understanding of all the known particles in the universe and the forces through which they interact. Scientists have long known that the model is incomplete despite it passing every experimental test to date.

Last year, evidence emerged that broke one of the Standard Model's core principles and defied the current laws of physics. The evidence came from studying beauty quarks, which are rare particles that offer valuable insights into new particles and forces.

In March 2020, physicists observed that beauty quarks were decaying in a way that could not be explained by the Standard Model. This suggests the existence of a new fundamental force, and recent research from Cambridge's Cavendish Laboratory supports such a theory. The recent study led by Cambridge physicists also looked at the behaviour of beauty quarks. They observed a large number of beauty quarks inside the Large Hadron

Collider - the most powerful particle accelerator in the world.

The research replicated the inexplicable decaying behaviour of the beauty quarks, which provides further evidence of a new fundamental force.

Dr Harry Cliff from the Cavendish Laboratory stated: "The fact that we've seen the same effect as our colleagues did in March certainly boosts the chances that we might genuinely be on the brink of discovering something new."

What even is COP26?

Recent polling conducted in seven European countries by YouGov and Cambridge Zero, the University's climate initiative, has revealed a general ignorance of the upcoming COP26 conference, which will begin this Sunday (31/10) in Glasgow. COP26 is the 26th United Nations Climate Change conference and allows countries to discuss climate change policies.

Director of Cambridge Zero, Dr Emily Shuckburgh, commented: "As the impacts of climate change are starting to be felt everywhere, COP26 should be seen as a vital summit where the world must deliver immediate and meaningful climate action."

"But the bad news is that most people have still barely noticed that the world leaders who can actually take the actions needed will be in our own backyard."

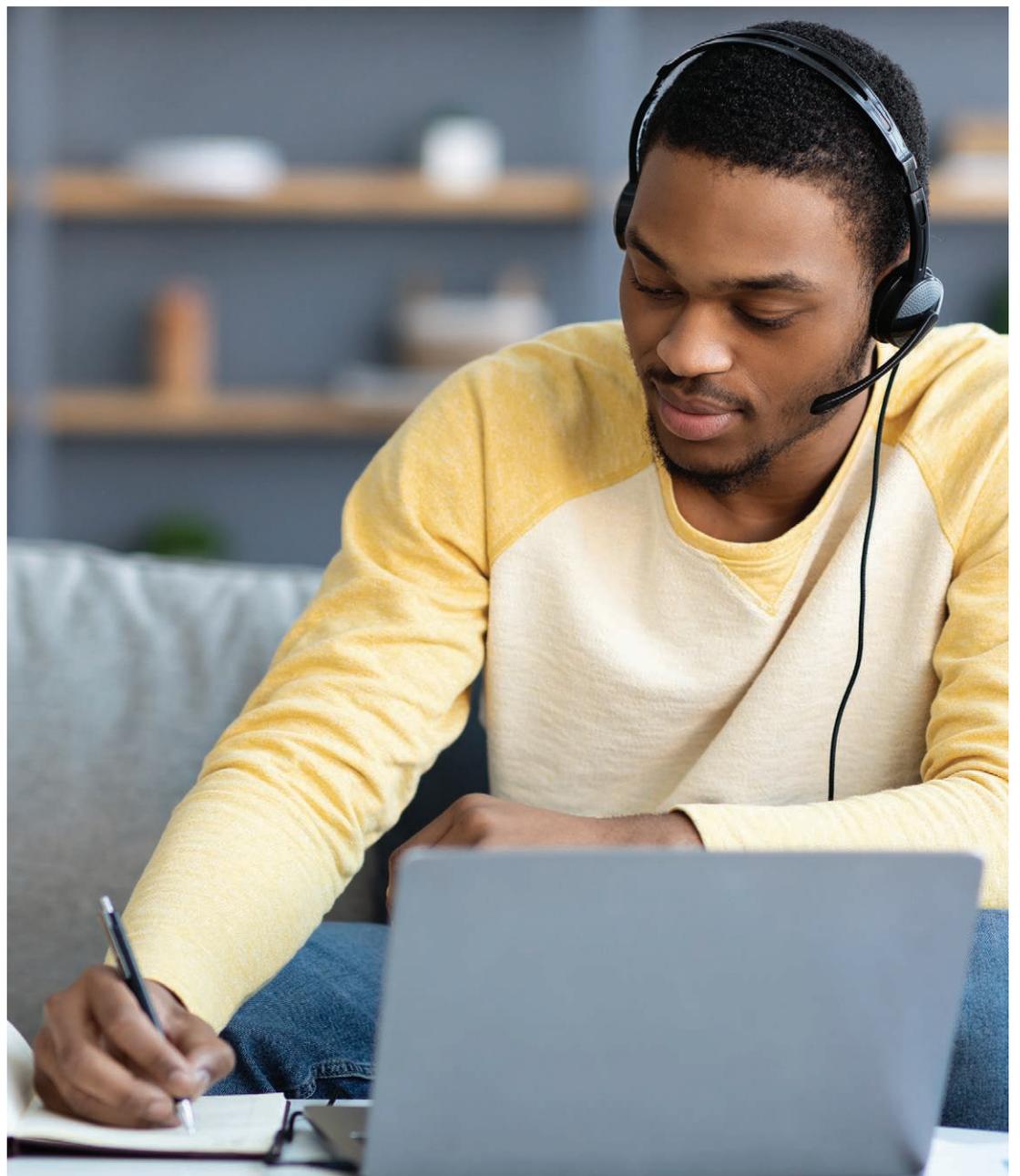
Additionally, a majority of those polled support certain environmental agendas such as rewilding but are reluctant to make personal lifestyle changes. For example, the majority of respondents in all seven countries reported eating meat regularly despite the environmental benefits of vegetarianism.



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Students to hold demonstration against University's so-called 'complicity' in 'war crimes'

Georgia Goble
Senior News Editor

CN: This article contains mentions of human rights abuses and military attacks against Palestine

A coalition of groups and student societies are coming together to ask that the University end their 'complicity' in aiding war crimes - launching a series of demands to 'demilitarise' the University.

The SU Ethical Affairs Campaign, Cambridge University Amnesty International (CUAI), the Cambridge University Palestine Solidarity Society (PaSoc), Cambridge Stop the War Coalition, and Cambridge Defend Education will launch their demands on Monday (01/11) coupled with a demonstration on King's Parade. Speeches will take place, and information will be distributed regarding the "university's complicity in human rights violations across the world", according to the event's Facebook page.

"We'll be sending a clear message to the university administration: we will not tolerate being complicit in war crimes and illegal occupations across the world."

The demands aim to put pressure on the University to remove their links to "some of the worst-offending arms companies in the world whose profits are stained with blood". BAE Systems and Rolls Royce are two companies they name. The Ethical Affairs Campaign told Varsity that the University "has a long history of complicity in human rights abuses

in the global south through propping up colonialism. The University cannot claim anti-racist principles or talk of "decolonisation" whilst aiding companies that allow horrific violence to continue to be enacted upon populations in the global South".

They continued: "Weapons manufacturers and war-criminals have no place on campuses. The university has sold itself to the arms industry; its students are being used to produce killing machines which are used on vulnerable and oppressed peoples across the world."

"The university is propping-up and legitimising the global war machine, they added, "when it should be promoting fields of study which tackle the emergencies of our time: climate breakdown, inequality and other social issues."

This is not the first time the University has faced criticism for their association with arms companies.

In May this year, following rising tensions between Palestine and Israel, an open letter was launched by PaSoc denouncing the University for being "complicit [in the] oppression" of Palestine through the Cambridge Service Alliance's partnership with BAE Systems and Caterpillar Inc., who they deemed to be aiding "Israel's violations of international law."

Cambridge student groups have also accused BAE Systems of "enabling major

► Continued on page 7

ARTS

New Dinky Door on Green Street

A new Dinky Door - the tiny door art installations which can be found across Cambridge city centre - has been placed by the Open Air shop on Green Street.

The artwork, which was revealed on Monday (26/10), is of a space rocket with an open door, also featuring an armchair, a cat, and a ship's wheel.

Cryptic clues as to the door's location were released on Twitter by the anonymous artist who has created more than 10 Dinky Doors across Cambridge as part of an environmental awareness movement.

The artist also thanked Gonville and Caius College for its support in launching the artwork.



▲ The new Dinky Door on Green Street (Serge Isman)

HISTORY

Cambridge history professor wins British Academy Book Prize

Cambridge professor of World History Sujit Sivasundaram has won the ninth British Academy Book Prize for Global Cultural Understanding with his book *Waves Across the South: A New History of Revolution and Empire*.

Sivasundaram, a Fellow of Gonville and Caius College, will receive £25,000 for the book focused on life for people indigenous to the Pacific and Indian Oceans during the British Empire's expansion.

The chair of the judging committee, Professor Patrick Wright of King's College London, said: "Waves Across the South is a riot of ingenuity, a truly powerful and new history of revolutions and empires."

RADIO

Emmanuel College alumnus writes radio sitcom

Kat Sommers, an alumnus of Emmanuel College who graduated in 2002, is currently the writer for Radio 4 sitcom *Charlotte and Lillian*, which has its third series airing at the moment.

Sommers commented: "If the English tripos teaches you anything, it's that tragedy lurks beneath every comedic surface. You just have to find it. Take a caricature, and turn it back into a person."

"At Emma, I had the good fortune to have Robert Douglas-Fairhurst as my Director of Studies, who taught me how to drill down through the layers of meaning behind a sentence [...] until I found the thing that resonated."

ENVIRONMENT

Single-use plastics banned on Cambridge City Council land

Single-use plastics have been banned from events hosted on Cambridge City Council land following a motion from Cllr Katie Porrer last Thursday.

The motion was introduced following Cllr Porrer's "horrified" reaction to the amount of single-use plastic thrown away, especially cups, following an event she attended on council land.

"There were no separate rubbish collections signed, no apparent separation of waste streams as food was being collected in the same bags as everything else, and nothing to remind people that they could use their own cups," she said.

The motion has also called for clear signposting of recycling facilities at events on council land or, if none are available, a clear confirmation that organisers will make an effort to ensure single-use plastic at events is recycled.

Cllr Alex Collis, the executive councillor for open spaces, added an amendment to the motion permitting the use of single-use plastics on council land, provided it is a council-run event. Collis said that the amendment "tightens up some of the specifics."

Collis added: "I think we are all aware of the dangers and issues of plastic pollution. There's a lot of will to tackle this issue. You might ask what can one city, or a smallish district council like ours, do to counteract change on such a catastrophic scale."

"There's actually quite a lot that we can do. It is a big global issue, but small changes can be positive too."



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News

Cambridge goes to COP26

Varsity speaks to those representing Cambridge in Glasgow for the summit that many believe is the 'world's last best chance' to combat climate change

Bethan Moss
Senior News Editor

Akshata Kapoor
Deputy Editor

Cambridge scientists, students and city councillors are among those who will attend the 26th UN Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP26), which begins this Sunday (31/10) in Glasgow. *Varsity* has interviewed some of those making crucial contributions to the three-week summit.

Cambridge undergraduate's documentary on green careers to debut at COP26

Rosa Prosser, a third-year NatSci at Lucy Cavendish, has produced a documentary series called 'Careers to Solve the Climate Crisis', the final episode of which will premiere at COP's 'Green Career Pathways' event on Sunday 7th November.

Prosser began the project – which she filmed, directed and edited herself – as part of a Cambridge Zero internship this summer. Her series highlights the need for people to come together across different sectors to tackle the climate crisis, showcasing the careers that will be critical to achieve net zero by 2050.

It features appearances from many leading figures in the fight against climate change such as Green Party MP Caroline Lucas and prominent scientist and activist Dr Mya-Rose 'Birdgirl' Craig.

Speaking to *Varsity*, Prosser expressed shock that her documentary will be shown at such an important event – she said this “definitely wasn't on the cards” when her internship began, but that the success of her film “goes to show that being ambitious with what you're doing, and not being afraid to ask, always pays off.”

She hopes that her series can “raise awareness of the great diversity of green jobs that are currently available, as well as those that will be available in the future”, thereby “empowering young peo-

ple to pursue a career that has a positive impact on the planet.”

The film series will launch on the Cambridge Zero YouTube channel on 3rd November.

What the Cambridge Green Party expects from the summit

Green Party Councillor and Jesus College Alumna Hannah Copley, is set to speak remotely at an event with the COP26 People's Summit for Climate Justice. She told *Varsity* that it is “imperative that governments at COP26 agree to implement the Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty.”

Cambridge became the first UK city to endorse the treaty, which calls for a rapid phasing out of fossil fuel use.

Copley hopes “to see the UK pledge meaningful resources and reparations to the Global South.” Pointing out that the UK has the “fifth highest cumulative historical CO2 emissions,” she said that it was the country's “responsibility” to lead efforts to decarbonise and to support developing countries.

One of the first steps the government needs to take, Copley continued, is to not develop the “huge” Cambo oil field off the north-west of the Shetland Islands. She says that to approve the development while hosting COP26 would be “the height of hypocrisy, and make a mockery of our climate commitments.”

‘We need to move from ambition to action’: ‘Friend of COP’ Dr Emily Shuckburgh

Dr Emily Shuckburgh is the director of Cambridge Zero, the University's climate change initiative. She is also one of 30 ‘Friends of COP’, experts from around the world brought together by the UK government to advise the COP26 presidency.

Dr Shuckburgh has a background as a climate scientist on the British Atlantic survey and is a professor of computer science. She joined the University with the main purpose of

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COP26 will showcase a range of contributions from Cambridge students and academics

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setting up Cambridge Zero, which celebrates its two-year anniversary this November.

Since its inception, Cambridge Zero has grown rapidly, Dr Shuckburgh tells *Varsity*, with its primary ambition being to “bring all the University's resources together to support climate action.” This includes Cambridge's engagement with national and internal policy, business and industry, and the public, as well as its own decarbonisation.

COP26 will showcase a range of contributions from Cambridge students and academics, of which Dr Shuckburgh highlights three. The first is the ‘Futures We Want’ project through which Cambridge post-doc students worked alongside academics in different countries to collate profiles on climate risk and hopeful visions of climate resilience.

The project work included conducting workshops with many stakeholders, including businesses and indigenous

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Dr Shuckburgh hopes the findings of the summit can help build climate resilience

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populations, to ensure the project was made “as inclusive as possible.” The visions from the project, and a video, will be showcased at COP26.

Cambridge Zero and Imperial College will also present the findings of the Climate Risk Summit at the summit. They have brought together UK universities to discuss “the risks of climate change in terms of the increase in extreme weather and passing tipping points.” By building a “better understanding of how climate-related risks can cascade through society,” Dr Shuckburgh hopes the findings of the summit can help build climate resilience.

Dr Shuckburgh also highlighted a film called ‘Act Now’ – to be launched

at COP26 – that aims to “actively platform” the voices of young people from around the world.

When asked about her hopes for the summit, Dr Shuckburgh emphasised the findings of the IPCC report this summer, which remind us of the “scale of the challenge.” COP26, she said, needs to move away from the talk about ambitions in Paris, and move towards actual action.

She listed her expectations for the summit.

Countries need to step up and commit to the things they agreed to in Paris and tie up outstanding negotiations from Paris.

There needs to be increased ambition in emission pledges; 1.5 degrees ought to be the maximum warming we see, but we are not currently on course to remain well below the 2 degrees increase limit set in Paris.

We need to talk about adaptation and building resilience.

Countries that are the most vulnerable and the least responsible for the climate crisis need to be supported financially.

We asked Dr Shuckburgh about the recent outrage over the challenges developing countries are facing sending delegations to the summit in Glasgow as a result of vaccine inequity and prohibitive quarantine costs – she acknowledged the tricky balance between needing to act urgently, and the need to have all voices heard. She said there should be a more equitable distribution of vaccines globally, and there needs to be a “vaccine rollout irrespective of what happens in COP itself.” However, this cannot be not “an either-or situation between pandemic and climate change.”

As countries around the world recover from the worst of the Covid crisis, we need to discuss how to “recover those economies in a green way.” The UK plays a critical role in its COP26 presidency in leading the way “for a green recovery.”

Commenting on the UK net-zero strategy released earlier this week, Dr Shuckburgh said that while such policies “can always be more ambitious,” a clear positive was the government's recognition of a “systems approach” towards climate action involving government departments working together to reduce emissions.

