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No.910
Friday 17th February 2023
varsity.co.uk

The Independent
Student Newspaper since 1947

VARSITY

Pay up or drop out, student told

Turkish and Syrian students criticise responses across the university to last week's earthquake

Meg Byrom
Editor in Chief
Eric Williams
Deputy News Editor

Syrian and Turkish students have criticised the university's response to the earthquake in the region last week. Speaking to *Varsity*, students said that the university and the SU "had not gone far enough" in supporting students from the affected regions, with one student told to "pay now or intermit" despite their sponsor's business collapsing. The 7.8 magnitude earthquake struck South Eastern Turkey, near the border with Syria last week (06/2). Over a week later, the total number of deaths currently exceeds 41,000, with millions more impacted and displaced across the two countries.

One student told *Varsity* that immediately after the earthquake their college "continued their threats" over existing financial issues. The student said "my tutor was still talking about this financial issue; it shouldn't have been the priority". The student, who wanted to remain anonymous, was previously experiencing challenges with their sponsor. After the earthquake, the sponsor is threatening to withdraw all funding due to damages to their business. The student

said: "there is a high probability of me being forced to intermit my studies- on top of everything going on". With universities across the region now closed indefinitely, the student added, "if I get kicked out I don't even know if there's a university that could welcome me."

Students also highlighted the uneven response to the disaster last week. Students pointed to the fact that "some colleges have not reached out at all". The university released a statement of support on social media, encouraging students to reach out to student support last week (9/2). Students were also contacted by email this week (14/02) by Professor Bhaskar Vira, pro-vice-chancellor for Education. However, the email was not sent to all students from the region, with students alleging that the university only contacted those with citizenship from the two countries. Students who have only grown up in the region or have familial connections were therefore not contacted.

The email, seen by *Varsity*, detailed donation appeals and encouraged students to reach out to the University Counselling Service. However, Ruby, a Syrian MPhil student commented that "sending one or two emails isn't enough" and that the university "could do more and provide consultations specifically for

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Labour Club 'can get problematic'
Students set up new group

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The end of Raven
Students mourn the death of much loved login symbol

News Page 4 ▶



Valentine's with Varsity

'Incredibly insulting': all staff meeting scheduled on strike day

Michael Hennessey
Senior News Editor

Striking university staff have criticised the decision by University leadership to hold an all staff meeting on an upcoming scheduled strike day.

The meeting is set to take place on Monday 27th February from 12:15 to 13:15. The meeting falls on one of eighteen days of University and College Union (UCU) strike action that are currently scheduled to take place this term.

The invitation to all members of University staff promises that acting vice-chancellor Anthony Freeling, pro-vice-chancellor for University community and engagement Kamal Munir and the pro-vice-chancellor for education Bhaskar Vira will join the meeting.

One of the aims of the meeting is to debate "the importance of making sure that Cambridge can attract the best academic and professional talent".

An anonymous striking academic criticised the move to *Varsity* and said: "I think scheduling a meeting on a strike day to talk about recruitment and about making Cambridge an attractive place to work is incredibly insulting to current staff who are on strike. We already work here and are taking part in a nationwide strike with clear demands about what would make the university a better place to work."

They continued: "We have clear demands about what would make working for the university a viable, liveable option especially for many of us who are on precarious and short term contracts, or indeed, in the case of college supervisors, on no contracts at all. To invite staff to a meeting like this at lunchtime on a strike day shows so much dismissiveness toward those of us who are on strike; it is a way of signalling to us that our distress is being actively ignored."

The all staff online meeting will also include discussions "on the recent survey on recruitment and retention, and actions being taken to make sure Cambridge is an attractive place to work".

The invitation to the event, from the University's internal communications

Continued on page 3 ▶

V Editorial Week 5

“Oxford is Oxford: not a mere receptacle for youth, like Cambridge. Perhaps it wants its inmates to love it rather than to love one another” E.M. Forster

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writing for *Varsity*?

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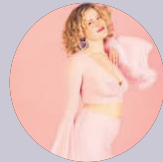


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Editorial

Navigating the ‘Cambridge Bubble’

Part of the challenge of Cambridge is navigating its so-called ‘bubble’. The scathingly short terms, excessive workloads, and limited time away from this small city can make it feel claustrophobic. Often, the idea of Cambridge can feel so consuming, it often feels as if there is nothing beyond it.

It’s certainly a privileged space – one that lets us escape to a mediaeval looking hub of like-minded people where we can rub shoulders with aristocrats, child geniuses, artists and nepo-babies alike, before returning home (and to reality) term after term, after term. There is a level of suspended disbelief that it takes to exist as a student here, to don a gown in all seriousness, or to even take charge of your own newsroom like ourselves.

But however strong a sense

of reality we feel, we know it can easily be lost. The last two weeks have shown us that it can take any kind of happening for it to burst. Illness, bereavement, natural disaster – all unpredictable obstacles which can throw us off course and change our worlds.

For students experiencing issues inside and outside of Cambridge now, that realisation may be setting in. The University should actively ensure mitigations are in place so we can all keep playing the role of the student, no matter what the circumstances. The ‘Cambridge Bubble’ should protect those inside it.

We hope the stories offered in this edition – midway through our term as Editors – help you navigate our strange and shared ‘Cambridge Bubble’.



Famke Veenstra-Ashmore & Meg Byrom, Editors, Lent 2023



**Valentine’s day:
Love it or hate it?**

**Love it! - 43%
Hate it! - 57%**

“I went on a guy who was in a cult and yes he did try and recruit me”

“RAG blind date last year turned into a ‘triple date’. One of the girls turned up with my mate”

Worst Valentine’s Day stories?

“Went on a blind date to The Eagle, halfway through made us go and sit with his mates”

“My friends flaked on our plans to do the RAG blind date and all went out for dinner without me”

“When all the trains to Cam were cancelled because of floods - and then my college husband proposed to me, my girlfriend being in on the plan”

“Got asked out for Valentine’s last year while in the middle of a psychotic episode. It worked.”

Want to give an answer? Follow us on Instagram @varsitycambridge

Story continued from front page ►

Another Syrian student added that “at an institutional level, the university should have reached out more to increase people’s awareness of the situation”.

Cambridge SU has not released any official statement or posts after the disaster. Previously, they have issued statements on several issues affecting students including anti-Asian hate, violence in Palestine and the invasion of Ukraine.

Many students drew comparisons to

the university’s response last year after the invasion of Ukraine, with one saying: “With the conflict in Ukraine, there were emails, announcements about what was happening, support for students and staff from the area, support for students and staff who aren’t even from there”. One student claimed that “whenever disasters happens in the Middle East, it feels like there is no interest”.

One student discussed how their college personally reached out to them in

the days after the earthquake, with support from their Director of Studies, supervisors and tutor, they said: “they have been so understanding and supportive, but I’m worried there’s people from other colleges who might who might not have those individuals.” Others highlighted that their college’s and JCR’s had also advertised support across different channels. A Syrian student said: “I’m grateful for the support I’ve received at an individual level. My course director and my personal tutor immediately sent me an email on the day of the earthquake to check on me.”

Students highlighted the support networks established between those affected. One said, “Turkish Society has made me feel less powerless- it’s been very supportive. We decided we couldn’t go through this on our own.”

A spokesperson for the University responded: “Since the tragic events of last week we have used the University’s social media channels to reach and engage with the largest possible audience, sending supportive messages through posts and by email from senior figures, and providing practical content, such as on fundraising efforts. The response to date has been positive, and we will continue to look for opportunities to provide relevant updates and information.”



▲ The 7.8 magnitude earthquake struck South Eastern Turkey, near the border of Syria last week, leading to over 41,000 deaths (EUROPEAN UNION/FLICKR)

Story continued from front page ►

team, noted that “it will not be possible for all staff to attend the open meeting, particularly this month”. To address this, the organisers said: “We are happy to take questions in advance and will make a recording of the meeting that we will share after the event.”

The meeting will also include a discussion on “the University’s initial response to the use of artificial intelligence tools like ChatGPT and their impact on teaching and assessment.” Earlier this month, Varsity revealed that pro-vice-chancellor for education Bhaskar Vira believes that bans on artificial intelligence like ChatGPT are not “sensible”.

The UCU has said the disruption caused by strike action is “entirely the responsibility of university bosses who have refused to make staff fair offers”.

The UCU has said that if the ongoing dispute is not resolved a “marking and assessment boycott” from April is being threatened.

A University spokesperson said: “Finding a suitable day this term that wasn’t affected by university or other national strikes that might have an impact on our staff has proved difficult. Striking or otherwise absent staff can submit a question in advance, a recording will be emailed to everyone afterwards, and there will be other updates on this topic in the future.”



▲ 70,000 university staff are scheduled to strike for 18 days in February and March (DANIEL HILTON)

Fun police John’s ban ents for the rest of the year after smashed ceiling

Claire Gao
News correspondent

St John’s College has banned ents until further notice following damage to the ceiling and glass in the urinals of the men’s toilets.

The incident occurred in the Fisher Building during an internet memes themed bop last month (21/01) and left a ceiling tile smashed.

The episode was described as the “fi-

nal straw” for senior College staff in a string of recurring damage to College property, as outlined in an email sent to students a week later by JCR members.

The email said that the Dean and Domestic Bursar would ban ents indefinitely unless those involved came forward, with a deadline of Tuesday 31st January to confess.

A further email sent to students on 10th February by the Dean, Nick Friedman, confirmed that no ents would be permitted until the JCR presented a “credible plan” to prevent damage to college property.

The Dean said that if further damage occurred he would also deny permission for all ents next term.

A spokesperson told Varsity: “Undergraduate ents have been paused at St John’s while the JCR works on a detailed plan to ensure College property is not damaged during events.”

John’s students flocked to the anonymous Bridge of Highs Facebook confession page to express outrage at the decision.

One student wrote: “It’s actually really messed-up that the actions of such a small group of people mean I might not get any more normal ents before I graduate”.

Other students expressed similar sentiments, with one student telling Varsity that people are “quite annoyed at being punished for the actions of a minority”. Many posts urged those responsible to own up, whilst some have tried to paint the incident as a harmless alcohol-fuelled incident, suggesting

that the person responsible may not have owned up due to being too “blasted” to remember.

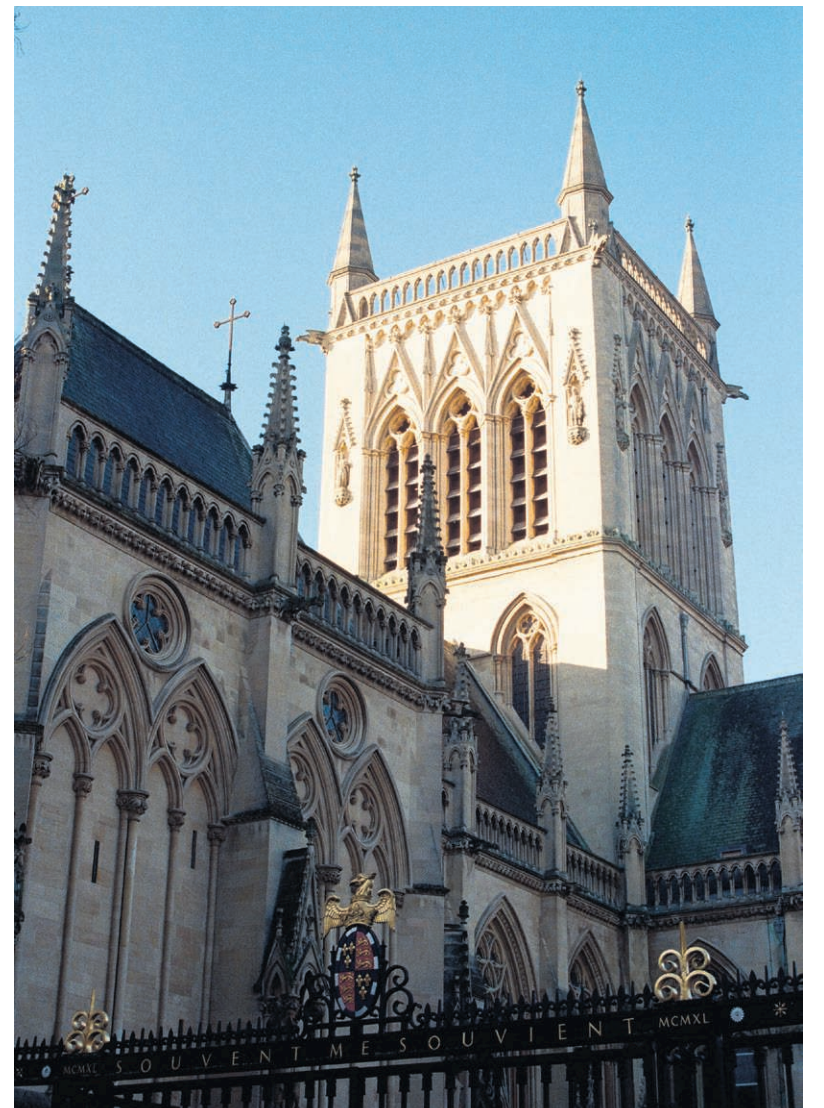
Some students have accused the JCR of “mismanagement” of ents. In response to one Facebook post, the JCR’s ents officer commented: “The JCR wants the next ent to happen as much as the ‘people’. After all, it is them who dedicate 8 hours of their Saturday night to run the ents.”

JCRs require permission from College authorities to hold ents. Difficulties with maintenance, as well as frustration at the behaviour and perceived lack of responsibility from students during Ents, have led to recent crackdowns on bops and other entertainment events.

Churchill’s own unofficial Facebook confessions page, Churchfess, has recently seen numerous angry posts concerning recent decisions regarding student fun. One submission likened the college, which has banned bops for “security reasons”, to a “police state” and noted “authoritarian behaviour from the Dean” in light of the ban on ents and alleged harsher policing of noise complaints. Robinson College’s JCR also expressed concern over students “getting rowdy” at bops at their last open meeting.

For now, it seems that John’s students are taking matters into their own hands, finding other ways to relieve the stress of work by organising secret ents, a source told Varsity. One such event advertised on Facebook gave a wink to the incident that caused the ban, imploring attendees: “Please no breaking ceilings”.

A college spokesperson said: “Undergraduate ents have been paused at St John’s while the JCR works on a detailed plan to ensure College property is not damaged during events.”