“This is a critical moment when the science makes it clear that unless we act immediately we're not going to be able to avoid the worst impacts of climate change,” Dr Shuckburgh concluded, saying that “anything Cambridge students can do to get involved in any way” is necessary.

“Cambridge has been around for 800 years,” she said, and we are now “at the cusp of potential for societal collapse” in the coming decades. This event will “affect everyone's future.”

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Sidelined Maths don gives underground lectures



▲ The abandoned lectures had been running since the early 1980s (PIERS BURSILL-HALL)

Jacob Freedland
Deputy News Editor

It's the subject that put Cambridge on the map. Its alumni include Isaac Newton, Bertrand Russell and Steven Hawking - and now, some students think it's lost its edge.

The dispute turns on what the Maths course should include. To the Faculty, the answer seems simple: maths alone, but to these students, it's more: its history and ethics.

The controversy comes as the Maths Department removed talks on the history of maths from its lecture list for this term. But in defiance of the decision, a group of Maths students have formed a society to keep learning with their former don.

Dr Piers Bursill-Hall, had been giving lectures on the history of maths for over 40 years but, without consultation, found his name removed from the Department's lecture list.

In 2018, following Bursill-Hall's retirement two years earlier, his lectures went from being classed as "non-examinable", to "not organised by the faculty" - a move widely seen as the Department distancing themselves from him.

The Department has yet to provide an answer as to why the lectures were removed, but sources told *Varsity* that they believe the decision came from a group within the faculty that had a grievance against Bursill-Hall.

In 2015, with Bursill-Hall's help, Dr Maurice Chiodo started giving lectures in the ethics of maths. Though also listed under the "non-examinable" section, some in the Department saw the lectures as an unnecessary distraction for Maths students: instead of studying for exams, they were learning abstract philosophy.

Some students are disappointed at the decision and the way it was reached. While changes to the lecture list tend to be made within Faculty meetings - where the student representatives are present - Bursill-Hall told *Varsity* that this decision was made over the summer, without consulting him or the students.

A group of Mathmos have responded to Bursill-Hall's removal by forming a new society for the sole purpose of continuing lessons with the former don: the

Cambridge University History of Maths Society (CUHoMS). Using a mailing list set-up by the breakaway students, like minded peers can receive Zoom links for lectures, humorous blog posts and invitations for social gatherings.

The motivation for the society appears to have stemmed from the popularity of Bursill-Hall's lectures. Known for their eccentric style, up to 100 students would often attend - one student said even her younger sister would come along to the lectures when they were online. For many, it was a chance to "broaden the

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Without consultation, Bursill-Hall found his name removed from the Department's lecture list

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horizons" of their subject - taking Maths out of the realm of abstract analysis and into the one of practical history, with lecture topics including the Islamic Enlightenment, the Industrial Revolution and the invention of the telephone.

According to the society's president, David Bai, "attending the lectures have been some of my fondest moments in Cambridge.

"They were filled with hilarious jokes, witty anecdotes and jaw-dropping historical facts. I used to be one of those 'mathmos should just do maths' people, but now I realise that this exposure to history and philosophy is also necessary."

Varsity reached out to the Maths Faculty for comment.

Vice-Chancellor Advisory Committee to include student for first time

Georgia Goble
Senior News Editor

For the first time, the Vice-Chancellor Advisory Committee for Nominations will include a student representative, according to the recent edition of the Cambridge University Reporter.

The committee is responsible for advising the Council on choosing a candidate to take over as Vice-Chancellor from Professor Stephen Toope, who announced in September that he would step down from the role next year, after a five year tenure.

Anjum Nahar, who is the Postgraduate President of the Cambridge Student Union (SU), will sit on the committee alongside 11 others, including Regent House resident members and academics. A member of the postdoctoral community, Dr Joshua Kaggie, will also be

included in the committee.

An external member will also be selected who "is, or was until recently, the Vice-Chancellor or equivalent of a university". This member will be confirmed in or before Lent Term in the next academic year.

Consultations and open meetings will take place to allow members of the University to inform the search.

► Continued from page 5

violations of international law" by the states of Turkey and Saudi Arabia. The company sells military equipment, including shells and F-16 fighter jets.

Set up in 2010, the Cambridge Service Alliance is described on the University's website as "a unique global alliance between leading businesses and

universities."

Cambridge University Amnesty International told *Varsity* that BAE Systems have been "integral in the Yemen conflict by supplying, servicing and arming a fleet of combat aircraft such as the Boeing F-15 and Eurofighter Typhoon jets to the Saudi Arabia-led coalition, used most notably in air raids in Yemen."

They continued: "The Institute for Manufacturing in Cambridge offered consultancy and training to companies including BAE Systems as recently as 2019. Investment is not the true issue here, though funding to the University is significant. What is crucial is that we cannot let the University provide consultation and weapons development research to companies that directly contribute to human rights abuses."

The coalition added: "As a community we are coming together to say: not in our name. With enough of us on the streets, and putting pressure on the university, we can, and we will, demilitarise Cambridge."

Varsity has contacted the Cambridge University Palestine Solidarity Society (PaSoc), Cambridge Stop the War Coalition, Cambridge Defend Education and the University for comment.

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News

Grantchester Meadows restoration project appeals for £10,000 to save banks from erosion

The popular bathing spot on the river Cam is suffering from severe erosion and footpath safety issues, claims conservation group

Meike Leonard
Associate Editor

Not-for-profit group Cam Valley Forum is appealing to the Cambridge community

to support essential conservation works planned in their Grantchester Meadows restoration project.

The charitable association urges “every-one to wake up to the fact that all is not

well with our river” in its manifesto, and aims to save the Cam’s rapidly eroding banks in the popular meadows area.

The Forum, in collaboration with the local Wildlife Trust and the Farming and

Wildlife Advisory Group, needs to raise £20,000 to enact the pilot project, as well as build a fund for future enhancements.

The project has been offered nearly £10,000 in funding so far, on condition

that a further £10,000 can be raised by the community, and that work will be finished by the end of March 2022.

“If everyone who enjoys the meadows gives a donation, we can easily do it,” encouraged Cam Valley Forum chairman, Stephen Tomkins.

Grantchester Meadows, which fills with swimmers and sun-bathers in the warmer months, and is frequented by families and dog-walkers throughout the autumn and winter, provides a crucial public green space for town dwellers and students alike.

However, constant use of the banks by people and cattle has led to severe erosion, removal of marginal vegetation, and silt inputs to the river - all of which can impact water quality.

Additionally, areas of cattle trampling next to footpath gates have created safety problems, particularly visible in winter.

Tomkins warned of river bank erosion and collapsing pathways resulting from heavy footfall, as well as airing concerns about litter and anti-social behaviour.

“These pressures threaten the continuation of the traditional cattle grazing that is such an attractive part of this rural scene” he said. “We enjoy this access for free but there is a cost for the owners and tenants in managing the impacts.”

The pilot project plans to address erosion and siltation by creating two new “cattle drinks”, gently sloping access points to the river reinforced by a hard stone base, which will allow cattle to safely reach the water without causing further damage.

Soil produced by the work will be used to create safer footpaths by repairing footpath adjacent cattle-damaged banks, which will then be protected by a short stretch of fence.

The project aims to “trial ways to rebuild and protect the banks using natural materials,” and to “learn lessons which can be applied to other areas of Grantchester Meadows”.

A previous River Cam conservation effort garnered much attention last summer, when King’s College, which owns the land, banning swimming, boating, barbecues and paddle-boarding on the meadows.

A letter, circulated to Newnham residents by Cambridgeshire County Council, stated that increased use of the area during the pandemic “put pressure on the habitat and facilities”, leaving the “long term future of the meadows at risk”.

After a petition against the ban gained over 18,000 signatures, King’s agreed to review it, promising that no swimmers would be prosecuted in the meantime.

The methods proposed thus far by the Grantchester Meadows restoration project promise to be less contentious.

To donate, visit www.wildlifebcn.org/grantchester-meadows-project.

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Features

My year abroad in a country that doesn't exist

In the midst of closed borders and lockdowns, *Shaun D. Foster* found himself in Transnistria, a country that isn't recognised as one. He reflects on this life-changing trip and lessons learnt on letting go of expectations and the norm



▲ Learning to give one-word requests, or shout "At the next stop!" from the back of the bus, certainly knocked some of the British out of me (PIXABAY/2427999)

Shaun D. Foster

In April of this year, I had been teaching English for almost three months in a language school in Ukraine. My visa-free stay was running out. I was taking online Russian lessons with Yaroslavl State University in Russia, but the ban on British visitors to the country had just been extended, again. I needed to find another Russian-speaking country where I could continue my Year Abroad.

That's when I remembered Transnistria. The Somerset-sized breakaway state sandwiched between Ukraine and Moldova along the Dniester River. I knew the people there spoke Russian, but I couldn't just go there, to an unrecognised republic, a frozen war zone...

First, I needed a job. I found a SMART language centre in the capital Tiraspol, and contacted them, asking if they needed a native English speaker. Within a few hours, they'd got back and invited me for an interview.

But what about visas? I contacted the foreign ministry of Transnistria, and only had to wait a few days for possibly the most surprising response of my life: "According to the constitution and the current laws of the Pridnestrovian Moldavian Republic, foreign citizens can exercise their right to work on a level with citizens of Transnistria."

In a post-Brexit world, this fact technically makes Transnistria the only place in Europe besides the UK and Ireland where a Brit can work without a visa.

What's more, Transnistria, for the first time since the beginning of the pandemic was opening its borders, for Easter. There's no limit on length of stay in Transnistria: you can just extend your registration every 45 days, in theory indefinitely. Moreover, there were no requirements for any tests, any quarantine; all I needed to do was catch one train and one bus and I'd be there.

Four days later, at the border, I was

questioned about my visit by a guard wearing a uniform emblazoned with the letters 'KGB', the name still used for the Transnistrian border force. The guard's passport scanner wasn't working. She shouted over to her colleague in the booth opposite: "Can you scan this young man's passport! He's from England! He's here to teach English! In our country!"

This very much set the tone for the rest of my stay. Nobody failed to see the irony. A Brit moving to Transnistria?! You speak to any young person in Tiraspol, they are trying to get away. Some to Germany or Poland; others to America or Canada; more still to Russia. The way they see it, there are no opportunities in Transnistria.

And yet for me, Transnistria represented opportunity... Where else could I practice my Russian, while legally earning, living cheaply, and without any need for tests or visas?

Not that it was all picture-perfect. Foreign credit and debit cards don't work in Transnistria, and so I did everything in cash. For the first couple of months of my stay, when I needed money, I had to cross over to Moldova, showing my passport at the border, take out Lei, and then once back in Tiraspol convert them into the local currency, the Transnistrian rouble, which officially is about as recognised as the country itself.

Nor could I use my phone. Foreign SIM cards don't work in Transnistria, and the republic has its own telecommunications company, IDC (Interdnestrom), which is — like Agroprombank bank, the KVINT cognac factory, nearly all the supermarkets, multiple restaurants, and, of course, the capital's stadium and football team — owned by the company Sheriff. IDC SIM cards aren't compatible with most foreign phones, and in order to get one they have to take in your phone for a week or two for 'testing'.

Not particularly keen on that idea, I contented myself to using WhatsApp and Wi-Fi.

But what did I actually do with my time there, besides work? When I first arrived, I found a society called DOZA, with whom I'd do something most weeks: from volleyball in the park, to board game nights at someone's house, to watching *Spirited Away* on a projector on an abandoned rooftop in Bendery. Through a weekly English-speaking club, I met people with whom to have barbecues, or go to the country's only zoo; one night a group of us ended up back at these two Danish tourists' flat, singing songs and sampling the local wine. I went on an early-morning kayak trip to watch the sunrise over the reservoir shared with Ukraine and visited the republic's beautiful national park in Yagorlyk. I took trips to the vibrant Moldovan capital Chisinau and to the other autonomous region within Moldova, the Turkic region of Gagauzia.

I don't think I'm exaggerating when I say that Transnistria changed me.

As with most places in Eastern Europe, you have to be assertive to be

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heard. Learning to give one-word requests, or shout "At the next stop!" from the back of the bus, certainly knocked some of the British out of me.

But there was something else about Transnistria. A lot of the time I was there felt like a dream. I couldn't believe I was really living in this country that didn't even exist. I think I'd be far too nervous to appear on a British morning talk show, and yet I didn't give it a second thought when I was asked to interview on 'Good Morning Transnistria'. I often lack confidence in my foreign language skills, but was happy to translate for the EU delegation to Moldova a speech given by the conductor of the Moldovan Youth Orchestra after a concert in Bendery Fortress.

I won't pretend I didn't spend a lot of time in Transnistria doing nothing, but the experience did teach me to take opportunities as they come, and also not to obsess about the "what if?" Had this been a normal year, I would have gone to Russia and studied for five months in person. Which would have been great. But I would never have discovered Transnistria.



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Three happy years later...

After her original column on anorexia, *Cordelia Sigurdsson* reflects on how Cambridge changed her relationship with food for the better

Content note: this article contains mentions of eating disorder

In my first year at Cambridge, I wrote a column of articles for Varsity in which I reflected upon my final years at school where I suffered, fairly severely, with anorexia. I found life in sixth form hard — which was something I never liked to admit — and as a result I spent a lot of that time quite unhappy. My eating disorder was undeniably linked to an unhealthy yet high-achieving perfectionism which I developed throughout school. I had to get certain GCSEs and A-levels, I had to be head girl, but I also had to see my friends and of course post it on Instagram, and, above all, I had to go to Cambridge. Indeed, I did manage all of these things — but at what cost? Whenever any one of these ‘perfect’ things seemed out of reach, that anorexic voice in my head knew the punishment — and it was always surrounding food and further eating restrictions.

I left home to go to Cambridge at 18, having only just about achieved a healthy weight and a sustainable mindset in order to live essentially alone, and entirely in control of what I eat. I don't think I ever could have predicted what going to university would do, good or bad, for my disordered eating habits.

But a year into Cambridge, I suddenly found myself questioning where that anorexic voice had disappeared too. It seemed to begin to vanish as I walked into my shabby Old South first-year room in Emmanuel College. Like magic, out of nowhere, I found I didn't question how many calories there were in the college

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Like magic, I found
I didn't question
how many calories
there were in the
college brunch I
was eating
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brunch I was eating, or refuse the cake offered by my new neighbour, or the VK at my first Cambridge night out. I threw myself into so many things — I had so much fun, loved almost every minute. However, I certainly didn't end that year with a first. I would like to say that that didn't faze me at all, but it certainly did, and I found my instant reaction was to



▲ PHOTOS FROM CORDELIA SIGURDSSON

attempt to return to anorexia's old ways: to eat less. Yet something over that summer and beginning my second year completely changed again. I suddenly let go of the idea that I had to be the best at Cambridge, that I would be ‘perfect’ — in a sense I knew I could never be — and so I chose to just be happy instead.

Now, having just graduated this summer, and it being over three years since my last therapy appointment, I am in a position where I haven't suffered from anorexia for some time. Not because instances where it had previously prevailed were not regular — indeed, a weekly supervision essay where I didn't achieve 65+ would once have been enough to begin an anorexia-fuelled cycle of punishment and starvation. Yet somehow, especially in my second and third years, it didn't matter so much. What mattered was making friendships, relationships, memories; going out for dinner, to formals, to May Balls; not scrutinising the calories in the drinks at Cindies or the Gardies chips on the way home. Or those hilarious late-night library snacks and hot chocolates with my new best friends, the 2-for-1 Franco Manca on UberEats, the Sidgwick Buttery cookies, the Novi cocktails, the pub golf night, the Sesame swap, and the curly fries in hall. All these things anorexia would never have allowed me to do — but all of these things are memories that will live with me forever.

In the end, I graduated with a 2.1, which would probably have killed 17 year-old me — but it didn't kill 21 year-old me, because 21 year-old and graduating me was inexplicably happy. My last year at Cambridge was the happiest of my life, and not because I topped Tripos, but because anorexia wasn't there to punish me. Looking back now at those articles, although I knew then that the anorexic voice had somewhat muted, I did write that I would never live without

ments and handing them over to anorexia. Undeniably, that little voice isn't constantly shrieking for perfection but I would much rather be able to genuinely smile than be pushed to an extreme by that ever-persistent and nagging voice inside my head.