▲ An incident at a recent bop was described as the “final straw” for senior College staff (TIMUR RAKHIMOV)



▼ Two freshers enjoying a bop (BETHAN MOSS)

News

Students mourn the tragic death of much loved Raven login symbol

Caredig ap Tomos
Deputy News Editor

The Raven authentication system has been retired after over 18 years in service in favour of a system run by Microsoft.

The new system, already used for university emails, will require multi-factor authentication (MFA) for all logins in order to increase security. It will be rolled out across all websites that currently use the Raven system.

The move has not been popular with some students. Speaking to *Varsity*, Tim Clifford, the chair of the Student Run Computing Facility (SRCF) said: "It is very saddening to see our university, which was once a pioneering force in IT, deactivate yet another of our home-grown systems in favour of paying a corporation to do our work for us."

The SRCF hosts and maintains a large number of websites for societies within the University, many of which use the Raven login system to control who can access sites.

Clifford told *Varsity*: "Anyone who has made a Raven-enabled site on the SRCF knows that historically, adding Raven protection has been extremely easy - just one or two extra lines of code to set which users can access the

page. This simple system won't be going away immediately, but the University Information Services (UIS) now refers to it as 'legacy', and it will be replaced by a more unwieldy system down the line."

In regards to this potential additional administrative burden Clifford commented: "Student societies are more likely to engage with their alumni than other elements of the university, including via websites, and if this change results in more alumni being locked out of society websites, that will be a loss for the university community."

Raven is not the first University service to be replaced with a Microsoft product. In 2018 the University began phasing out its Hermes email service in favour of Microsoft's Outlook platform. The move was met with similar disappointment from students.

One student has gone as far as to organise a vigil on King's Parade to mourn the end of the Raven service. The organiser of the vigil, Sam Hudson, told *Varsity*: "In an act of extraordinary cultural vandalism, the University Information Services has decided to kill off our beloved Raven. The heavy stone which these philistines throw kills not just one raven but many which we hold dear."

A notable feature of Raven was its colourful logo changes to coincide with holidays and events, such as for LGBT+ History month, Halloween or the ser-

vice's own birthday. Hudson particularly mourned the loss of this feature, claiming: "These lively birds and the joy which they bring will now be buried behind the soulless and sterile Microsoft login page."

The user interface for the new Microsoft system has also received criticism, with one student describing it as "modern" and "slow" and claiming that it will "require way more clicks". Users on the anonymous Facebook page Camfess also expressed concerns about accessibility issues stemming from the switch to MFA. The MFA system has been praised by other students for improving user security.

Ian Leslie, the director of UIS said: "The National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) has advised UK organisations that we are facing a period of heightened cyber security risk. The use of multi-factor authentication is in line with security best practices and is encouraged for personal and work-related accounts. The vast majority of students and staff are already using the Microsoft system to authenticate with their University Microsoft 365 environment, including their University email accounts."

Leslie continued: "Our Service Desk is ready to support enquiries from the small number of staff and students who will be interacting with MFA for the first time, including anyone who requires adjustments for accessibility, following the change on Tuesday 14 February."

Comment

Sam Hudson

The University Information Service's decision to scrap Raven has left a medium-sized-bird-shaped hole in all our lives. For most Cantabrians, Raven was far more than just a log-in page. Raven and its many seasonal alter-egos, marked us distinct from the uniformly bland and barren log-in pages of other universities. It is a tragedy that Halloween Raven, Christmas Raven, Gay Raven, Birthday Raven and the many other colourful birds who graced our screens will not be known by future generations of students.

"Raven has left a medium-sized-bird-shaped hole in all our lives"

This is without even mentioning the absolute hassle the new multi-factor authentication (MFA) system is to use. Camfess is already ablaze with comments deriding the new login page. Many of our libraries have notoriously bad mobile reception so it seems

madness to make access to our work reliant on it. And all of this pain for what exactly? Sensitive parts of our digital footprint such as university email were already protected by MFA. I quite frankly don't care very much at all if people can access my Moodle account. All they'll find is some banal reading lists.

Raven's demise is just one part of a disturbing post-pandemic trend of university bigwigs disregarding student opinion for the sake of nebulous "security" concerns. From imposing CCTV on Sidney Bar to encroachment by college authorities on Clare Cellars, it appears nothing is safe from the tyranny of these grey vulgarians.

Only external intervention can rescue us, which is why I'm calling upon UNESCO to declare Raven an item of Cambridge's "intangible cultural heritage".

The United Kingdom currently has no such heritage according to UNESCO, and what better way to start than safeguarding a Cambridge institution which is currently on the verge of extinction.



Varsity The Varsity Trust

If suitable candidates present themselves, the Trustees intend to make awards to students about to graduate, or who are recent graduates, from either the University of Cambridge or ARU who intend to undertake approved training in journalism for 2023/2024.

Trust awards will be tailored to individual circumstances but are normally intended to make a significant contribution to the fees for the training concerned.

Up to £5,000 is potentially available.

For further information and how to apply visit: www.varsity.co.uk/trust



Could you be the next Editor of Varsity?

Applications to be *Varsity's* Editor for Easter Term are now open. Please keep an eye on our website for further information on how to apply.

You will lead a team producing online content throughout the term after our 21st April 2023 print edition up until the late summer handover to the Michaelmas 2023 team and be responsible for producing our *Varsity Review & Yearbook* - a circa 60 page A4 glossy magazine, which will be published on 9th June 2023.

No previous experience at *Varsity* is required for the role. All students who are passionate about journalism, have clear creative direction for the magazine, coupled with a high level of expertise with Adobe InDesign and an eye for layout and design are encouraged to apply.

Direct questions to the VarSoc President at president@varsity.co.uk, or the current Editors at editor@varsity.co.uk.

The deadline for applications is midday, Friday 3rd March 2023. Interviews will take place on the morning of Wednesday 8th March 2023.

Students break from ‘problematic’ Labour club

Romilly Norfolk
News correspondent

Last week (06/02) The Solidarity Forum (SF) launched, presenting Cambridge with a new left-wing discussion society.

The Solidarity Forum aims to set itself apart from other left-wing societies, encouraging people of all political beliefs to discuss left-wing ideology primarily through a political blog and social events.

Alex Horan, one of the founders of SF told *Varsity* she thinks Cambridge doesn’t “really have a space for people to publish, dissect, and analyse leftist thought” and so worked with her fellow founders to launch SF. She hopes that the SF will be able to “foster an environment in which people from across the political spectrum can respectfully and intellectually debate”. One member of Solidarity Forum said the main reason they joined the group was its non-partisan nature.

As a left-wing political society, the formation of Solidarity Forum has prompted discussion about how it will interact with the Cambridge University Labour Club (CULC). Some new members of the society were not enthused with the poli-

tics of CULC, and saw the society as an alternative to the club, as well as a place to voice their opposition.

One anti-CULC SF member spoke about their reasons for joining, declaring the “lack of true socialism” in CULC as “disheartening”. The leadership of the SF are against any anti-CULC association but accept that anti-CULC members are likely to join.

When *Varsity* spoke to CULC regarding the founding of the SF, they acknowledged that “there are students who want to engage in politics beyond the often constricting confines of British party politics.” but that they were “happy to see the advent of new left organisations on campus.”

Addressing accusations about toxicity within CULC, their co-chair said “CULC is a political space so it can get problematic but there is a really strong collective effort from all the team to be extremely inclusive”.

The SF was founded by 3 active members of CULC and spokespeople from both CULC and the SF stressed there is no hostility between the two societies, with both focussing on preventing infighting among the left.

Cam student convicted over climate protest

Elisabeth Doherty
News correspondent

A Cambridge PhD candidate was among those charged for aggravated trespass in Cambridge Magistrates Court on Wednesday (08/02).

Three activists stood trial following a 36 hour blockade of the Schlumberger building in West Cambridge last March.

The activists are part of the Schlumberger Out campaign, which calls for the University to cut all ties with Schlumberger, now operating as SLB, a company which provides key services to oil and gas companies globally.

The activists blockaded the SLB site last year to draw attention to the company, which operates in more than 120 countries and has been linked to oil and gas extraction. SLB claimed in court papers that the blockade cost £43,000 per day.

Peach Rose, a PhD Candidate at Cambridge, was one of the activists who stood trial. They stated that the blockade was an important part of the Schlumberger Out campaign, telling the magistrates court that “directly stopping their work was an important step”, because the re-

search in the building at West Cambridge is “used for fossil fuel expansion around the world”.

Rose was found guilty of aggravated trespass, for which they were given a conditional discharge and ordered to pay £600 in court costs.

They appeared in court with two other activists, Jamie Goodland and Chris Ford. All three were found guilty and ordered to pay £600 fines.

Both were also charged with criminal damage for spray painting SLB’s property, and ordered to pay £200.

When asked about his action, Ford told *Varsity*: “We are at a code red for humanity. Our children’s futures are in danger. How can I, as a parent, stand by and do nothing?”

Following the trial, Rose told *Varsity*: “As the climate crisis worsens, it is becoming increasingly important to take action in whatever way we can.”

They stated that the movement will continue despite their conviction for criminal activity.

The campaign is currently planning more actions, including a rally on 18 February at Senate House.

SLB has been approached for comment.



Makespace

Cambridge’s community workshop on Mill Lane

Making, designing & creating 24/7, 365 days a year in the centre of Cambridge.

Open days & evenings March 13th, 14th & 15th

To celebrate our 11th birthday, we are opening our workshop so you can meet Makers and see equipment of all kinds from 3D printers to glassworking. See making projects, professional, prototype or hobbyist. Created by engineers, scientists, artists, games developers, wood & metal workers, costume - designers, roboticists, guitar-builders, steampunks and more.

www.meetup.com/makespace/

Tours, Mondays at 7pm

April 22nd Makespace is hosting Cambridge Raspberry Jam (CamJam) An event for everyone in the Raspberry Pi family of computing devices and other technology, making and education. There will be a series of talks, organised workshops on the Raspberry Pi and Pico plus a “show and tell” area for attendees to show off their own projects.

Pi, Microcontrollers & CAD evening, Tuesday at 7pm

Makespace, run by volunteers,
Open to everyone over 18



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Alumnus of Emmanuel College



Alumnus of Robinson College



Alumnus of Pembroke College



News

Cambridge's European exodus

EU undergraduate enrolments fall by a fifth post-Brexit

Amelia Platt
News correspondent

Bethan Moss
Investigations lead

EU undergrad enrolments at Cambridge are down 19% from 2020/21, *Varsity* analysis of data for the first full post-Brexit year shows.

In the academic year 2021/22, 875 EU students started undergrad courses at Cambridge, compared to 1,075 the previous year, according to Higher Education Student Authority (HESA) data.

Nationwide, the number of EU students enrolling in British universities has more than halved. The largest declines post-Brexit are in students coming from Italy, Germany and France.

HESA called the change “significant”, attributing it to “changes in fees eligibility”. Before Brexit, up till the 2020-21 academic year, EU undergrads paid the same tuition fees as UK students – they now pay the same as non-EU international students and cannot access support from UK Student Finance. For 2023 entry, Cambridge's international

student tuition fees range from £27,333 to £63,990.

Across the UK, the reduction in the enrolment of EU students is most significant at the undergraduate level, with just 13,155 EU students enrolling in 2021 to start undergraduate degrees, compared with 37,530 the year before.

At Cambridge, reductions

£433 million

the amount given to Cambridge in EU research funding (Horizon) over the seven years before Brexit

£0

awarded to Cambridge in EU research funding (Horizon) since Brexit

in EU student enrolments are similar for undergraduate and postgraduate courses; postgrad enrolments for 2021/22 were down 18% on the year before, compared to

19% for undergrad courses.

Overall, 18% fewer EU students started courses at Cambridge in the first full post-Brexit year, following a 7% drop between 2019/20 and 2020/21.

Compared to 2017/18, overall EU enrolments at Cambridge are down 24%, with postgrad enrolments down by 25% – the 2017/18 academic year was the first for which most applications would have been made after the UK's vote to leave the EU in June 2016.

Before the Brexit transition period ended on New Year's Eve 2020, EU student enrolments had been climbing at Cambridge, peaking in the 2019/20 academic year, when 2645 EU students began courses at the university.

Last year, a Spanish charity which advises students on applying to top universities wrote to Stephen Toope, the then Cambridge vice-chancellor, to say that they are now “actively discouraging”

their students from applying to UK unis, including Cambridge, due to “impossibly high post-Brexit tuition fees”.

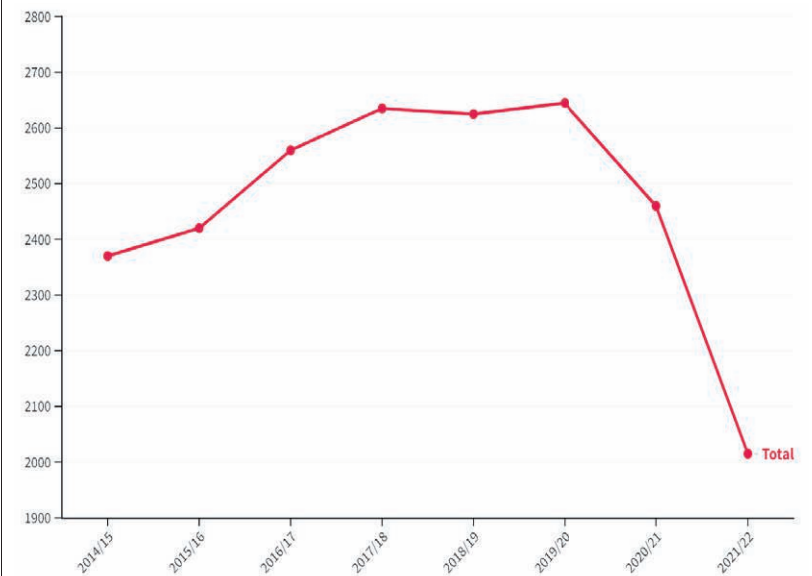
As EU student numbers fall across the UK, there has been a significant increase in international student enrollments from outside the EU – but Universities UK said that this has not countered the reduction in EU students at the undergraduate level.

HESA data show “very clearly the impact of the sort of loss of freedom of movement and the change in European students fee status, but also, and critically for undergraduates, the loss of access to student loans”, said Charley Robinson, Universities UK's head of global mobility policy.

The decline in the number of EU students comes as new stats demonstrate the collapse of European research funding for Oxbridge. Cambridge, which was awarded £433 million over the seven years of the last European research funding programme (Horizon 2020) has not received any funding in the first two years of the new Horizon Europe programme.