Sure, I probably could have done more. I probably could have gone to the pub a little less and the library a little more — or not had that three hour long ‘coffee break’ — but regretting that would be letting that anorexic voice win again, and to me, I did just fine. I did the best I could while being the happiest I could. I also now know I could never say I have fully recovered from anorexia if I did let this perfectionist voice continue to plague me.

This, then, is to all those suffering, who may be in the midst of the intense unhappiness which an eating disorder brings. I'm walking proof that things can get better — things change, and anorexia isn't always there. Who needs to be perfect anyway? No one is. This is also to Cambridge, for giving me three amazing years.

this perfectionist mindset:

I know I am still learning how to couple this perfectionist ambition and fear of failure with being my own best friend, yet I would never live without it. This little voice, which constantly shrieks for perfection, has got me to exactly where I want to be in life; I wouldn't be at Cambridge without it.

Two and a half years later, I've realised I was wrong. I think to reach the mindset that I now have, I have had to let this perfectionism go in many respects. In many ways, it did get me to where I wanted to be — but I think I could have got to Cambridge without it. Thinking otherwise would be downplaying my own achieve-

“
My last year at
Cambridge was the
happiest of my life,
and not because I
topped Tripos, but
because anorexia
wasn't there to
punish me
”

I'm sorry I wasn't your best student ever, but I may have left as one of your happiest.

No grade or number on the scale is worth your life. I could never have made the number of friends or memories I did throughout these three years if I had allowed anorexia to come to Cambridge with me. Never in a million years would I swap the happiest three years of my life for a first, or to top Tripos — never, ever, ever.





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Opinion

The maths faculty is failing its female students – literally

Jess Ingrey reflects on her experiences of gender bias in mathematics, voicing powerful insight into systemic gender inequality



Maths is a man's world. You can see it as clear as day in admissions to study maths at Cambridge; in recent years, women have made up only 15% of the undergraduate maths cohort. However, once I had achieved my dream of making it to Cambridge, I didn't even consider the possibility that my gender would affect my performance or enjoyment of the Tripos. I had already beaten the odds to meet my STEP offer — in 2016 only 37% of female offer holders did so compared to 52% of their male counterparts — and become a woman in STEM. Surely, it was just about the maths now?

It wasn't until I received my first-year results that I realised how naïve I was. I had massively and unexpectedly underperformed compared to my high grades in example sheets and supervision reports throughout the year. This shock caused me to reflect; speaking to fellow female mathematicians, it was clear they too shared these bad results and bad experiences of the course. There was an almost unanimous feeling that the maths Tripos was not made with women in mind.

With my doubts about the teaching and examination process starting to grow, I decided to look at the data to see if there was a trend. I submitted a freedom of information (FOI) request to the university, asking for data on the progression from STEP to Part II of female and male identifying maths students who matriculated in 2015/16 (the most recent years to graduate unaffected by the pandemic). I expected the data to be bad, but it was truly shocking. Perhaps the most disturbing statistic showed that only one woman matriculating in 2016 received a first in Part II. Ironically, this could have been the reason why my FOI was rejected initially, because the candidate was easily identified in data.

Table 1, below displays the percentage of male and female students matriculating in 2015 and 16 — combined to create a larger data set — achieving each class or above in Part II (their final year grade). The total percentage of students achieving a third or above is less than 100% to account for a small number of fails, as well as discontinuations and extenuating circumstances.

Evidently, women are massively underrepresented in achieving firsts. There is a smaller but never-

theless significant difference of 15% between male and female students achieving the all important II.i or above which employers look for.

Table 2, presents the exact same data but for Oxford, with a 23% female cohort compared to Cambridge's 15%. While there is still a gender gap at Oxford, it's nowhere nearly as drastic as that of Cambridge. Accounting for Oxford's more generous grading by interpolating, 24% of Oxford's female students would achieve a first, which is considerably higher than the 7.0% at Cambridge. There is also much less of a difference between the percentage of male and female students achieving a II.i or above at Oxford.

The largest difference between the maths courses at Oxford and Cambridge is the admissions process, with Cambridge offer holders taking the STEP exams just after sitting their A Levels, whereas Oxford applicants take the MAT in October of their Year 13. Both the lower admittance and lower performance of women at Cambridge suggests that STEP is not an accurate test of all mathematical ability. Perhaps STEP, which is used to prepare future students for the Tripos, as well as being an admissions tool, is the

first sign of a course that is not built for women.

To worsen the story, in March 2019 Mathematics Undergraduate Admissions Committee (MUAC) meeting Professor Julia Gog stated: "even after accounting for STEP women perform less well than men in Parts IA and II". Clearly, studying at Cambridge — often regarded as the best place in the world to study maths — does more harm than good to female students. In this same MUAC meeting "the Committee were concerned about the non-completion rate for women. [Professor Gog] noted that non-completion also includes change of subject, which is anecdotally high in women". In fact, 33% of the women matriculating into mathematics in 2016 chose to intermit or discontinue their studies at some point during the Tripos. While I understand that many students take this route for personal reasons unrelated to their studies, compare this figure to 14% of their male counterparts and 250 students total across the university.

Now to explore the possible reasons for this inequality between genders, many of which have likely been a feature of the Tripos since

▼ Table 1 refers to the percentage of male and female students matriculating in 2015 and 2016 whilst table 2 shows the same data but for Oxford

Table 1. Cumulative % at Part II

Class	Male	Female	Total
I	33	7	30
II.i	69	54	66
II.ii	83	86	83
III	88	92	89

Table 2. Cumulative % at Part II

Class	Male	Female	Total
I	41	31	39
II.i	84	79	83
II.ii	97	99	98
III	100	100	100

before women were even allowed to study it. Most of the following are anecdotal, as I do not have access to the appropriate data. However, I would hope that the faculty will take time to look into each one.

I believe a large contributor to the gender awarding gap in Cambridge's undergraduate maths exams is the

marking system; seemingly the greatest difference in examination systems between the university and Oxford. A student is awarded extra “bonus” marks if they reach a certain number of standard marks in an exam question; for example, if a student achieves 15 marks or more out of 20 in a longer exam question they are automatically awarded an additional 15 marks. This system rewards risk; students have to ask themselves in the heat of a time-pressured exam ‘should I potentially waste time attempting to reach the lucky 15 or just move on?’. Risk is typically a gendered attribute, nurtured by society in men and dissuaded in women. While I understand the faculty wanting to encourage students to reach the end result of a question — an important skill for research — it is possible to do so without using a risky step function; this could easily be replaced by squaring the raw mark achieved in the question for example.

Looking further into the extreme-

ly exam-heavy grading system highlights more faults. My female peers and I struggled to know how to prepare for our first-year exams due to the faculty’s refusal to publish solutions to past papers. Exam length is also relevant; Oxford chose to extend its maths exams by 15 minutes in 2017 because the department thought “female candidates might be more likely to be adversely affected by time pressure”. Introducing coursework (other than CATAM, the computing based current coursework) to the course could offer a solution that benefits traditionally “female” skills suited to research, like collaboration and risk-aversion; comparing students’ supervision reports to exam grades could show a need for this.

Additionally, it’s widely acknowledged that a lack of role models is a strong contributor to the gender gap in STEM. This lack of representation continues in Cambridge, as only two of my 11 first-year lecturers, and two of my eight course supervisors identified as female. In a

conversation about this issue with my director of studies, he told me that he tries to ensure that each of his female students has at least one female supervisor each year. However, this awareness of gender representation shouldn’t be rare and individualised; directors of studies and the faculty should champion representation and promote role models for female and non-binary students continuously.

Cambridge insists on an intense workload but the maths Tripos in particular puts huge pressure on students. While there is negligible research into the effects of workload on different genders, note that when A Level exams were cancelled in 2020 due to COVID, 23% of Cambridge’s maths undergraduate incoming cohort identified as female — the highest proportion of female students in recent years. Perhaps the absence of A Level exams gave female offer holders a more manageable workload and therefore reduced the stress they experienced while preparing for STEP.

The Maths Faculty do currently make some effort to address and reduce the negative effects of gendered society by hosting a welcome event to allow female and non-binary freshers to meet each other, as well as giving £500 each year to the Emmy Noether society, which aims to support these groups and further the connections made between these students. Similarly, the faculty and various colleges host many events to encourage female and non-binary school students to apply to the course. However, the faculty needs to realise that its course just simply isn’t suited for female students and that this isn’t female students’ fault but the fault of multiple system failures.

I deliberated for a long time over whether publishing this article would have the desired positive effect on female mathmos. Would reading this article set a female fresher up to fail? Would they feel like they were fighting a losing battle and create a self-fulfilling prophecy of underachievement?

However, after consulting with my peers, I realised that it’s worse to suffer in silence. Female and non-binary students in STEM, as well as all subjects, need transparency — as it stands, the faculty meeting notes which discuss gender issues are not made public. This needs to change for students to be able to collaborate with each other and the faculty to create positive gender-inclusive change.

Undergraduate maths might not be changing, but the people studying it are; it’s time for the faculty to understand this, and to adapt the system so it doesn’t just benefit people like themselves. Even the educational buildings don’t accommodate us; on the first day of lectures I passed three lots of male toilets before finding the womens! I don’t have a complete answer, and as a mathmo who pursues answers, this is infinitely frustrating and exhausting. What I can do is offer my experiences, which depressingly are probably yours as well.

"Girls night in": why are university students taking on the spiking epidemic themselves?

Meg Byrom

For many young people the re-opening of clubs, the prospect of nights out, and freedom to sit in a pub with a group bigger than 6 felt like a reconciliation with adolescence. The 18 months of Covid-19 restrictions severed students from their “university experience” and undergraduate memories with their peers. Winter terms have begun with students returning in droves to local towns and cities to get a taste of “real” student life. However, the cathartic release of a night out with friends has quickly been halted by disturbing stories and statistics of rampant spiking, and a new tactic of gender-based violence involving students being injected with drugs.

After the tragic murders of both Sarah Everard and Sabina Nessa this year, gendered violence has recentered itself in mainstream public conversation. Young women in particular are having to ask themselves how do I truly stay safe if danger seems to arise from every corner, whether simply walking home, or on a midweek night out with friends? Across the UK, the “Girls Night In” boycott intends to put pressure on nightclubs and the service sector to improve safety standards so those at risk of gender-based violence can be safe. Many of these grassroots student boycotts want intensive training for staff on dealing with drug-related first aid, better CCTV, background checks on staff and drink testing facilities, amongst other calls for change. Whilst the boycott planned to commence in the last week of October may see students empowering themselves — much like the “reclaim the night” protests — it seems that yet again the onus of protection and safety falls upon students. From using safety covers on drinks to organising boycotts, these heavy burdens are emotionally exhausting and traumatic. Whilst young students plan

to tackle gender-based violence and misogyny-fuelled crimes, what can universities do to protect us?

On the whole, universities across the country have been slow to react to the spiking crisis, only beginning to comment on the issue long after terms began in September. The epidemic of sexual and gender-based violence have unravelled; when universities do react, the advice has been largely superficial and reinforced victim-blaming rhetoric. Durham University’s handling of the crisis has illuminated such an

issue, as their own student wellbeing team advised “don’t get spiked” to its students.

Isabella Taylor, one organiser of Cambridge’s boycott, reasserted that universities have been slow to act, suggesting apparent ignorance and denial of the issue at hand. After seeing posts circulating around social media that reinforced victim-blaming and put pressure on vulnerable students to protect themselves, the organisers joined the plethora of other university boycotts to enact change in Cambridge. “I wish some-



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Young women in particular are having to ask themselves how do I truly stay safe if danger seems to arise from every corner?”

times people at the top would have the initiative to reform sooner and not need to be told what needs to be done” Taylor commented, “There is amazing solidarity amongst everyone who campaigns in this way though, and we lift each other up and support one another. But, we shouldn’t have to scream so loudly for things to change.” Taylor added, “The student body has been incredible. The Women + Nonbinary officers from the college JCRs have been doing so much work to campaign for safety but also support victims in their colleges. The SU has also been great. Hawks and Ospreys did huge amounts of work to coordinate with two of the main clubs in Cambridge to bring in measures. There is a real feeling that people want and are willing to fight for change.”

But for student organisers, the boycott represents once again that it is bottom-up endeavours doing a lot of the heavy lifting to address sexual and gender-based violence in universities. Though spiking may take place in nightclubs and bars, universities have a duty of care to protect and ensure the safety of all students whether threats and issues occur on or off-campus. With *The Tab* reporting that 70% of Cambridge students feel worried about the spiking epidemic, it shouldn’t take a student boycott to highlight the extent of this problem — but it has. Misogyny-fuelled violence is not being tackled fast or effectively enough and universities need to step up to the challenge, addressing these problems before they spiral. Whether this ranges from providing holistic support for survivors, or educational campaigns on sexual health, safety and consent throughout the terms, with a problem as dangerous, traumatic and life-altering as spiking, universities cannot wait to be taught by their students before they dare to act.

Science

Demystifying intersexuality

Rei Chin takes an in depth look at the biology underlying intersexuality as part of a growing drive to fight the stigma faced by intersex individuals

Intersexuality - you will most likely have heard of this term in the context of increasing LGBTQIA+ awareness; you may have heard of it in the context of sex testing in female sports. However, what does intersexuality or Differences in Sexual Differentiation (DSDs) mean? Society is increasingly striving towards inclusion and acceptance. Learning about what intersex individuals live with and how it arises may help us empathise with them. With this knowledge, we can also comprehend and contribute meaningfully to ethical and political debates about intersex rights. The definition of sex is multi-faceted and consists of three components: genetic, gonadal and anatomic sex.

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The definition
of sex is multi-
faceted
”

Male genetic sex is defined as the possession of the Y chromosome, while female genetic sex is defined as the possession of only the X chromosome and not the Y chromosome; male gonadal sex is defined as the possession of testes while female gonadal sex is defined

as the possession of ovaries; male anatomic sex is defined as the possession of male external genitalia such as penises while female anatomic sex is defined as the possession of female external genitalia such as vaginas. In most humans, the three components of sex will be aligned: females will inherit only X chromosomes, which means they develop ovaries and a vagina, with the opposite being true for males. However, intersex individuals possess a mixture of male and female traits. For example, their genetic and gonadal sex may be different to their anatomic sex; they can possess the Y chromosome and testes but have a vagina. Sex is therefore a biological trait and is different to gender, a personal choice of identification.

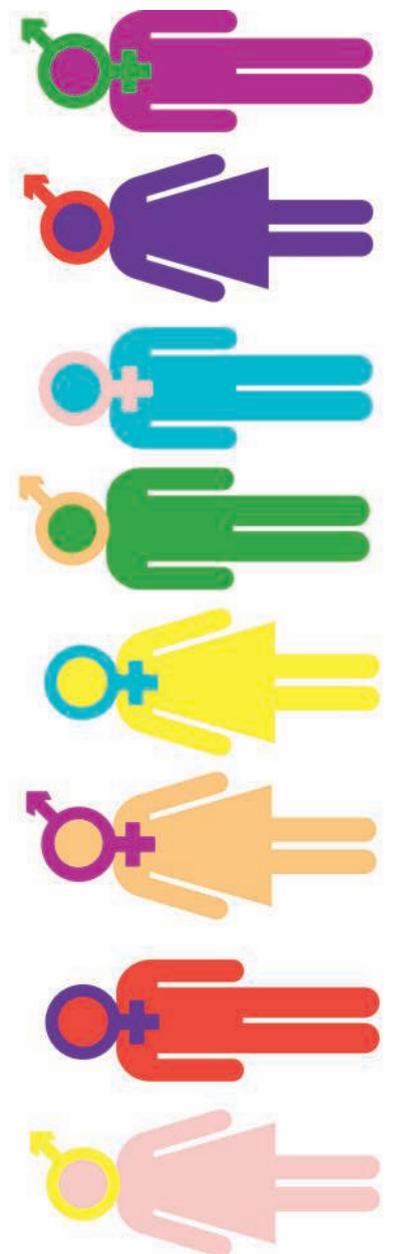
To understand intersexuality, we must first have a basic understanding of genetics. What is the relationship between DNA, genes and chromosomes? The human genome can be thought of as an enormous instruction manual for the creation of a functioning human. This manual is divided into a series of individual volumes. Each volume is composed of many chapters, and each chapter contains words. Similarly, the human genome is divided into chromosomes, which are analogous to the volumes. Each chromosome can be subdivided into many genes, the equivalent of chapters. Every individual gene, or chapter of the instruction manual, guides the formation of a different component of the human body. Genes are composed of DNA, just as the chapters of the instruction manual are composed of words.