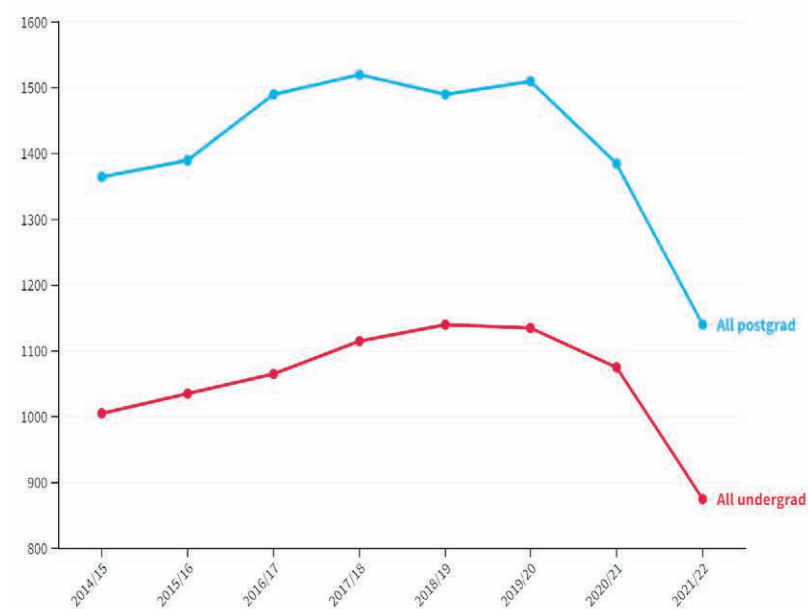
In August 2022, Dr Augusta McMahon, an archaeologist, left Cambridge

Total EU domiciled students starting courses at Cambridge University, 2014-2022



▲ Source: HESA • Analysis by Bethan Moss and Amelia Platt for *Varsity*, 2023

EU domiciled students starting courses at Cambridge by level of study, 2014-2022



▲ Source: HESA • Analysis by Bethan Moss and Amelia Platt for *Varsity*, 2023

University after 26 years to work at Chicago University, citing Brexit uncertainty as a significant factor in her decision. McMahon had noticed the decline of EU students on campus and claimed that fewer European lecturers were applying for UK jobs.

25%

the reduction in EU students starting Cambridge postgrad courses since 2017/18

24%

the reduction in EU students starting Cambridge undergrad courses since 2017/18+

Brexit has also meant that the UK no longer takes part in the Erasmus+ scheme, which facilitates short term exchanges between European universities, providing students with monthly grants while studying or working abroad.

Erasmus+ was the primary source of funding and university places for MML

students on their year abroad, a compulsory part of language degrees at Cambridge. Although not all students spend their year abroad in Europe, for many language choices, such as Italian and German, there are few other options.

Erasmus+ has been replaced with the Turing scheme in the UK, which aims to provide funding for UK students to travel to countries across the world, rather than just within the EU.

While Cambridge is no longer a participant in Erasmus+, it has maintained study exchanges with EU partner institutions, and agreements with universities elsewhere, such as in Latin America, are unaffected.

Varsity has approached the University for comment.

Has your year abroad been impacted by Brexit?

Varsity would like to hear about your experience, and your anonymity will be protected at all times. Contact us at investigations@varsity.co.uk.

Vandals trash Mill Road cemetery twice since new year

Cat Coggan
News correspondent

Historic gravestones at Mill Road cemetery have been graffitied, damaged or entirely smashed in multiple attacks by vandals over the last month. The first attack on 1 January resulted in the desecration of 12 headstones, which caused an estimated £6,000 in repair costs.

A further attack took place on the 31 January in the Centre Circle, with gravestones graffitied and broken. One resident of the nearby area said that offensive imagery had been spray painted onto some of the headstones in white



▲ FRIENDS OF MILL ROAD CEMETERY paint.

The cemetery is currently under the management of Cambridge City Council. However, it is normally the responsibility of family members to attend to any repairs to graves and memorials within

the cemetery.

There is an exception in the case of damage to listed graves or memorials, though none of the defaced gravestones are believed to fall within this category.

The councillor Alex Collis condemned the “pointless” vandalism in a statement where she pledged to contribute £2,500 to the repairs of the damaged memorials.

Collis described the attacks as “horrible” and “needless” and voiced her sadness for the family members who would have to come to terms with the damage to the gravestones of their relatives.

A statement from the cemetery on its social media account described feelings

of “dismay, sadness and anger” in the wake of the recent damage.

A spokesperson from the Friends of Mill Road Cemetery went further, calling the incidents of vandalism an attack against the “memory of the dead” and an “affront to us all”.

The Mill Road cemetery is an English heritage Grade II listed site which, while no longer accepting new burials, serves as a place of “relaxation” and remembrance according to the Reverend Margaret Widdes, the chair of the Parochial Burials committee.

A representative from the city council disclosed that members of the police had

been contacted and attended the site in the wake of the attacks. However, police have since closed the investigation into the criminal damage due to a lack of evidence.

Despite the now numerous attacks, members of the committee have said that the installation of CCTV cameras is unlikely due to the size of the area.

The cemetery has requested anyone who has any additional information or has witnessed anything related to the damage to get in touch with them urgently.

This can be done by email or through their Facebook page.

On your bike: Cam bike-tivist calls on colleges to act

Nick James
News correspondent

Omar Terywall, founder and administrator of the 'STOLEN BIKES in Cambridge' Facebook group has called to work directly with Cambridge colleges to help educate students on bike theft.

The Facebook group was set up by Terywall to "use the knowledge and power of community intelligence" to combat bike theft "at a time when police resources are scarce." Members of the group can post about their stolen bikes in the hopes other members have seen them and can also take pictures of abandoned bikes they find around Cambridge to help reunite them with their owners. Videos and photos of thieves stealing bikes are also regularly uploaded to the group to warn people and deter the thieves.

As part of his push to reduce bike theft in Cambridge, Terywall wants to work directly with colleges. "Most of the bikes that are stolen are stolen from students and most of the people that buy the bikes are students," Terywall says.

He wants to train incoming students on storing and locking bikes as well as educate them on the dangers of buying cheap second-hand bikes online. He urges students to do their due diligence by checking the frame number and seller of bikes on eBay and Gumtree to ensure

they are not stolen.

Terywall also wants to educate students about what to do in the event that their bike is stolen. This comes at a time when many students in Cambridge who have experienced bike theft have been disappointed with the police's response, with one student saying they "had never felt so uncared for and dismissed by public servants" as they did when they reported their stolen bike to the police.

Cambridge has some of the highest rates of bike theft in the UK, and recent national cuts in police spending have put additional pressure on the authorities to prevent these thefts. Terywall also defended the police in face of growing pressures following budget cuts. He said that he is very willing to work with the police more, and is pleased he now has regular meetings with Cambridge police where he shares the data he collects from the group.

Some have raised concerns about the group's tactics, which occasionally involve publishing personal information about underage teenage thieves, including their full names and where they live.

Yet Terywall says that he is "happy to take any kind of criticism from people," and admits, "I've learned a lot along the way". Several head porters of Cambridge colleges were contacted to see if they would be willing to work with Terywall, but none wished to comment at this time.

Downing May Ball cheaper for fellows than bursary students

Joe Bray
News correspondent

Downing College's May Ball tickets are cheaper for Downing fellows than they are for external students on a full bursary.

Ticket prices for non-Downing students on a full bursary is £135. In contrast to this, the ticket for Downing staff and fellows is £99, making the fellow ticket £36 cheaper than the bursary ticket.

This is different to other May Ball's ticketing policies. Jesus College, is charging £85 for bursary students, in comparison to £175 for internal tickets. Girton College, is currently trialling a new bursary ticket at £100 compared to £135 for

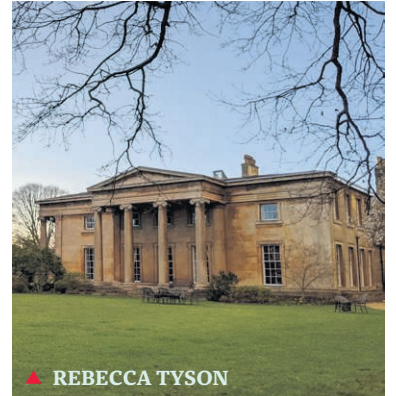
an internal ticket.

In the case of Downing, full bursary tickets for students from the college are only slightly cheaper than fellow's tickets, at £90. Meanwhile, the full price for a student is £179, and £182 for a non-student.

When contacted by *Varsity*, Downing's president said: "Non-Downing bursary students have access to other funds and their own home-balls to attend at more discounted prices."

The president said: "The subsidy is reserved for Downing students as this is their home college ball and thus our priority."

The president also noted that only around ten staff and fellow tickets are



▲ REBECCA TYSON

sold, in comparison to about one hundred bursary tickets.

Downing College has been contacted for comment.

Cam historian warned Truss of market crash

Finley Brighton
News correspondent

Charles Read, an economic historian at Corpus Christi, has refuted claims made by the former Prime Minister Liz Truss about the fallout from last year's mini-budget.

In a recent *Telegraph* article, Truss claimed that "at no point" had concerns been raised to the Treasury about the

risks the mini-Budget posed to bond markets. Read was quick to inform his Twitter followers these claims were "NOT TRUE"

Read went on to claim that, in a lecture given to civil servants in September, he explicitly warned against fiscal action that would make inflation rise any faster. He also wrote personally to chancellor Kwasi Kwarteng with the same warnings.

Read told *Varsity* that he warned the government about the severe "political consequences" that a budget that forced market rates to rise rapidly would have.

He went on to state that Truss's claims were "highly misleading and should be called out. To have former politicians seeking to blame their own policy errors on conspiracy theories is deeply worrying as it is both corrosive of public discourse in this country and another step towards Trumpism".

The long-term impact of this economic policy is, he claimed, ongoing.



CHARLES READ ▼

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WEST ROAD CONCERT HALL

News

Grand Arcade fire caused by heater

Firefighters were called to the Grand Arcade last Wednesday (15/02) after a fire broke out in the early hours of the morning. Crews from across the county were called in to fight the fire, which was caused by an electrical fault in a heater. Damage was limited to the heater itself, with no damage to property or stock. Firefighters were able to put out the fire with a fire extinguisher.

Businesses oppose congestion charge

84% of small business owners oppose the proposed Cambridge congestion charge, a survey by the Federation of Small Businesses has shown. The GCP is consulting on proposals to introduce a £5 per day charge for car drivers. The FSB have criticised the plans for potential "serious financial hardship" and called for changes to the plans to ensure no business is forced to cease trading.

King's solar panel plans approved

More than 400 solar panels will be installed on the roof of King's College Chapel after Cambridge City Council approved the planning application, describing it as a "symbol" for others around climate change. The solar panels will reduce carbon consumption across the estate by 1.4%. The Council said there would be "very minimal visual impact" from the installations.

Cam fellow to co-lead earthquake response

Professor Emily So, Director of Cambridge University Centre for Risk in the Built Environment and fellow at Magdalene College, will lead the UK response to uncover the causes of the extensive damage and loss of life. The team will carry out evaluations of disaster management procedures. So said that identifying the causes of the earthquake "will be the key to help prioritise actions for change."



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University watch

Eric Williams brings you
the top student stories
from the other place(s)

Occupy Manchester

Students at Manchester are now occupying four university buildings in an ongoing rent strike dispute.

The occupation follows wider action in which 150 students are withholding rent payments, with demands including a 30% rent reduction and rent caps.

Strikers have been occupying university buildings since 8 February, including the vice-chancellor's 'John Owens building'.

On Tuesday (14/02), the University issued an ultimatum threatening students with formal disciplinary action over "serious misconduct" if they did not leave the buildings that day.

The rent strikers called this "an unprecedented escalation from the university".

Man takes former women's officer position on Oxford SU

Oxford SU is facing backlash over the appointment of a man to the now-transformed "Women's Officer" role.

Last year, Oxford University replaced the Women's officer post with a Vice President for Liberation and Equality.

Now the University SU's appointment of a man, Kennedy Ailu, has prompted backlash from conservative and feminist campaigners. They argue that it is essential to have an official Women's Officer who can speak on women-only issues.

Edinburgh protests inadequate sexual assault support

On Thursday (09/02), students at Edinburgh protested against "inadequate" university support for victims of sexual assault.

Students are criticising changes to the university's Code of Conduct, made after last year's "Me Too Edinburgh" movement, as "insignificant". The petition demanding change to the university's support system has now reached 60,000 signatures.

Demonstrations were organised by Aarti Mukhedkar, a sexual assault survivor, who said at the rally "I am not only a survivor of sexual violence but also a victim of neglect at the hands of the university".

Illustration by Richard Briggs

Investigations



Widening participation since 1999

How has access and outreach evolved at Cambridge across the last two decades?

Harry Hult
Deputy Features Editor

Famke Veenstra-Ashmore
Editor in Chief

In 1999, state school pupil Laura Spence submitted her application to read Medicine at the University of Oxford. Her Oxford rejection – and subsequent acceptance into Harvard on a full academic scholarship – brought the nation's attention to the concept of “widening participation” for the first time. Less than a year later, Cambridge University Reporter quietly published a full breakdown of Cambridge's maintained sector admissions for the very first time.

Since then, Cambridge's track record for admitting state-school students has steadily improved. Barely half of the 2000 intake were educated in the state system – today, that proportion nears three-quarters. But the picture of Cambridge admissions is much more nuanced than that figure implies, with its 29 undergraduate colleges achieving vastly fluctuating results when it comes to widening participation.

The usual suspects

Some colleges' placements in the rankings are hardly a surprise. King's has consistently admitted a high proportion of its students from the maintained sector, resulting in a progressive reputation. In 1999 the King's cohort was 79% state-educated, at a time when the university average was only 53%. It remains one of the most consistent colleges statistically.

Churchill, Homerton and Fitzwilliam have also maintained an impressive track record over the past 20 years, with maintained intake percentages consistently in the high 60s and low 70s. All four usually receive a high proportion of applicants from state schools, and with more modern architecture, gownless dinners and communist flags, cultural perceptions of King's and the Hill colleges play into

that figure.

They also offer some of the most extensive widening participation schemes, with Homerton in particular having a history of proactive strategies – a current example being the Higher Education Access Course.