There is a particular gene which determines the sex of the human being formed. It was named the SRY gene and can be found on the Y but not the X chromosome. In other words, the SRY 'chapter' is only found in the Y 'volume'. At the early stages of development, all fetuses possess the same gonadal precursors, which will develop into either testes or ovaries depending on the presence or absence of the SRY gene. As a result, genetic sex directly influences the gonadal sex under normal circumstances.

The hormone testosterone is produced in the testes of male fetuses. It is an example of an androgen, though there are more potent androgens such as dihydrotestosterone (DHT). The physiological effects of androgens on the body are diverse: it can induce the building of muscle mass, increase the blood-carrying ability of blood, but more importantly, it stimulates the development of male external genitalia. Male and female fetuses initially share the same genital precursors such as the genital tubercle. However, these shared precursors later develop into male or female external genitalia depending on the presence or absence of androgens. For example, in the presence of androgens, the genital tubercle enlarges and becomes the penis in males; without androgens, the genital tubercle remains small and becomes the clitoris in females. It is worth noting that females also produce testosterone in organs such as the adrenal glands, albeit at a much lower level than men.

In summary, genetic sex directly influences gonadal sex, which then

directly influences anatomic sex in the average human. However, exceptions to the 'norm' are often found in biology, and this normalisation of binary gender is one of the reasons some face challenges from society. Intersex individuals have a mixture of male and female genetic, gonadal and anatomic sexual traits. Primary intersexuality is caused by variations at the level where genetic sex influences the development of gonadal sex. For example, SRY gene mutation may nullify its effects. These individuals effectively possess the Y 'volume' of the human genome instruction manual but have an erroneous SRY chapter.



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Exceptions to
the 'norm' are
often found in
biology, and this
normalisation of
binary gender is
one of the rea-
son why some
face challenges
from society
”



◀ With its yellow background and purple circle, the intersex flag is not as well known as the classical rainbow pride flag, but awareness is starting to increase. BOJAN CVETANOVIĆ

As a result, they do not have the correct instructions to develop male gonads. Consequently, they have male genetic sex but female gonadal and anatomic sex. In other individuals, the SRY chapter can be erroneously copied onto the X chromosome. As a result, they have female genetic sex but male gonadal and anatomic sex. On the other hand, secondary intersexuality is caused by variations at the level where gonadal sex influences the development of anatomic sex via androgen signalling. Signalling consists of two parts: transmission and reception. For example, verbal communication depends on effective transmission of speech but also receptive hearing. Similarly, testosterone signalling depends on the production of testosterone by the testes or the adrenal glands, and also on the binding of testosterone to its cognate receptor at the target organ, such as muscle. Malfunctioning of signalling can occur at either the transmission or reception component.

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Intersex individuals often face discrimination and ostracisation in society due to ignorance
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In some secondary intersex conditions such as congenital adrenal hyperplasia, individuals with female genetic and gonadal sex produce excess testosterone in their adrenal glands. As a re-

sult, their external genitalia may somewhat resemble that of males. In other cases, individuals of the male genetic and gonadal sex may not be able to produce sufficient testosterone. As a result, their anatomic sex is more feminine. In one specific example known as 5 α -reductase deficiency, individu-

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Intersex individuals are more than just their biological variations
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als of the male genetic and gonadal sex fail to convert testosterone to the more potent androgen, DHT. As a result, they are born with female anatomic sex and are often raised as girls. However, at puberty, their testes mature and produce a vast amount of testosterone, which compensates for the deficiency in DHT. As a result, their external genitalia transform from feminine to masculine following puberty.

The reception of androgen signalling is equally important in sexual development. In cases of androgen insensitivity, mutations in the testosterone receptor result in decreased androgen signalling. As a result, those with male genetic and gonadal sex may have ambiguous or female anatomic sex. In the verbal communication analogy, this is akin to deafness - communication is poor when the receiver has difficulty hearing; the transmitter can speak louder to compensate, but this is not effective in cases where the receiver is profoundly deaf. Similarly, those with androgen insensitivity commonly have elevated levels of testosterone, but depending on the degree of insensitivity, the effect of testosterone may still be profoundly blunted.

Intersex individuals often face discrimination and ostracisation in society due to ignorance. With more education about what intersexuality is and how it arises, microaggressions and stigmatisation can be minimised. Intersex individuals were merely born with a biological variation, similar to the natural

variations in hair colour, height and facial structure. Intersex rights organisations argue that the approach towards intersexuality as a medical condition is harmful to their community; they shun terms such as ‘disorders of sexual differentiation’. Reconstructive surgery on intersex babies and children to ‘assign’ their sex has been common practice. Only recently has there been a shift in attitude towards the rights of the individual, who may choose to undergo surgery in later life or choose to accept their biological variation and remain as they are.

The legal classification of persons by sex is a deeply controversial topic. Some intersex individuals believe that they have the right to choose and change their legal sex. Some wish to be non-binary: sex is a spectrum with intersex individuals lying between the stereotypical males and females. Some

believe that legal classification by sex should be abolished altogether.

Better understanding of the fundamental science behind intersexuality drives the intersex rights movement: it could lead to better policy-making as more members of society can contribute meaningfully to debates, and could contribute to

destigmatisation. However, it is important to remember that intersex individuals are more than just their biological variations. They, too, are humans with unique experiences.

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Comment

The UK's flagship university sector is built on the "exploitation of staff"

Frankie Richards comments on the recent vote signalling the SU's support for UCU strikes, which may take place just before Christmas



▲ CREATIVE COMMONS / IT'S NO GAME

At the end of September, the University and College Union confirmed that they would open strike ballots at 152 institutions across the UK on 18 October – union members are now voting on two motions to strike.

Ballots close next Thursday (18/10), and in the event of a 'yes' vote, industrial action could take place this side of Christmas, potentially as early as Week Five. Proposed strikes at Cambridge would be the fourth of their kind in as many years.

The two motions are the same as those that passed in 2020, which saw walkouts from thousands of staff at 74 institutions in the largest strike action in UK education history. The first motion concerns USS pensions, with the second concerning what the UCU call the "four fights" – pay inequality, pay deflation, job insecurity and rising workloads.

The National Union of Students (NUS) pledged their support for the UCU back in September, saying that if university vice chancellors and employers do not come to "a negotiated settlement and address the fundamental issues repeatedly raised by staff" then "students will hold employers responsible".

Cambridge Student Union (SU) pledged to support potential striking workers in a motion passed on Monday (25/10) – the SU's motion allocated £250 for posters, flyers and picket line support and resolved to "inform and educate students about the ballot and its results".

The SU have caveated their support for potential strikes with a clause stating that "expressing solidarity should not come at the expense of academic performance", and an amendment which ensures picket-line free access to the Student Services Centre at New Museums site.

Vice-Chancellor Stephen Toope wrote to staff in an email sent on 14 October that

although he "understands the strength of feeling that exists across the sector" on pay and pensions, he was "extremely concerned at what a fresh round of industrial action would do to our students' education after 18 extremely difficult months."

Bethan Moss Senior News Editor

University staff are integral to university life. This seems like a truism, but the potential for more UCU strikes before Christmas tells us a different story. Last night (25/10), the Cambridge Student Union (SU) voted 69% in favour of supporting strike workers, ahead of the University College Union's (UCU)'s ballot to join strike action. The SU support strike workers and what they stand for: withdrawal of pension cuts, demands for pay equality, an end to zero-hour and other precarious contracts, and pay increase for all pay points.

I unreservedly support and recognise the effectiveness of strike action, yet I, as a student embarking on my all-important third and final year, can't help but feel apprehensive. I'm not concerned with the purpose of the strikes, but on a practical level I have to acknowledge that every year of my undergraduate studies has been disrupted in some way: strikes interfered with my first year; COVID-19 radically affected my second year; and now, both COVID-19 and strikes are set to affect my third year. This amalgamation of disruptions may pale in comparison to the destruction of global

pandemic or necessity of union strikes, but when I'm sitting (figuratively or literally) in my exam, no one will care if my Wi-Fi cut out during online lectures, or that I had to teach myself course content and comb through incomprehensible academic jargon without lecturer aid – or even have a panic attack over the possibility of crossing a picket line. I'm not concerned with strike action, but I am concerned

access to student services at New Museums Site. Transparency and continual communication between students, the SU, and UCU is crucial, but how can it be manifested? Lecturers could indicate their stance on the strikes to their students well in advance of the events themselves. This may be mixing education and ethics, but these are arbitrary boundaries. After all, if my lecturer proudly parades pictures of their children, then informing us on their strike action shouldn't be classed as too "personal".

Additionally, whenever a student misses a lecture, or needs to reschedule a supervision, it's common practice to send a courtesy email. If lecturers involved their students more in their decision making, this could encourage a broadening of perspectives in and outside the classroom. Our education doesn't stop once we leave the lecture hall: the 24-hour onslaught of various university emails should tell us that much. Encouraging open conversation about the realities of university life, for students, staff and faculty is vital. We all operate in this space, so surely, we should be holding up a mirror to the institution we subscribe to?

Just because we're in a space of academia, this doesn't mean we have to have tunnel-vision, and focus solely on our own courses. As shocking as this may be to some, I don't live and breathe for my subject; but just in case my DoS or any future employers read this, I love my subject, I'm excited to pursue fur-

ther studies – but I think it's equally important to be aware of issues greater than yourself. Being 'politically minded' doesn't necessarily entail standing on a soap-box. If that's your mode of expression, then great, but having an awareness and acknowledgement of the injustices that are unfolding right under your nose is a step in the process of addressing inequalities, which sooner or later, you or someone you know will be affected by. Direct experience shouldn't suddenly validate issues.

In true Cambridge fashion, I paraphrase the theologian, Martin Niemöller, to substantiate my point: "first they came for...and I didn't speak out because I wasn't a... [...] then they came for me and there was no one left to speak out for me." The strikes are highly significant and reflect wider issues on pay inequality, concern over pensions, workloads and greater equality failings, issues which pervade society in every industry and its institutions. Therefore, I support the possibility of UCU strike action, but am mindful of its caveats. Communication, not just lip-service and the odd email, between faculty, staff members and students is crucial, as are continual discussions about the realities of working and studying at the university. Students should be able to indicate whether their studies have been impacted by strikes, emotionally, or physically – and meaningful mitigation should be put in place, whether this manifests as adjustable workloads, exam consideration or alternative modes of assessment.

I want to look back at my third year and know I achieved my academic potential and supported important social causes, but whether this is a pipe-dream or reality, that's to be decided.

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I support the possibility of UCU strike action, but am mindful of its caveats
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by the possibility that this very real disruption will not be taken into account regarding my academic output.

True, the SU has announced support for students affected by the strikes; notably, they will ensure picket-line free

Reclaiming *solitude*

‘This year feels different’: *Sean O’Hare* reflects on the importance of doing less and being comfortable in your own company



▲ ILLUSTRATION BY LEONI BOYLE

Thinking is a lonely thing. Or, it’s lonely, at least, in part — and that’s good. It’s hard to impart to others what one has not yet obtained, and it’s nearly impossible to obtain anything worth having without significant doses of solitary contemplation. Worthwhile thoughts require space to formulate, time to germinate. To put it bluntly: you can’t be that sexy intellectual at the party without having read at least one damn book on your own time.

Vanity and joking aside, this imparting — the sharing among one’s peers — be it through conversations in supervisions, seminars or pubs, is one of the best things about this city. A place like Cambridge is wonderfully suited to this kind of cross-pollination. It’s why I came here to study, and I imagine why many of you chose this place as well. There is a surplus of brilliant people here, many of them eager to engage with you — either about your chosen subject, or something fascinating and entirely different altogether. This year, we can finally partake in this again, and it’s a beautiful thing.

For me, the opening of Michaelmas term has reflected this excitement, and rightfully so. Being a hopeless extrovert heading into second year, I’ve been looking forward to the increased social opportunities all summer, and have already taken advantage of so many of them. However, I’ve also begun to notice a tendency in myself and those around me to over-extend and over-commit to what’s on offer around the city, even in these first few weeks. Sure, Freshers’ week has always been hectic, and I’d imagine that finding a balance between work and play in such a vibrant environment as Cambridge has always been a challenge... but this year feels different. There’s a temptation this time around, I suspect, to grasp not only at the things that are available this term, but also for whatever it is we feel that we’ve lost

“ We run the risk of becoming zombies: wandering from thing, to thing, to thing ”

the previous year. I understand this impulse; however, I’m also convinced that, for many, it will lead to a less fulfilling, less constructive re-entrance into our shared sociality and academic pursuits.

It’s dawned on me in recent weeks that, while there are finally so many opportunities for exciting interactions this term, we may, in our over-excitement, just as easily end up creating a bunch of noise instead of durable connections. Not because the events and the people running them aren’t exceptionally and endlessly interesting, but because we run the risk of becoming zombies: wandering from thing, to thing, to thing, unable to participate in meaningful ways as attendees, or alternatively, incapable of hosting events worth attending. Conversation that could be dynamic and insightful, or playful and hilarious, might instead become stretched thin as we all nervously sip our drinks: exhausted from the never-ending social carousel. Tapping into those truly impactful, friendship-building experiences means we all need to have spent a substantial amount of time on our own so that we can be confident in what we’re contributing, and be able to muster genuine interest in what’s happening around us.

One of the greatest challenges facing us after such an extended period of isolation, is the disentanglement of fruitful, intellectually generative solitude from the soul-sucking loneliness we’ve all experienced in recent months. This difficulty of rightly distinguishing between ‘good’ and ‘bad’ solitude is further compounded, I think, by the fact that ‘good’ solitude often manifests itself as a painful experience — and we’ve had enough of those recently, thank you very much. Worthwhile thinking is usually a strenuous undertaking, like strength training, or pushing through cardio on a sluggish day. So too is identifying, working through, and cultivating a healthy emotional life. And the memory of

months and months of working alone in our rooms, of not seeing or meeting our own course mates, makes the prospect of building a healthy practice of solitude quite daunting. Still, confidence in solitude is perhaps one of the most important things to be pursuing as this year explodes upon us, and can only be forged by choosing it when it counts.

Before I’m misread here, let me make an important clarification. Lest it be claimed that I’m proposing students become antisocial or lock themselves in a room and work themselves to death... I’m not. In fact, I would argue that regular and restful time alone — whatever this looks like to you — is the only real solution to the crushing workload that inevitably accrues over the course of a term. One thing is for certain: going to every event, run by every club, every night of the week is not the answer to unhealthy academic expectations, nor is it the best way to make friends. Carving out space to actually be alone — some of that time working, some of it not working — seems to me the only real solution to these challenges, not ‘funning’ ourselves into oblivion.

This may all seem banal, but it needs to be said nonetheless, in this moment perhaps more than any other in our lives thus far. Never have we emerged from something like these past few years, nor have we ever attempted to forge our professional and academic identities in such uncharted waters. And while I’m fully aware of the potential unpopularity of arguing for doing less things right now, it feels vital to reiterate the value of self-restraint in such a buzzing atmosphere. I wager that being selective in what we participate in this term, and the remainder of the year, will be rewarding in ways we can’t quite anticipate yet. If we can work out how to be alone now, when we feel pulled in every direction by an academic world celebrating its reclaimed freedoms with such abandon, we may just forge intellectual and social confidence that will pay dividends for decades to come. We also might think more interesting thoughts these next few months, and, well, have more fun — on our own, or in each other’s company.



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Interviews

XR Activist Dr Jason Scott-Warren: 'All other more moderate means have basically failed'

Marion Willingham speaks to Dr Jason Scott-Warren, who remains dedicated to Extinction Rebellion despite having been fined for his involvement in protests

In October 2018, three years ago now, the International Panel on Climate Change released a special report on what could happen if the earth warms by more than 1.5 celsius. Put simply, the consequences involve flooding, drought and the risk of poverty for hundreds of millions of people. The report warned that we had only 12 years to prevent these effects. For many, including Dr. Jason Scott-Warren, Cambridge University English literature professor, this report was a wake-up call.

Scott-Warren, a lecturer and research fellow at Gonville & Caius, says the report "punctured a state of illusion I was in that things were basically OK and must be, in some sense, under control." This is not to say that he had never engaged with the problem of climate change before. He had been watching the issue 'with alarm' for some time, and reveals that when preparing for a recent court case, after his arrest at an Extinction Rebellion protest in London, he discovered that he had been donating to Friends of the Earth since as early as 1994.

So what happened in the 26 years between that initial donation and his visit to the City of London Magistrates Court in 2020? A pivotal moment for Scott-Warren was the formation of the Extinction Rebellion movement (popularly referred to as 'XR'): "The formation of XR in 2018 kind of coincided with [the IPCC report] and was pretty crucial to me, because, although I had been involved in strike action, I had seen student occupations going on and been supportive, and I'd gone on marches and demos, I hadn't ever really done anything that could count as civil disobedience before."

And what was the appeal of civil disobedience? "I think the idea that you might cross a line, and that the social contract is broken and therefore to some extent the standard operation of the law is suspended. That kind of logic suddenly made a lot of sense to me, you know, that something extreme needs to happen in order for change to take place." XR's demand - that the UK government reaches net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2025 - is, according to Scott-Warren "not extreme if you think there's a planet to save, but extreme in the sense that it's not on anyone's political agenda".

Scott-Warren's view on the negative perceptions of XR's 'extreme' activities is that "by demanding something which feels extreme in the given political climate, XR opens up a space within which other people can do things that seem

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to them more pragmatic but which are pushing further and further towards the demands that we're making".

"By being willing to put yourself in that position of the extremist, everyone else gets to be not the extremist, but they're kind of pressured to do something, so it creates a demand for action that moderate people can rise to."

Following his involvement in XR's 'April Rebellion' in London in 2019, Scott-Warren was arrested and found guilty of several public order offences, because the protest action was deemed unreasonable. He tells me that "The judge said that you could influence the situation through the ballot box", but argues that 'the situation we're in proves that democracy is not working as a solution to this problem.' "All other more moderate means have basically failed. That word failure disguises lots of smaller suc-
cesses,

there have been lots of victories along the way, but none of them have been sufficient." Sufficient, he means, to stop us reaching that 1.5 \square of global warming which this year's IPCC report warns is dangerously close.

In 2020, Scott-Warren took part in XR's 'Rebellion of One' in which individuals blocked roads wearing emotive sandwich boards. Scott-Warren's read: 'I'm terrified for my children and my students because of the climate crisis'. No stranger to solo protests, Scott-Warren also spent months protesting at his local petrol station in 2019. Asked about the rationale behind this technique, he says "obviously it's dramatically powerful to suggest that one person can stand up against the juggernaut, or throw themselves on the gears or whatever it might be, and that's something about the relationship between drama
and agency,
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do you start to create responses that might make people shift in their views?" XR's 'Rebellion of One' project harnessed this drama as a group. "It was one person sitting in the road, but there was a kind of support structure there as well."

This is one of the advantages of collective action, he says. "I think XR has turned into this quite amazing organisational structure, with lots of support roles and lots of knowledge, knowledge from past actions feeding into future actions in a very disciplined way". Despite his belief that collective action can be incredibly rewarding, participating in it has not always come naturally. "As an academic, taking part in collective action of any kind is always quite strange because I think academic life is quite individualistic, so the idea of subsuming yourself into any kind of collective will is actually counter-intuitive and sometimes feels quite painful."

Continuing to discuss the "uneasy" relationship between academic and activist, Scott-Warren emphasises that he engages in activism "more as a private individual, than as an academic." Comparing himself - an English literature professor - to climate scientists, he says "I haven't got a very strong connection between my academic self, the kind of research I do, and my activist self."

Moreover, he doesn't want any controversy surrounding his academic status to overshadow the intentions of the action, and has avoided prominent involvement in some "more outlandish" actions to discourage media coverage focusing on his position at the university rather than on XR's message.

As for the university itself, he expressed his admiration for the Cambridge Zero Carbon campaign and the achievement of pushing Cambridge University to pledge to divest from fossil fuels, but notes that there's still more to be done: "I now think there are new challenges in terms of the timetable, speeding up the timetable for decarbonisation would be a really good thing."

Clearly, however, Scott-Warren and Extinction Rebellion are acutely aware that heeding the warnings from the IPCC will involve changes far beyond one university. With 9 years left to act on that 12 year warning, Scott-Warren says "I'm just going to keep pushing for change and keep hoping that it will come."

▲ TOM DORRINGTON



Vulture



ILLUSTRATION BY OLIVIA LISLE

Lifestyle

AskVulture: How do I navigate Cambridge as an introvert?

The **AskVulture** team talk about how to cope with a drained social battery, and the art of socialisation as an introvert



“How do I navigate Cambridge as an introvert? I have been here a long time and I still don't understand how people can go from society, to work, to socials without stopping for days - even weeks - at a time.”

Rosina:

The most important thing to remember when worrying about navigating Cambridge as

to be the super-fun, sociable side of yourself might come as a surprise, but it is certainly true. We all need to take a break sometimes — even those who seem to be unstoppable socialising machines — and people are generally willing to wait for you to be in the right mind-set.

Keep in mind that your goal is to enjoy your university experience, not merely to appear as though that is the case.

Try not to compare yourself to others, your idea of fun is personal to you, and just as valid as anyone else's. One useful thing to do might be to rethink the way that you socialise; experiment and figure out what works best for you. Why not try hanging out in smaller groups? You could invite two or three friends over for the evening, or

meet

and academic calendars.

However, not over-planning your life allows you a sense of spontaneity. If you're not having to dash from one activity to the next then you're keeping your options open; you can choose either to hang around and chat, or to go off and do your own thing. It's a matter of allowing yourself freedom and space. Be honest with yourself and others about how you are feeling. That way, when you do want to be out and about, you'll be refreshed and able to have the best time possible.

Clemmie:

Navigating the busy lifestyle which comes with studying at Cambridge is difficult for everyone, especially if you're an introverted person who finds it exhausting constantly socialising and being around people. First of all, I would say that it is vital not to compare yourself to those around you. It is so

just not seeing the moments in which they stop. No one can go on forever without taking time for themselves.

If you aren't happy, though, then potentially something needs to change. As an introvert it is necessary to carve out time for yourself and you shouldn't just go to everything you can because you think that everyone else is. Perhaps try to go to just one or two more events each week and see how you feel. You may find that, actually, you don't enjoy yourself - then you know that you are not missing out on anything. Alternatively, you might really enjoy yourself and find a group of people who you feel comfortable being around. There are plenty of societies and events in Cambridge that don't involve excessive socialising or expect you to go to something every night of the week. If you can find something that interests you, then I am sure that there will also

“It is vital not to compare yourself to those around you”

an introvert is that you are not alone. Nobody can be an extrovert 100% of the time. We all have a threshold at which constant socialising becomes too much, and once you've learnt and accepted what yours is — and that it may vary — then life becomes a whole lot easier.

The great thing about moments of introversion being a universal experience is that all the people in your life should be able to understand when you need a break, whether their own socialising threshold is high or low. The idea that nobody constantly requires you

in the day for coffee. You could also try combining studying and socialising in order to avoid rushing from one to the other. Do some work with a friend in a library or café, then when you're done you can go home for a well-earned break from it all.

Bizarrely, I think that navigating Cambridge as an introvert can be dealt with both by clever scheduling, and by a total absence of planning. If you choose the former, then what you need to remember is to allocate time for yourself. Setting blocks of time aside for not doing things is just as important as putting dates and deadlines into your social

important not to change who you are just because other people are living their lives differently. No two people are the same and what some may find too little social interaction may seem overwhelming to others. As long as you feel satisfied in how you are spending your time, then it doesn't matter what anyone else is doing. Also, although it may seem like they aren't ever taking a break, you are probably

be similar people there who understand that you might not always want to go out with them. Just make sure that you are content with the way you are spending your time at Cambridge — ultimately, that is all that matters.

▲ ILLUSTRATION BY ELLIE WILSON

Making sustainability sustainable

Kefeshe Bernard discusses veganism, race, and easy and accessible ways we can all contribute to our environment

I identify as a second-generation Black Caribbean, and at first, I saw going vegan as potentially losing culinary ties to my Trinidadian heritage. I knew that there would be limited options for plant-based versions of my favourite foods — roti, crab and dumplings, bake ‘n’ shark — which, in the past, had enabled me to connect with my family. It seemed like, in choosing to live a more planet-friendly lifestyle, I had no choice but to say goodbye to my ethnic heritage. Alongside this, veganism has always been presented to me as an expensive and niche movement for middle-class white women. I was concerned that vegan community spaces would feel exclusive and uncomfortable.

It has been three years since my initial switch to a vegan diet and lifestyle: a lot has changed in that time. I’ve been able to find spaces for people like me — Black and Caribbean vegans — make friends in the community, and work together on different environmental and social justice projects. Far from the sea of white middle-aged faces crowding the streets of London at my first Extinction Rebellion protest, I have been able to make my climate activism accessible, fun and truly culturally sensitive.

Ultimately, living consciously is less about your actions — what you do and don’t do — and more about your mindset. The way

I see it, mindset is what allows us to continue damaging the natural world; we believe that we exist outside of her (the Earth) and that she is here for our use. Likewise, a shift in mindset to become more humble can make a world of difference. As a collective species, if we were to see the natural world as worthy of respect, care and love, that’s when we can really provide a challenge to the climate crisis. For me, this is where I see the future of vegan diets and lifestyles as the norm.

In 2018, when I made the switch to a vegan lifestyle, I experienced a significant shift in mindset: I realised that non-human animals, the earth, other human beings, all of these do not exist for the benefit of individuals. While I have a subjective experience of life, that does not mean that I am the only subject in this life. Instead, I began to see my role in life as one of stewardship. I receive what the Earth gives me, it is not my place to take, whether

“I’ve been able to find spaces for people like me - Black and Caribbean vegans - and make friends in the community”



that be natural resources or the life of another.

I see my role within the ecosystem of the climate movement as one of caregiving and building. That is, building spaces so that I can care for as many people as I can who are impacted by this crisis; feeding their bellies, minds and souls. Through creating content on living a vegan and low waste lifestyle on Instagram (@kefeshebernard and @kefesheskitchen), I demonstrate to others on social media that although it may take some adjustment, it is not impossible to reconsider our behaviour and thought patterns. At the same time, I understand that sustainable living can be culturally isolating and expensive to participate in, and I am still faced with the challenges of finding food or low waste items when I leave my Cambridge bubble. It is things like this that have allowed me to understand the importance of each individual doing their best in each moment, without expecting to live perfectly all of the time.

Ultimately, we can all make a difference simply by adjusting our approach to consumerism and our relationship with our world:

Consumption and consumption mindsets: Reducing consumption of animal products and fast fashion products, and honouring the value in less.

Local Groups: Joining a local youth group! There are roles for every type of person in these organisations, and if one doesn’t work for you, maybe try another! I’d suggest getting started with your college environmental campaign first.

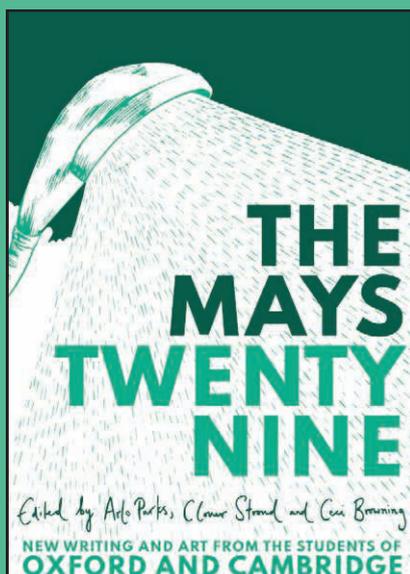
Open-mindedness: It’s always a bad idea to make dramatic lifestyle changes overnight! Instead, be gentle with yourself and make small changes over time. If you’re hesitant about the idea of vegan meat, for example, maybe try it once and if it doesn’t work for you, that’s okay!

Creating and finding an intersectional, diverse and accessible community within the environmental justice movement has been incredibly empowering. I’ve learnt that organising and participating in protests, creating planet-friendly vegan meals, and seeing how empty a rubbish bin can be, are effective ways to take action. Involvement in the climate movement allows me to meet like-minded young people, knowing that I am not alone in my passion, and helping me to find fun in sustainable living.

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Arts

Autumnal Reading List

Arts Editor **Emma Hulse** shares a list of her favourite books to read on drizzly autumn evenings



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Some
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▲ UNSPLASH / JOHN-MARK SMITH

If you're a bookworm like me, then you have to admit that autumn is objectively the best season for reading. When it arrives, its presence marked by the flaming colours in the trees, and that slight chill in the early morning that pricks at the skin, the time for leaf-crunching, jumper-snuggling, and book-devouring is here. There's something about the season that is inherently atmospheric: some books just seem amplified somehow by the misty mornings and pale, shimmering light of the afternoon. And let's not forget the added cosiness of the wind and rain raging outside the window while you're nestled by the fire, a steaming mug of tea in one hand and a chunky book in the other. To get you started this autumn, I've put together a list of books that are ideal for reading on those dark and drizzly evenings.

Jane Eyre (1847) by Charlotte Brontë

Brontë's classic is one of my absolute favourites and simply had to be included in this list. The heartrending romance between Jane and Rochester is of course central to the narrative, but Brontë infuses it with gothic elements — the misty moors, the cold and echoing rooms of Thornfield, the spectral appearances of Bertha — that are all intensified by reading it on a blustery autumn afternoon. Even in the very opening of the novel, a young Jane Eyre is confined to the house by the driving November rain, where she attempts to escape her loveless family in the pages of a book. This bleak image is so illustrative of Jane's entire childhood, it makes her journey towards independence and discovery of love on equal terms all the more fulfilling.

Rebecca (1938) by Daphne DuMaurier

Frankly, there are some books that just feel wasted if you don't read them as Halloween approaches, and DuMaurier's *Rebecca* is one. Continuing with the gothic theme, *Rebecca* tells the story of an unnamed young woman who is beguiled by the charms of widower Maxim de Winter, and impetuously accepts his sudden proposal of marriage. However, when she reaches his country estate, she finds that his former wife still continues to cast a sinister shadow over the household — one that seeps through the cracks in the floorboards and threatens to destroy their marriage from beyond the grave.

Autumn (2016) by Ali Smith

Autumn is the first book in Ali Smith's 'Seasonal Quartet.' Although the title makes it an obvious choice for this listicle, Smith really does capture the essence of the season through an inventive exploration of art, politics, and the passing of time. Set amidst a fractured society in the aftermath of the Brexit referendum, the book follows the unlikely friendship of Elisabeth, an art historian, and Daniel, the old man who used to be her neighbour. It's a very fluid work, moving freely between past and present, dream and reality, emphasising the transience of this life, like the fleeting autumnal colours in the trees.

Small Favors (2021) by Erin A. Craig

Erin A. Craig's latest book is a chilling, slow-burn horror story set in the small town of Amity Falls. Bordered by an almost impenetrable forest, the laws of the elders keep the town safe from the horrors that lie beyond, in a narrative slightly reminiscent of *The Village*. Yet, as autumn deepens into a bleak winter — and a supply party fails to return — cold, hunger, and ancient rumours cause fissures to emerge in what had previously been a tight-knit community. Craig's prose is intensely atmospheric and wonderfully lyrical; *Small Favors* often reads like a claustrophobic fairytale, ideal for raising goosebumps on a dark autumn night.

Dissolution (2003) by C. J. Sansom

To finish off this reading list, I've included the first book in C. J. Sansom's Shardlake series. *Dissolution* is a richly woven tale of murder and mystery, set during the political turbulence of the sixteenth century, as Henry VIII orders the dissolution of the monasteries. When Cromwell's commissioner is found dead in the monastery of Scarnsea, he sends Matthew Shardlake to investigate the murder. What follows is an intensely gripping crime novel, with a remarkable depth of historical detail, and Sansom's icy portrayal of a Tudor winter will have you reaching for the nearest thick fleece blanket.



▲ ILLUSTRATION BY EMMA HULSE

Reframing Jack the Ripper: The Five

Quincy De Vries examines Hallie Rubenhold's *The Five: The Untold Lives of the Women Killed by Jack the Ripper*, arguing that more attention should be brought to the victims in True Crime culture



Content Note: This article contains detailed discussion of murder, sex work, true crime, and the victims of Jack the Ripper.

When you think of Jack the Ripper, what comes to mind? Maybe a dark and mysterious figure prowling the streets of London, or perhaps a more violent scene inspired by a murder mystery docuseries or podcast. What you likely did not think about are the victims who were killed at his hands. It is this exact problem that Hallie Rubenhold's *The Five: The Untold Lives of the Women Killed by Jack the Ripper* sets out to rectify. While Jack the Ripper is perhaps the most famous serial killer in Western history, his victims have melted into obscurity and are often only mentioned in passing. Once faceless victims, 'The Five' come to life in Rubenhold's non-fiction as she traces their lives and individual stories.