At the other end of the spectrum, King Charles's alma mater Trinity has

vestment and social mobility has been noted – and other colleges are demonstrating evidence of this already. St John's and Caius have historically over-represented private-school students, at times rivalling Trinity. But both have seen recent marked increases: John's has been slowly clawing itself upwards since 2016, while Caius experienced a considerable jump between 2020 and 2021.

Their recent successes correlate with increased college funding for widening participation. 2016 marked the first year of the St John's Studentships, a £2000 top-up bursary for students from low-income families. And in 2020, Caius expanded their admissions team to four full-time staff.

Wider trends

Besides investment, a few colleges' historical trends correlate with changes in their senior fellowship. Corpus Christi admitted very low state-school intakes in 1999 and 2000, before a sudden increase with the arrival of a new master. This pattern repeated in 2018. By contrast, the arrival of a new master of Sidney Sussex in 2009 coincided with the college's maintained sector admissions plummeting from 73% to 52%. Sidney defended their record on widening participation, noting that “with the single exception of the pandemic year, the College's ratio was above the University's.”

Thinking more broadly, changes in national education policy has also had an effect on Cambridge's admissions – the largest to note being in reaction to the Conservative rise in tuition fees. In 2011,

as fees were anticipated to triple to £9,000, the overall number of students admitted fell by 15,389, a decrease of 3.6% from the previous year.

This overall decrease at many colleges has disproportionately affected state-school applicants. Corpus, Caius and Kings all saw their maintained admissions decline by between 10–15% compared to before the

2010 Conservative election victory.

This impact was short-lived, though, not persisting into the succeeding years. It remains to be seen whether other financial fluctuations, such as the current cost-of-living crisis, and further restructuring of tuition fees, will have an impact on future state-school intake.

Naturally, there are several outliers to these trends. In particular, Lucy Cavenish has been marked by a total deviation from Cambridge's average intake – their first year of undergraduate admissions saw a record-breaking 90% of their students admitted from the maintained sector.

This massive success, however, has been damped by the fact that they are simultaneously the least well-endowed (£14 million to Trinity's £1,286 million), with a significantly reduced ability to financially support disadvantaged students – a major drawback of these collegiate disparities.

Red-brick Robinson

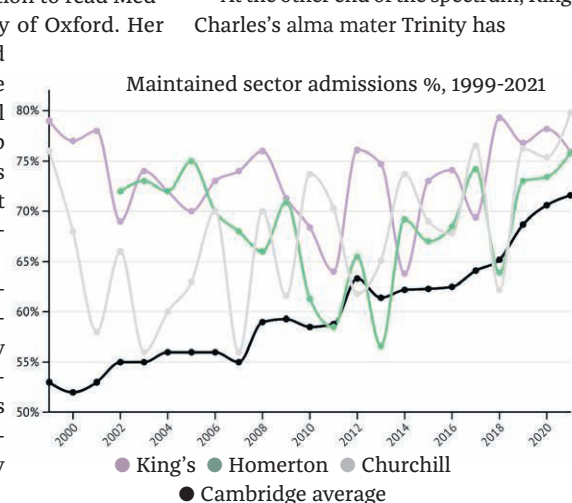
Surprisingly, the unenviable crown of Cambridge's most privately-educated college goes to red-brick Robinson, where almost half of the student body seems to have received a downgrade in historical ambiance upon arriving in Britain's second-oldest university.

Cambridge's youngest college is a strong outlier in the data. Whereas all other colleges show increases in the proportion of state school students over the past two decades, Robinson's trendline is solidly negative.

Consistently sporting a maintained sector percentage in the mid-60s and gaining a relatively positive reputation for state school outreach, it has fallen consistently (despite an outlier of 61.3% in 2016) and as low as 41.3% in 2018. Rising back up to 55.3% in 2021, the College relies heavily on the pool, which constitutes 16.9% of its offers.

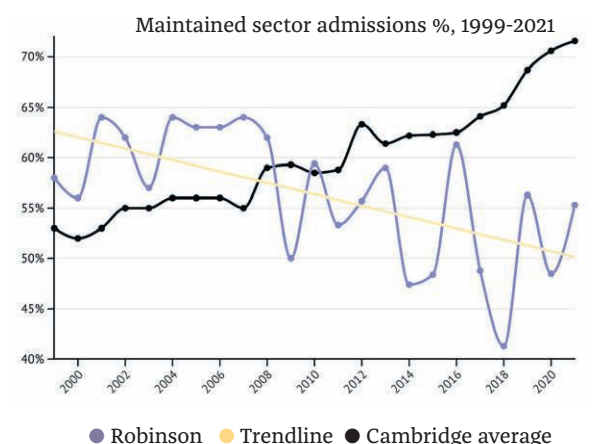
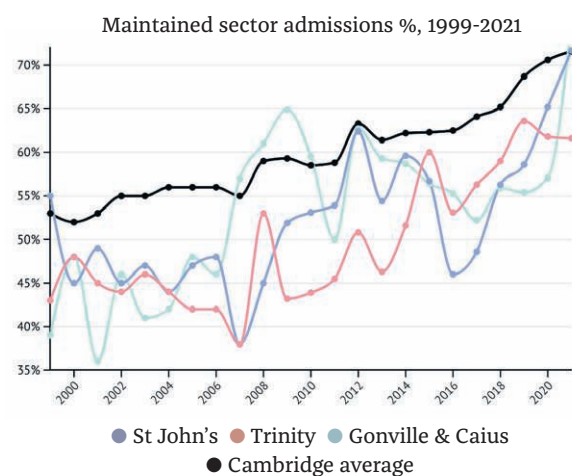
Dr Lizzi Rawlinson-Mills, Robinson's recently-appointed Admissions Tutor for

Widening Participation, told *Varsity* that “excluding the mature colleges, eleven colleges fall below [the University average of 72%]. Every college has their unique set of circumstances and challenges and like all the colleges, we are committed to improving the diversity



consistently performed terribly in the rankings, admitting a rock-bottom 38% of its students from state schools in 2007, and recently coming third-last in 2021. It is worth noting that the effect of Trinity's pioneering Maintenance Grant on their admissions statistics is yet to be seen in the university's published data – as well as their offer to fund the accommodation fees of pooled students. In response to this, Trinity described the TMG as one of the “most comprehensive packages” of help available.

The correlation between financial in-



of our intake at Robinson.”

She also claimed that the college's 2021 intake had been the “most diverse to date” in the last ten years, although the data indicates that the college admitted a greater proportion of state school students three times in the last decade.

Conclusions

Across these 22 years of data, some colleges have been consistent over-achievers while others have been lagging behind. But in recent years, colleges with poor historic showings have put concerted efforts into improving access to Cambridge: Caius and Robinson have, for the last two admissions cycles, significantly expanded the size of their outreach teams, while Trinity and John's have put funds into bursary schemes.

Historically cemented perceptions of certain colleges, which have in the past influenced the decisions of state school applicants, are thus slowly changing.

With the cost-of-living crisis, the government's upcoming reorganisation of tuition fees, and the changing face of Cambridge's Admissions Offices, college admissions remain relatively unpredictable year-on-year.

Several colleges were contacted for comment.