Instead of following the classic murder mystery formula by detailing the murderers and the movements of the killer, Rubenhold hardly mentions Jack the Ripper, and does not go into any detail concerning the murders themselves. By contrast, she focuses on the lives led by each of these five women and the circumstances that led them to become the victims of this senseless crime. Polly, Annie, Elizabeth, Catherine and Mary-Jane are often amalgamated into one-dimensional, faceless victims. Rubenhold reminds us that these women were people — they had families, hopes and dreams, and above all, were human beings who have been stripped of their humanity in most examinations of Jack the Ripper. In shedding light on the actual lives of

"The Five' have been overlooked and ignored since the time of the crimes themselves

these women, Rubenhold reinstates their humanity and allows the reader to try to understand the mountain of hardships they faced.

Poverty, alcoholism, and a lack of contraception are only a few of the issues these women, and many like them, faced in daily life. Through examining their lives, Rubenhold paints a vivid picture of what life was like for working class and poor women during the Victorian era, and the multitude of circumstances that could lead them to live in a workhouse or find themselves on the street. Although this may seem less 'exciting' than books that delve

into the theories surrounding the identity of Jack the Ripper, *The Five* is a gripping read that is difficult to put down. As a reader, you root for these women and hope they are able to overcome their obstacles — despite already knowing how their stories end.

Rubenhold also explores the reaction to the murders at the time they happened, using newspaper reports to try to gauge public opinion. While there was the expected fear elicited from the knowledge a killer was on the prowl, many articles sensationalised the murders and seem to imply that since the women were of lowly social and economic status, they were deserving of their fates. This seems to be the opinion that has largely made it into popular culture. There are a

"The Five illuminates an issue that plagues history and historical books: a lack of women's history

multitude of YouTube videos, podcasts and books about Jack the Ripper, the vast majority of which pay little attention to these five women except to describe their bodies after their murder, or dismiss them completely. The idea that they were 'only prostitutes' is not only factually incorrect but also maintains ideas that are still present in modern culture that women engaging in sex work are 'bad women' and that they are therefore less deserving of our attention and respect. 'The Five' have been overlooked and ignored since the time of the crimes themselves.

While not directly mentioned in the book, *The Five* illuminates an issue that plagues history and historical books: a lack of women's history. Reflecting on why we, as a society, have chosen to venerate Jack the Ripper — and not his victims — sheds light on the fact that for the majority of history the voices of women and minorities have been ignored. The backlash against this book from 'Ripperologists,' the community that studies the murders, has been quite fierce. This reaction is both disheartening and shows why books that focus on social history and non-traditional narratives are so important. *The Five: The Untold Lives of the Women Killed by Jack the Ripper* then is an important book as it successfully highlights such issues, but is also an extremely compelling and engrossing read. If you prefer podcasts, Hallie Rubenhold has just released a new podcast with Pushkin, the producers of Revisionist History, titled "Bad Women: The Ripper Retold." *The Five: The Untold Lives of the Women Killed by Jack the Ripper* not only examines the lives of his victims, but forces reflection on who is left behind by traditional historical narratives.

◀ ILLUSTRATION BY ARI CHAN

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Fashion

Underwear as Outerwear? In Defence of Lingerie

Fashion columnist **Eliane Bedu** makes a case for the individual empowerment that lies beneath the hyper-sexualisation of lingerie

In a post-pandemic world, our relationship to clothing, and lingerie in particular, has never been so contradictory. After attending Zoom meetings in loungewear with no bra on for more than a year and a half, the idea of returning to a full working wardrobe seems like torture. Moreover, are stiletto pumps and a skirt suit really the only mark of our professionalism? Does our appearance count more than our CV? And are we really more efficient in our jobs wearing a certain type of clothing than another? It would appear that our wardrobe reveals more about us as a person than our interests do. So what does what we wear underneath say about us? Since lockdown, the bra has been at the heart of controversy. Should we burn them, or celebrate them? There are those who have seen Covid as a sign



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To hell with the skinny white model; plurality of races, body-types and genders is now the trend
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to liberate themselves from this instrument of hyper-sexualisation, while others see the wearing of the bra as a return to normality after two years of a pandemic.

Sexy lingerie has always been associated with a certain body type, meeting the criteria of beauty standards of tall, skinny girls with a good C-cup bra size. For years, the Victoria Secret runway show convinced us that only Alessandra Ambrosio, Gisele Bündchen and Adriana Lima could pull off a corset and a garter. The lack of options for plus-size or post-operative buyers is alarming, but it is now with



relief that we are witnessing a turning point in the lingerie industry. Since the launch of Rihanna's Savage x Fenty line, diversity is finally represented in the world of sexy lingerie. Plus-size, male, non-binary and trans models walk the runway celebrating their bodies, defying society's male-orientated gaze. To hell with the white skinny model; plurality of races, body-types and genders is now the trend.

But first, we should ask ourselves, who are we buying lingerie for? Ourselves or our sexual partners? Often seen as an object of

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to support our breasts and protect the most sensitive areas of our body. Who, as a teenage girl, hasn't been shamed in school because the straps of her bra were showing? Labelled as distracting and vulgar, we have internalised the idea that lingerie should be taboo. It should be hidden, as its showing is interpreted as an invitation to sexual activity. From a young age, we have been over-sexualised for wearing bras, showing them, or even talking about it. It is

time to change this. Our relationship to lingerie is toxic, even self-harming in a way. In an article in the New York Times, Colleen Hill, curator at the Museum of the Fashion Institute of Technology, affirms that our view of the bra is slowly overlapping with that of the corset, seen as an instrument of female oppression. Instead

of accepting defeat, should we not reconquer this item of clothing, so intimate and private? It is time to use sexy lingerie as a symbol of female empowerment, rather than that of our submission.

All the excitement surrounding “hot girl summer” has incited us to show some skin, not for men, but for ourselves. Lingerie is experiencing a makeover. The underwear transforms into outerwear, as the slip dress makes its way into our everyday looks. In a vintage spirit, Anya Taylor-Joy wore a Dior lingerie set to the



Emmy's after-party last month. She completed the look with a muslin cream cape, giving herself superhero vibes. This energy is exactly what we are looking for! Sexy lingerie should be an instrument whose sole purpose is that of celebrating our bodies, whether it's skinny or plus-size, bare or hairy, white or brown. Lingerie complements us, it should not be the subject of fantasies.

What we need is to fix our relationship with lingerie, stop seeing ourselves as the object of someone else's desire, but rather, as the character of our own desire, the hero of our own story. In an article for Vanity Fair, beauty director Laura Regensdorf recounts her Zoom lingerie fitting session, asking herself: “what am I looking for in a bra?”. From an outside view-

“
Our relationship to lingerie is toxic, even self-harming in a way
”

point, this question seems simple. When bra-shopping, we want underwire, lace, or a comfortable cotton bralette. But what Laura Regensdorf really meant was, “how can I express my current feelings in my next bra purchase?”. Lingerie is the only thing which is in such close contact with our skin on a daily basis. It should reflect ourselves, our feelings, and strengths. Stop feeling like you're wearing lingerie for someone else. If one morning, you feel like a girl boss, ready to take on the world, do not hesitate to put on your balconet bra or your laciest corset. You're doing this for yourself. Always.

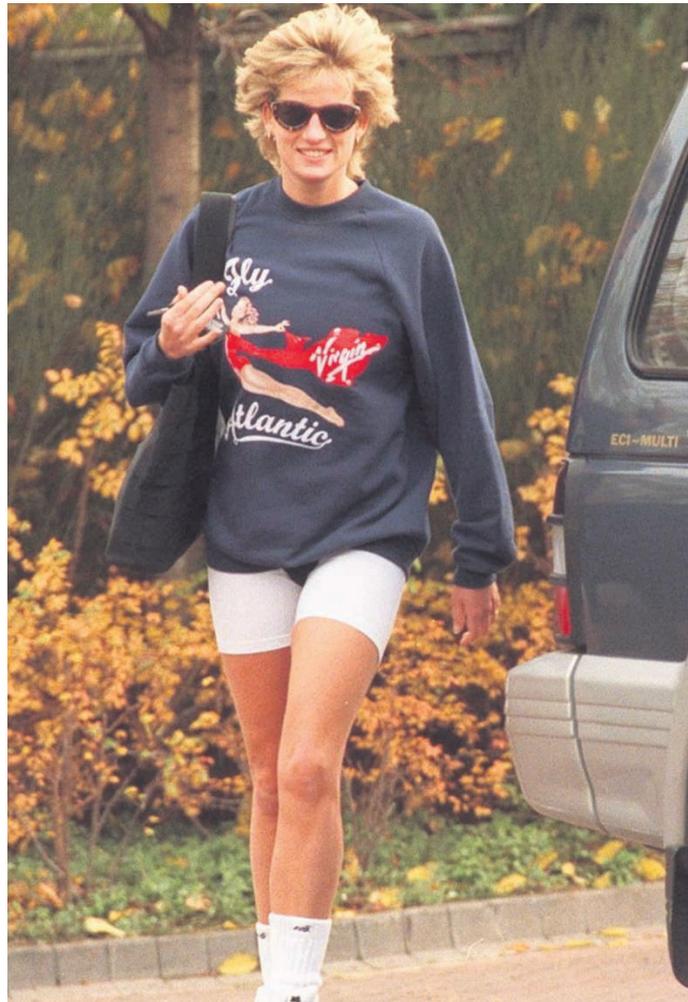


▲ ILLUSTRATIONS BY OLIVIA LISLE / @LIVCOLLAGE

◀ PHOTO BY INSTAGRAM / @SAVAGEXFENTY

The Fashion Legacy of Princess Diana

Fashion Editor **Olivia Rhodes** explores the celebrated wardrobe of the people's princess, examining why she is so deserving of her 'fashion icon' accolade



In the metaphorical hall of fame of fashion icons, actresses, First Ladies and singers jostle for attention. However, there is one woman who, appropriately, reigns as queen of them all: Diana

Spencer, much-loved Princess of Wales. A bright-eyed 19-year-old was propelled into the spotlight after her engagement to Prince Charles in 1981, and with the new-found attention came the need for a whole new wardrobe. It would not be long before the wardrobe in question became one of the most celebrated in the history of fashion.

The watchful eyes of 750 million television viewers of the wedding on 21st July 1981 could not be torn away from the new princess, and the Emanuel-designed dress often dubbed 'the most closely guarded secret in fashion history'. For a dress so precious and a woman so important, it is no wonder that Elizabeth Emanuel found herself 'horrified' to see the bride emerge from her carriage, the skirt covered in creases. However, the record-breaking 25-foot train, huge puff sleeves, antique lace, pearls and sequins could hardly fail to consign the dress to becoming one of the most well-known wedding gowns of all time. It was the embodiment of the real-life princess fantasy of every little girl who sat rapturously in front of her television. Ex-Vanity Fair and Tatler editor Tina Brown reveals 'she always knew

exactly what she was looking for, down to the diamond-studded horseshoe sewn in the waistband for good luck'. It seems that Diana, too, was excited by the prospect of seeing her own fairy tale come to life.

But we all know how that fairy tale ended. After years of strife and tension, the marriage broke down with catastrophic implications, particularly for Diana. But even in the hardest of times, fashion was there to support her. In 1994, a documentary entitled 'Charles: The Private Man, The Public Role' aired on ITV in an attempt to portray him more favourably after his separation from Diana in 1991. In

the documentary, he admitted to his adultery with Camilla Parker-Bowles. While many a cheated-on wife might have marked the date in her diary to sit on the sofa with a tub of ice cream, Diana did the opposite, arriving at a Vanity Fair party that night in what became known as the 'revenge dress'. A slinky, off-the-shoulder silk Christina Stambolian piece, paired with tights and stilettos, made her untouchable on the night that could so easily have reopened old wounds. In wearing a dress that Stambolian claims she had previously found 'too daring', she showed she had truly moved on, assured in her own identity.

But it is not just princessy taffeta or killer cocktail dresses that mean Diana is so deserving of the accolade of fashion icon. In

fact, it is her distinctly less formal wardrobe that continues to influence the style of a generation who are not even old enough to remember her. The collegiate sweatshirt, cycling shorts, and white trainer combo is one that has found its home in the casual-but-cool repertoire of many an off-duty supermodel, as well as in the wardrobe of many a millennial or Gen-Z. One of the most iconic images of the people's princess is one that is touchingly informal and intimate, as she sits on the steps of her Gloucestershire home in 1986, stunning in fuchsia gingham trousers. The trend for a statement trouser is very much in full swing, and it seems fashion brands have not forgotten who to pay homage to in the resurgence of this style — this summer, Zara sold an almost identical pair of trousers. The down-to-earth nature generated from the frequency of these casual looks enhance her relatability — if a princess can throw on an oversized sweatshirt and look effortlessly cool, then we can too.

It is undeniable that there is a reinvigoration in the interest towards Diana: her life, her legacy, her fashion. Thanks to the fourth series of blockbuster Netflix series *The Crown*, and the upcoming biopic *Spencer*, she is propelled once more into public discourse. The sympathetic light

in which she is unfailingly portrayed evokes universal pathos, and a desire to be closer, to comfort, someone whose pleas for help were all too often left unanswered. Perhaps, this desire manifests itself in the interest in her style, because it is where we see the real Diana. Often without the support of a stylist, her outfit choices give us one of the truest insights into who she really was, invited to observe her individual choices that frequently rejected the boundaries surrounding her as a royal. It is where we see real heart: she often chose to wear velvet when visiting children at hospitals so that she would feel warm and soft. Using her fashion to serve others — and herself, as evidenced by the revenge dress — is what makes her a style icon. Her clothes weren't just something she wore, they conveyed a sense of who she really was, whether that be sporty or vengeful or maternal or glamorous. The way

that fashion contributed to this diverse understanding of her as a public figure is an undeniable factor in the establishment of her as a princess loved unfailingly, devotedly, and everlastingly.

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Her clothes weren't just something she wore, they conveyed a sense of who she really was
”

“
It was the embodiment of the real-life princess fantasy of every little girl who sat rapturously in front of her television
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Music

Black Innovators

Fela Kuti, Tony Allen, and the Rise of Afrobeat

Liv Robinson takes a look at the musical, cultural, and political impacts of Afrobeat, focusing on the immense contributions of Fela Kuti and Tony Allen

Content Note: This article contains discussion of rape, violence, death and racism.

To mark the 50th anniversary of Glastonbury festival, the BBC released a fantastic array of recorded performances from the festival's history. If I had to pick just one to recommend, the choice would be clear: Fela Kuti and his band Egypt 80. Introduced on stage as "the one and only black president," Fela Kuti, his band and dancers give an unbeatable demonstration of the majesty of Afrobeat, the genre which Fela essentially created.



(TWITTER/FELA KUTI)

THE BIRTH OF AFROBEAT

Fela Kuti was born in Nigeria in 1938, when it was still under British Colonial rule. Fela fell quickly into music, starting off on piano, but eventually winding up playing trumpet at Trinity College in London. The music Fela and his early bands ('The Highlife Rankers' and 'Koola Lobitos') were playing was Highlife, a genre stemming primarily from Ghana, involving a combination of Akan, Caribbean and Latin musical structures played with western instruments. Fela sang primarily in his native Yoruba language about lighter topics. However, in 1969, Fela and his band embarked on a tour of America, a trip which would change the entire direction of Fela's life and Nigerian music.

It was in Los Angeles that Fela began to formulate both the musical structure and political messages of Afrobeat. He began to expand his political horizons through his relationship with Sandra Izsadore. A musician and civil rights activist, Sandra alerted Fela to the Black Power movement, introducing him to the works of Malcolm X and the embrace of African and African-American culture. Sandra would challenge his largely apolitical lyrical content (for instance, one song about the contents of a soup) and encourage him to use his talents to draw people's attention to injustice. Musically, it was in Los Angeles that Fela and his band increased their experimentation, expanding Highlife, until he recorded "My Lady Frustration," a song that for Fela marked the inception of Afrobeat — an irresistible combination of Yoruba music and Highlife, fused with American Jazz, Funk and Soul rhythms.

“
Tony Allen's polyrhythmic beats have become one of the most distinguishing features of Afrobeat

Any account of the inception of Afrobeat would be incomplete without referencing the monumental contribution of Tony Allen, Fela's drummer from 1964, without whom Fela said "there would have been no Afrobeat." Described by Brian Eno as "perhaps the greatest drummer who has ever lived," Tony Allen's polyrhythmic beats have become one of the most distinguishing features of Afrobeat. After Allen left Fela's band in 1979, Fela had to hire four separate drummers just to create the same complexity of sound that Allen could produce on his own.

BACK IN NIGERIA - FELA RISES

Back in a now independent Nigeria, Fela began to write songs to "move people to dance, but also to think," with hits like "Jeun Ko Ku (Chop 'n Quench)" poking fun at the gluttony of Nigerian elites. Pan-African themes showed up increasingly in his music, with Fela even changing the name of the band from Nigeria 70 to Africa 70 to reflect his view of the fundamental unity of African people. His lyrics were anti-colonial, especially in hit song "Teacher Don't Teach Me Nonsense" which criticised the intellectual and cultural impacts of colonialism in Africa, and the unfairness of the Nigerian electoral system. Fela even set up his own commune, the 'Kalakuta Republic' and declared it independent from government rule. His main venue 'Afrika Shrine' became a popular hub for Afrobeat, political discussion and displays of Yoruba culture. In the late 70s, Paul McCartney visited the Shrine and described his experience as "one of the greatest music moments of my life."

Fela's attacks on elite corruption drew the

“
Fela and his band were repeatedly harassed and beaten by state forces... [but] they refused to be intimidated

ire of the Nigerian military government. Fela and his band were repeatedly harassed and beaten by state forces, and Kalakuta repeatedly raided. They refused to be intimidated by this, writing what would come to be one of his most famous albums, the provocative *Zombie*. This album sees Fela painting the Nigerian army as "zombies," mockingly commanding them to "Go and kill... go and die." Listening to this song first got me into Afrobeat. It seemed a new type of protest music that I'd never encountered before, and the power, drive and anger of this song remain cataclysmically striking.

Unfortunately, it was also this song that



(ILLUSTRATION BY AUDREY LIM)

proved the last straw for the Nigerian government. In 1974, the army launched a full scale attack on the commune, burning it to the ground, as well as beating and raping the people they found inside. Fela's mother, Funmilayo Anikulapo-Kuti, an anti-colonial and women's rights activist, later died from her injuries. Despite the hardships, the music did not stop, with Fela writing a stream of songs, including "Coffin for Head of State" which put the blame for his mother's death squarely at the feet of the Nigerian government. Throughout the 80s, Fela continued to be a harsh critic of the government that continually jailed him and he released more music, including the 1989 anti-apartheid "Beasts of No Nation," until his death in 1997.

CELEBRATION AND LEGACY

Fela's entire band deserves to be celebrated, from keyboard players like Dele Sosimi, to dancers like Laide Babayale, who were instrumental to the dynamism of the band's performance. Even if he'd stayed apolitical, Fela should still be highly regarded for his leadership and musical talent. Barring Tony Allen's drum patterns, Fela wrote all the musical parts for his band, which included a full brass section, singers, and generally two bass and guitar players. He had a keen eye for talent and how his band were performing, with one member Lekan Animashaun stating that "you could not make a mistake that Fela didn't notice." The ability of Fela and the band to sus-

tain such energy throughout 45 minute songs (Fela was pushed by producers to shorten his songs, to which he reportedly replied "I am playing African Classical music. You wouldn't mess with Tchaikovsky") is something truly amazing.

Although Fela was a polarising figure, his songs had a huge impact in Nigeria and across Africa. Today, Nigerian artists like Burna Boy and Wizkid (who recently performed at a renovated Afrika Shrine club) continue to use Afrobeat in their work. Tony Allen, after leaving Africa 70, formed several of his own bands and collaborated with artists, including on rising Malian superstar Fatoumata Diawara's 2009 album *Fatou*, which I can't recommend enough. New Wave bands of the 70s and 80s are hugely indebted to Afrobeat, with Talking Heads even titling a track on their seminal album *Remain in the Light* "Fela's riff." Artists continue to draw attention to the connection between Afrobeat and the Black Power Movement, with Beyoncé performing "Zombie" during her ground-breaking set at Coachella.

Today, Fela and Tony Allen must be celebrated for the creation of a new genre of music, for Fela's ability as a band leader and performer, and for his demonstration of the power of good music against oppression.

VARSAITY MUSIC'S BLACK INNOVATORS PLAYLIST

FELA KUTI - "ZOMBIE"

The powerful, quintessential "Zombie" was released in 1976 as criticism of Nigeria's oppressive military regimes

NINA SIMONE - "I WISH I KNEW HOW IT WOULD FEEL TO BE FREE"

This Nina Simone classic became an important Freedom song, serving as an anthem for the Civil Rights Movement

BEYONCÉ - "FORMATION"

"Formation" incorporated New Orleans bounce as a celebration of Beyoncé's culture as a black woman from the South. It was perceived as a rallying cry for the Black Lives Matter movement

DAVE - "BLACK"

Dave's politically-charged and personal "Black" discusses themes of racial inequality, exploring how black individuals often must work "twice as hard"

Listen to these songs and more on the Varsity Spotify ([musicvarsity](#)) or by scanning the Spotify code below



Film & TV

Queer cartoons made progress but we can't stop here

Ellie Etches argues that LGBTQIA+ representation is on the uptide but questions the quality of that representation



animation industry, this dynamic is proving slow to change.

In the midst of this, there are still landmarks to celebrate. In January 2020, *Kipo and the Age of Wonderbeasts* featured the first Black protagonist (only the second protagonist ever) to refer to themselves as gay out loud. Critics consider *Craig of the Creek* to be one of the most groundbreakingly inclusive kids' shows on television. While the show's creators are white, the positive representation of the Black nuclear family at its heart is the result of the efforts of the Black writers, artists and actors in its creative team.

If companies and consumers really care about diversity in animated media they need to realise that white queer showrunners and characters are not the be-all and end-all. The shows that broke ground half a decade ago were the first steps, and can be celebrated as such; they are not the final destination and they should certainly not be held above scrutiny. Mistakes will be repeated until we stop lifting the same people onto a pedestal.

ILLUSTRATION BY ELLIE ETCHES

The pitch that became this article was slightly different to the final product. Initially, I planned something similar to so many fluff pieces praising the trailblazing work of the cartoon medium in normalising LGBT+ characters in children's media. I was part of the *Legend of Korra* generation and, like many animation fans, I experienced the seismic shift in onscreen representation during the mid-2010s as it happened. But now (if you'll forgive the crystal gem pun) it's high time fans woke up and took off the rose-quartz tinted glasses. Let's take a look at where we're *really* at.

“
There were a whopping 48 shows starring characters with confirmed 'LGBTQ status' during the 2010s”
”

The 2014 *Legend of Korra* finale let its two heroines walk off into the sunset holding hands. It's funny now to think that five seconds of eye contact between two female characters ever felt revolutionary. Troubling is the fact that this is the best the creators could do with the short rein Nickelodeon gave them. This is the same Nickelodeon that, obviously scrabbling around for more queer characters to add to their 2020 Pride post, decided to claim *Spongebob Squarepants* for the LGBT+ community — but I digress. The

point is, in 2014 it would have been hard to imagine that we'd ever get recognition of a character's through sexuality as definitive as an onscreen kiss. Then, in 2018, as Pendleton Ward brought his ten-season behemoth *Adventure Time* to a close, a love confession between Marceline and Princess Bubblegum gave us just that. In the same year, Ruby and Sapphire married in the first LGBT+ wedding in a kids TV show. Characters became not just implicitly queer, to be confirmed by showrunners in interviews or in spin-off material, but explicitly, *irrefutably* queer. There's a world of difference.

This distinction is crucial because statistics only tell half a story. According to data collected by *Insider*, there were a whopping 48 shows starring characters with confirmed 'LGBTQ status' during the 2010s. But the figure drops once you remove side characters, and drops again when you discount characters whose identities were only hinted about or confirmed off-air. And even when you've done all of this, there's no way to separate the wheat from the chaff — positive representation from negative stereotypes. A closer look reveals that behind the veneer of Western animation's pastel-pop, CalArts pastiche, there's stagnation. *Insider's* database tracked all confirmed LGBTQ cartoon characters throughout time, and out of their total 259, just 70 were identified as people of colour — only ten of which had leading roles. Parvesh Cheena, a gay Punjabi voice actor, linked these disparate figures to tokenistic inclusion: “White people were allowed to be gay, in a sense, or be queer as an identifier. People see our colour and ethnicity first before our sexuality.”

It's no wonder that cartoons have historically centralised whiteness in their LGBT+ representation. So many of the big names in the Queer Cartoon Canon — Noelle Stevenson, Rebecca Sugar, newcomer Dana Terrace — are white and, in a notoriously toxic, nepotistic

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Theatre

Cabaret, Redmayne and the problem of casting

Columnist **Tom Chandler** explores the implications of casting of Eddie Redmayne in *Cabaret*

Recently my Instagram feed was filled with adverts for *Cabaret*, to be performed at the Playhouse Theatre in London this November and I was excited! One of my favourite musicals, filled with queer decadence, representing the high point of Weimar Germany's artistic and sexual freedoms, and now I may be able to see it live!

So, after seeing these adverts, I looked at the casting for the upcoming production. All publicity proudly proclaimed the star would be Eddie Redmayne. When I saw this, I assumed Redmayne would play Cliff. Indeed, Cliff is not far from the character of Newt Scamander, Redmayne's character in the *Fantastic Beasts* film series; both are nervous, highly-strung academics, thrust into a foreign land.

It was odd, though, for Cliff to be highlighted in such a way. There's a long tradition of having Emcee and Sally be the key roles; Joel Grey and Liza Minelli, Alan Cummings and Emma Stone.

So I did some research to find Redmayne was playing the Emcee.

I immediately knew I would not be seeing the production.

There have been many conversations recently about casting in Cambridge Theatre – from ensuring that casts are racially diverse and casting is inclusive of all genders. Redmayne's career stands as an example of many of these problems writ large.

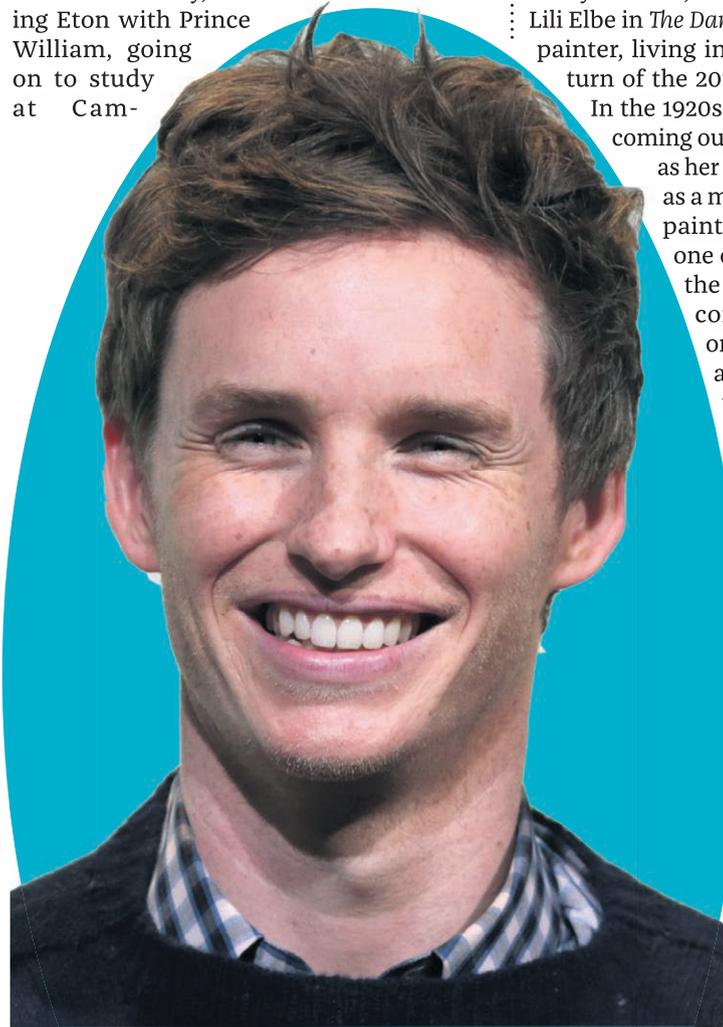
Redmayne comes from the upper echelon of British society, attending Eton with Prince William, going on to study at Cam-

bridge's own Trinity College and becoming a member of the notorious Pitt Club. Trained in acting and singing from age ten, it's not surprising that Redmayne has had a successful career – his breakout role for many being the part of Marius in the 2012 film of *Les Misérables*, though he has been active on stage and screen since 1998. In 2014 he married, and since then has had two children. Since *Les Mis*, he has had a number of notable roles, but I would like to draw attention to two of them in particular.

Firstly, in 2014 he played the late Stephen Hawking in *The Theory of Everything*. The film was widely acclaimed and earned Redmayne an Oscar, but not without criticism from disabled people. Redmayne is able-bodied and the film has several moments which feel like they are pandering to able-bodied audience's fears about disability. It is generally respected that representation for women and ethnic minority people on stage and screen is important, and to allow white people to take the roles of ethnic minority people, to allow men to take the roles of women, would be unacceptable in casting today. And yet, it is common, often celebrated and rewarded, to see able-bodied and neurotypical people put on the costume of disability. In some circumstances, such as *The Theory of Everything* where the actor would need to portray Hawking before and after his ALS developed, it is easier to cast an able-bodied person, but this wouldn't be Redmayne's first foray into dicey casting.

A year later, Redmayne would be cast as Lili Elbe in *The Danish Girl*. Elbe was a Danish painter, living in Copenhagen around the turn of the 20th Century with her wife.

In the 1920s Elbe began the process of coming out as a woman, adopting Lili as her new name, and would pose as a model for many of her wife's paintings. She would become one of the first trans women in the world to undergo gender confirmation surgery, and only the second ever to have a uterus implanted, though would die shortly after due to complications. Eddie Redmayne is a cis man. His portrayal of Lili Elbe would earn him an Oscar nomination. For best actor. The film's treatment of its subject matter was not regarded as good by any trans people, being criticised as a "hyperbolisation of femininity" and ultimately by casting a man and not a transgender woman to play Elbe, the film presents trans women as ultimately 'men in dresses' – every trans woman's worst fear about her-



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self. The story of Elbe does need to be told, but it needs to be told by people to whom it is authentic – by a trans director and a trans performer.

Since *The Danish Girl*, Redmayne has appeared to largely stay away from controversial castings. When Redmayne was first cast as Newt Scamander in 2016, though there was some sense that JK Rowling generally did a poor job at representation in her intellectual property, she was not regarded as heinous as she is now. In the time between then and now, however, Rowling has begun to espouse ever more transphobic sentiments from her twitter account, and is generally seen as a figurehead of the 'Gender Critical' movement, which seeks to remove all trans women from women-only spaces – characterising trans women as perverted men and pedophiles, and trans men as women led away and damaged by the 'trans agenda'.

These sentiments are obviously disgusting, and hold no place in a progressive society. Rowling has received much criticism for it, including from actors involved in the *Harry Potter* franchise. Not Redmayne, though. He has stood by Rowling, criticising the backlash to her transphobia, perhaps because he has an interest in making sure her work continues to be popular, with the third *Fantastic Beasts* film slated for release in 2022. Redmayne says he does not agree with the author's views, but in standing by her, he is demonstrating that he is not an ally to the queer community in even the most su-

“ It's not like the UK is short on notable queer performers ”

perficial way. He is actively upholding the platform of a transphobe who seeks to strip trans people of their ability to exist freely.

And so Redmayne is cast as the Emcee in the 2021 production of *Cabaret*, in a theatre scene devastated by Covid, where hundreds, if not thousands of queer artists and performers have been out of work for well over a year. Redmayne is

stepping in to play a queer stereotype, again, while standing alongside someone who would likely much rather the kind of gender-bending queer performer exemplified by the Emcee did not exist. It's not like the UK is short on notable queer performers, with the recent success of RuPaul's *Drag Race*, there are now more well known queer performers than ever in the UK. Can anyone claim honestly that Eddie Redmayne would play the Emcee better than, say, Bimini Bon-Boulash?

Do I know for certain that Redmayne is cisgender and heterosexual? No. But I think the reality of his identity behind closed doors means nothing if in public he functions within the role of a cishet man, married to a woman, who is able to work with transphobes, should he wish.

And so a show, which has grown through the erasure of queer and Jewish identities for a mainstream audience, meets a career based on donning the attributes of minorities like a costume, while in reality doing nothing to support those marginalised people. Of course, there will be business motives behind this casting, an attempt to justify the ticket

price – the cheapest tickets currently selling at £70, though most being between £90 and £150, the November shows already almost sold out of even £230+ tickets.

As the Emcee says, “Money makes the world go round.”

“ It needs to be told by people to whom it is authentic - a trans performer ”

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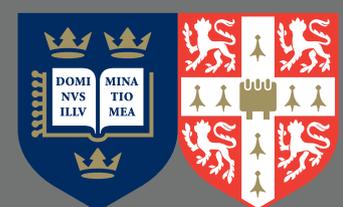
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For details on membership or a tour of the Club house, please visit www.oxfordandcambridgeclub.co.uk or call 020 7321 5103

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Violet Tries

Becoming a sell-out

Violet Editors *Conall Hughes, Evie Lucas & Oona Lagercrantz* sit down for a chat with *Glen Higgs, director at the Radiant Network*, to discuss their new CV consultation service

Here at Violet, we are lucky to receive a great many emails from new and innovative companies and we have recently been afflicted by a particularly persistent one, who promised to get off our backs if we agreed to a partnership. Not to mention offering us a rather significant amount of money... So, we are now proud to announce that Violet is partnering with the one and only careers advice service — the Radiant Network! The Radiant Network have just

begun a course for students *in statu pupillari* at the University of Cambridge, and in a Violet exclusive, we sat down with Director Glen Higgs to discuss the new exciting scheme...

Violet: "So, word has it you and your team have developed a unique method just to help out students. We're dying to hear about it. Tell us more Glen!"

Glen: "Well, our programme is based upon the groundbreaking 'Ground-up' method, where we start by making sure students are aware that their

“
Through intricately crafted questions, such as 'WTF is this?' students report having eye-watering responses
”

Glen up: a survey revealed that a staggering *ninety-nine* percent of students admit to having worse confidence about their employment prospects after only one session. But that is not all, as Glen explains:

"The Ground-up method encourages students to always think within the standard template, to impress even the haughtiest of Magic Circle firms. Too many times have I opened a cover letter to see Times New Roman instead of Georgia — sometimes even 11pt font?! Naturally, we are careful to beat such grotesque habits out of students, and the results are promising. We have testimonials from a number of Spring Week success stories who have learned to take the proper level of care."

Glen tells us the story of a 'radiant star', Max Gordon, now at Goldman, who was so thorough that he didn't notice he was pulling out his hair until he developed a bald patch. This, says Glen, is the dedication the programme inspires.

The Ground-up method provides clear pathways to achieving students' goals, Glen ensures us, with the first step being elimination of unprofitable commitments. At the top of the list is giving up your Netflix account, non-televised sport and, most importantly, sleep.

"This is enough to get you into the investment banks and consultancy houses," Glen goes on. "But those hoping for a hedge fund or a respectable chance at the Bar will discuss cutting off friends, family and romantic relationships as the inevitable next step. And if students have hesitations, or find themselves growing content with their accomplishments, 'Ground-up' recommends constant comparison with the finest LinkedIn influencers. Or, 120 rejected intern applications to ensure that humility

is preserved and improvement always sought for."

Before concluding our interview, we

“
The most important thing for us is that each and every student is equipped to really stand out from the crowd — as they follow its every move
”

got up close and personal with Glen. We asked what drives him and the Radiant Network in their relentless work, and his response perfectly captured the essence of his loving soul, free-thinking spirit, and logical mind:

"The most important thing for us is that *each and every student* is equipped to really *stand out* from the crowd — as they follow its every move. In other words, we are passionate about ensuring that everyone gets the chance to get ahead of everyone else."

So, dear reader: these great principles — and more — await you! In only six weeks, you will be transformed from an unproductive, socialising fool to an enlightened and (soon to be) highly-paid maestro of the corporate world.

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current CV is deficient. This is accomplished through one-on-one mentoring by one of our three specialised bots: Posh-Josh, Brilliant Brijesh and Shiny Shelly. Through intricately crafted questions, such as 'WTF is this?' and 'Did you know Mozart had already written all his sonatas by the age of 2?', students report having eye-watering responses."

Research backs



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Sport

CUAFC: “It’s definitely the most united and inclusive atmosphere we’ve had at the club”

Liam Kline
Senior Sports Editor

Cambridge University Association Football Club (CUAFC) is unofficially recognised as the oldest football club in the world, after being founded in 1856. Fast forward to over 150 years later, CUAFC is making impressive strides in the current digital age, revamping their social media presence and reaching out to alumni players in an effort to connect with such an extensive history. Meanwhile, both the men’s and women’s sides on the pitch compete in various British Universities and Colleges Sports (BUCS) leagues, with the men’s Blues and Falcons enjoying victories in the opening week (20/10). Ahead of what promises to be a long and exciting campaign for all teams involved, *Varsity* sits down with Women’s President Tatiana Kasujja and Men’s Co-President Henry Lambert, as well as captains Frances Steele and Ben Adam, to discuss CUAFC’s overall goals for this season.

Before assuming her new role over the summer, Kasujja featured in a women’s side whose season was unfortunately plagued by the COVID-19 pandemic, with the 2020-21 BUCS season scrapped entirely. The lack of on-field action inevitably aligned with sparse interactions away from the grass, as cancelled terms and national lockdowns combined to thwart inter-club connections. Rectifying this situation is something that Kasujja is set on doing during her presidency: “The main plan is to strengthen the bond between the men’s and women’s sides of the club”. She continued: “One of the biggest focuses for Kosi [Men’s Co-President], Henry, and myself is just making sure that the relations on both sides are really strong”.

Such bonds also extend beyond the current personnel at CUAFC, as the thousands of alumni that have donned a blue and white kit form part of a vigorously rich footballing heritage. On the men’s side, Chris Elliott, who was involved in the club setup back in 1984-7, recently got in touch with CUAFC to discuss his playing experience, notably reminiscing about a well-struck volley in his debut Varsity match. For the women, players like Clare Rustad, who matriculated at Homerton College in 2005 and had a spell at CUAFC, went on to earn 45 caps for the Canadian national team. Kasujja stressed the importance of reaching out to former Blues: “We’re just try-

ing to ensure that we stay connected with players once they leave and avoid making them feel like they no longer have an affiliation with CUAFC”.

Alongside work taking place within the club, Men’s Co-President Lambert was keen to emphasise CUAFC’s external ambitions, nurturing invaluable relationships with both the student body and wider local community. After investing in a Veo Sports Camera to record this year’s games, which uses AI technology to document important moments, Lambert expressed the popularity of football at the University and a subsequent need to make it more accessible: “CUAFC runs the college football league, which contains over 60 teams and about 900 players that turn up every weekend, so there’s a phenomenal amount of interest around football

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I think the current vibe and culture around the team is something that has only come in spells over the last few seasons
”

in Cambridge”.

In terms of broadening CUAFC’s reach across the city, both Kasujja and Lambert provided an insight into the club’s partnership with charity Power2Inspire this year, who organise all-inclusive sporting occasions: “The highlight of our football calendar will be a ‘powerhouse’ games in either February or March, which will be a day where kids from Special Educational Needs (SEN) schools and other schools will take part in sporting activities like walking football, blind football, and lots of other fun events run by CUAFC members”.

More timely is an inaugural Varsity match against University College London (UCL) this December, where CUAFC will be continuing their work with suicide prevention charity The OLLIE Foundation. Meanwhile, Lambert said: “We’ve also been exploring the opportunity of doing some work with Cambridge United Community Trust, potentially getting CUAFC players into local

schools to talk about applying to universities or other topics, and hopefully being able to offer free tickets to kids for our Varsity match against Oxford in March”. He added: “We have a great professional football club on our doorstep who have great initiatives in the community that we haven’t necessarily tapped into as much as we could have in the past, and I’d like to see that become a lasting relationship”.

But top performances for CUAFC on the pitch are equally as crucial in elevating the club’s standing, which is something that Women’s Captain Steele is confident about achieving: “We’re really meshing together well and we’re excited to play at an obviously tougher level following the promotion”. After topping the Midlands Tier 2 division back in 2020, the Blues find themselves in Tier 1 this season. An 11-0 debut loss to the University of Nottingham (20/10) was certainly a wake-up call to the strength of opposition.

Steele pinpointed her team’s fitness as a key factor for success: “We definitely need to make sure we’re ready to play ninety minutes in a high-level league, which I think will prepare us really well for our next Varsity match too because it’s a big step up from before”. She continued: “We had quite a few training sessions over the summer and our coach Mohammad Ghamari was just great at implementing lots of different tactics and formations, so I think it’s just a matter of getting minutes under our belt at this point”.

Like Steele, Men’s Captain Adam is excited about the way his team is coming together: “We’ve seen a

“
The main plan is to strengthen the bond between the men’s and women’s sides of the club
”

strong intake of freshers, a couple of which have gone straight into the first team, we’ve got a bunch of boys who are now second years, and we’ve also got a strong core of experienced lads in their third year”. He added: “For me, it’s a really good balance of experience and young, fresh faces who are ready to tackle the season”. Speaking on the general atmosphere around CUAFC, Adam commented: “I think

the current vibe and culture around the team is something that has only come in spells over the last few seasons, but as a whole club I’ve never felt as unified as we do this year”.

Although CUAFC’s polished setup demands a rigid hierarchy, Adam was ready to point out that being in his leadership role is about more than just commanding a single squad: “Not only is it a Blues captain, it’s a club captain, and I want to be on good terms with everyone in the club”. Lambert gracefully reinforced this sentiment: “Ben’s been really great at creating that nice environment in the club where players feel welcome”. He concluded: “It’s definitely the most united and inclusive atmosphere we’ve had at the club since I’ve been here”.

With two Varsity events, various charity engagements, and challenging BUCS seasons on the horizon, it’s certainly shaping up to be an exciting year for CUAFC.

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Sport



▲ CURUFC Blues hosted Exeter Chiefs under-23s in their second game of the season on Wednesday evening (27/10) (Kane Smith Photography)

Cambridge continue winning ways: CURUFC 29-14 against Exeter Chiefs U23s

Joseph Hill
Staff Writer

On Wednesday evening (27/10), Cambridge University Rugby Union Football Club (CURUFC) beat Exeter Chiefs under-23s by a score of 29-14 at Grange Road.

CURUFC went into the fixture still without injured captain Charlie Watson, meaning that Tom Walton pulled on the armband to lead a team that included ten returning Blues. Jamie Benson also made his debut for the club at fly-half. The side's last outing produced an impressive 26-17 victory over Pringle Farm Pillagers last Thursday (21/10).

Meanwhile, Cambridge's visiting opponents were the academy squad for Premiership Rugby outfit Exeter Chiefs, who finished runners-up in last season's professional campaign.

Straight from the kick-off, Scotland U20 international Archie Smeaton broke four tackles and ran deep into Exeter territory, offloading to last week's player of the match Max Loveridge only for him to be brought down at the 40-yard line. Exeter didn't hold out for long though, with Tim Andrew crossing over in the corner after a sweeping move from the other touchline. Debutant Jamie Benson added the extras to set the score at 7-0 to Cambridge with barely sixty seconds on the clock.

For the first five minutes, Cambridge

“
Cambridge's visiting opponents were the academy squad for Premiership Rugby outfit Exeter Chiefs”

continued to knock at the door of the Exeter try line, squandering a golden opportunity to exploit a huge overlap when the ball was lost in the breakdown. Benson began to show signs of confidence, taking a quick lineout to himself deep in Cambridge's half and shrugging off two Exeter defenders before offloading smoothly, sparking a promising move which unfortunately ended in disappointing fashion as the ball came loose.

Cambridge's second try came after twenty minutes, with Loveridge acting as the architect to this time slip in Andrew for his try number two of the evening. Benson missed a difficult kick from the touchline, leaving the score at 12-0 to the home side.

Exeter pulled one back five minutes later, however, as they piled over from close range following a period of sustained pressure. But a mere thirty seconds after the restart saw Andrew complete his hat-trick, brilliantly weaving his way through to finish in style in the corner to make it 17-7.

Cambridge could have had a stunning fourth, as Benson returned a kick from his own 22 to the opposite one, sending the ball out to Suwi Chibale — whose offload to Smeaton was dropped just a metre away from the try line. The first half came to a close with Cambridge ten points to the good, a score which didn't quite reflect the dominance they imposed over a sluggish Exeter side.

Cam Millen replaced Benson at fly-half during the break, with Benson availing himself well on his first start for the Blues. The second half began in similar fashion to the first, with fullback Alex King dotting down after being set through by Smeaton. Although King narrowly missed his conversion, Cambridge boasted a strong 22-7 lead.

The next twenty minutes were ultimately characterised by scrappy rugby. Handling errors began to creep into the games of both sides, with Exeter's fly-half in particular spilling the ball multiple times from scrums and rucks. Smeaton consistently caused the Chiefs backline problems, bursting through tackles seemingly at will, but neither team could put together more than four or five phases of rugby before the ball was turned over.

With 67 minutes on the clock, Exeter finally added to their tally, again driving over from close range to take the score to 22-14. Yet, with less than ten minutes to go, Cambridge's King pounced on a loose ball just inside halfway and ran in his side's fifth try of the night, as well as his second of the evening. Substitute James Moore slotted the conversion from out wide to restore Cambridge's seven point cushion at 29-14.

The score remained unchanged until the sound of the final whistle, granting Cambridge their second successive victory of the season. Exeter had quality

“
Exeter had quality within their ranks, but seemed like a much less organised outfit”

within their ranks, but seemed like a much less organised outfit than Cambridge, consistently getting caught up in their own half without much direction. The Blues deserved their victory, and maybe walked away from the game disappointed in the fact that they didn't score more, especially given how open the Chiefs defence was at times.

Varsity Player of the match: Tim Andrew

Looking ahead, CURUFC's first team will face Welsh Academicals next Saturday (06/10), who will be playing their opening game of this rugby season.

Teams

Cambridge Starting XV: Danny Collins (Fitzwilliam)*, James Wright (Jesus), Matt Pettit (Clare)*, Charlie Friend (St John's), Zac Bischoff (St John's)*, Tom Walton, (St John's, Captain)*, Demi Obembe (Churchill)*, Archie Smeaton (Queens)*, David Holdroyd (Jesus), Jamie Benson (Downing), Tim Andrew (Jesus), Max Loveridge (Jesus)*, Suwi Chibale (Queens)*, Angus McIntosh (Jesus), Alex King (St Catherine's)

Cambridge Replacements: Luke Parry (Downing)*, Jeremy James (Selwyn), Paddy Harris (Hughes Hall), Adam Rochussen (Churchill), Hugo Lloyd-Williams (St John's)*, Danny Hide (Hughes Hall), Cam Millen (Gonville & Caius), James Moore (Homerton)

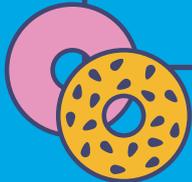
*Denotes Blue

Exeter Chiefs: Unconfirmed



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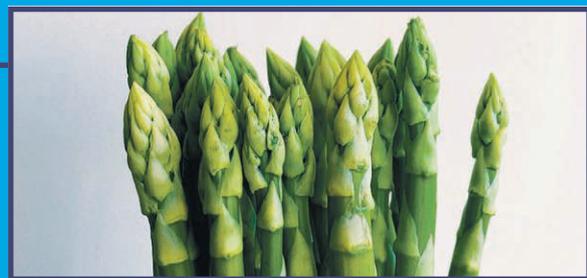
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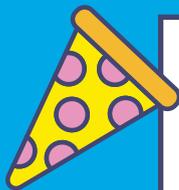
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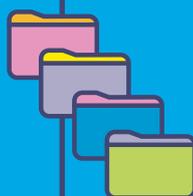


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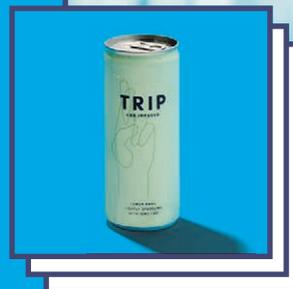
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