Features



▲ Chris Scott and David Rennie, Gonville & Caius' admissions team

Inside the Caius Admissions Office

Harry Hult explores how Caius shed their status as Cambridge's most privately-educated college

Dr Chris Scott's office is in a cosy corner of Gonville & Caius college, tucked away in the college's leafy – and appropriately-named – Tree Court. “You’ve looked at the facts,” he tells me from an armchair across the room. “Caius was radically out of step with the rest of the university until recently... That has changed.”

Chris was appointed Caius' inaugural Tutor for Admissions and Outreach less than three years ago. The year before, the college admitted just 55% of its cohort from the maintained sector – the lowest of any Cambridge college in 2019.

In 2021, that figure rocketed to 75% – a fair margin above the University average, and an astounding increase of 20 percentage points in just one year. Figures released by Caius for 2022 and 2023 indicate that that increase has

been maintained – so what exactly lies behind the college's meteoric rise?

“Social engineering” seems to be the media's go-to explanation, with debates about Oxbridge admissions deeply embedded in nationwide “culture wars”. During nearly every recent admissions cycle, national newspapers erupt with testimonies from crestfallen pupils and irate parents, alleging discrimination against independent schools.

I put this to Chris – he doesn't seem bothered by those sorts of accusations. “I'm aware that some people see social engineering, they see discrimination. That's not reflective of what I see as an Admissions Tutor: considering applicants individually and in their contexts is not positive discrimination, it's fair.”

Nevertheless, it's clear that

his appointment at Caius precipitated a significant shift in the college's maintained sector intake. David Rennie, Caius' Schools Liaison Officer (SLO), makes no secret of that fact: he tells me Chris has had a “pretty seismic” effect on the college's admissions process.

57.1%

Caius maintained sector admissions, 2020

Caius maintained sector admissions, 2021

75.0%

Certainly part of the shift reflects changes to how Caius assesses its applications. Where the college's admissions policy used to emphasise “academic achievement”, it now reads “academic potential, regardless of background”. Caius was late among Cambridge colleges in implementing this change – the government's Office for Students has tasked universities with “widening participation” for over a decade.

But what debates about Oxbridge admissions usually fail to address is that widening participation begins much earlier than with the applications themselves. The ‘seismic effect’ David mentions lies not with offer-making, but with the college's efforts to ensure that every student with the potential for Cambridge makes an application in the first place.

“We've massively ramped up our access and outreach capacity at Caius,” Chris explains. “My role as a full-time admissions and outreach tutor was created in 2020... before that we had two part-time admissions tutors who had no capacity or responsibility for outreach.”

That remains the setup employed by the vast majority of colleges, where an SLO, generally a recent graduate, is the

only full-time member of staff dedicated to outreach.

As David points out, even SLOs “as a concept are barely ten years old.” His impression is that Cambridge admissions offices before then were full of well-intentioned people, simply being overstretched and under-resourced.

And although SLOs are today a feature of every Cambridge admissions office, the implication remains that funding, and consequent capacity for outreach programs, varies significantly by college.

In contrast to what he terms the “old-style Cambridge model of outreach”, where colleges would simply wait until schools (often selective or fee-paying) got in touch to request school visits or college tours, Chris describes himself as a “big believer in sustained intervention”. Key to that philosophy is proactively reaching out to schools in underrepresented areas, to ensure that outreach efforts are targeted to those students that stand to benefit the most.

I'm a big believer in sustained intervention

Chris's achievements in this respect are not insignificant. In these conversations, there is a clear sense of the inertia that plagues any attempt to effect change in a centuries-old institution such as Cambridge. In David's words: “at any Oxbridge college you are fighting an uphill battle... Chris shook up a culture that can get complacent.”

But neither Chris nor David are under any illusions that Caius has got it all solved. “We are still some way off a position where everybody who has the academic potential for Cambridge is applying.”

Indeed, although Chris claims that applications from Caius' link areas have increased noticeably, university data shows that the overall proportion of state-school applicants to Caius remained roughly constant between 2019–21, at 61%.

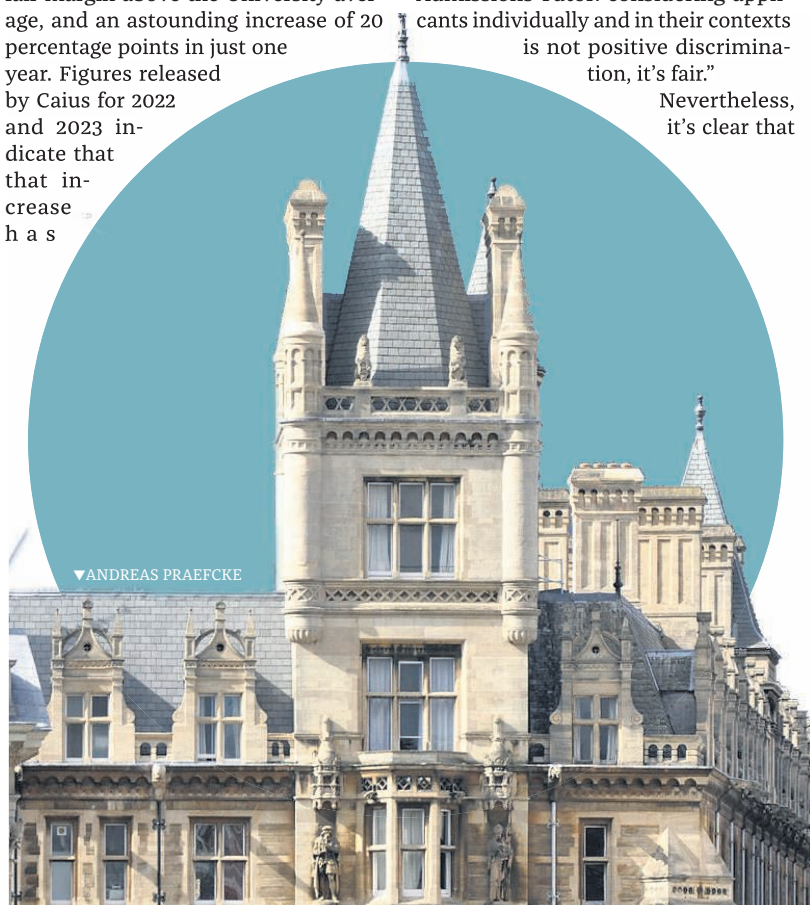
Ultimately, we couldn't do what we do without students

For Chris, the most important factor in encouraging applications from underrepresented students is simple: reassurance that they will fit in at a university whose name and prestige carry so much cultural and socioeconomic baggage.

“Applicants want to hear from students like them, with voices like theirs, who can give their authentic experiences.” To that end, the support he receives from the upwards of 100 Caius undergrads who volunteer their time is indispensable: “Ultimately we couldn't do what we do without students – they are our biggest asset.”

“Authentic” experiences seem vital: Chris notes that for many students there will be aspects of their time in Cambridge that they enjoy less than others. After all, Caius today is still far from reflective of the UK's diverse population as a whole.

But to those potential applicants still put off from applying for fear they won't fit in, or that they won't find others with backgrounds like their own, Chris makes a compelling case: “You can be part of that social change in coming here – that's the best attitude to have.”



▼ANDREAS PRAEFCKE



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How to get recruited by MI6

Taneesha Datta investigates MI5 and MI6 recruitment at Cambridge

In the summer of 1984, as Easter term drew to a drowsy close, Richard Tomlinson heard an unfamiliar voice calling his name across Gonville court. Christopher Pilchard, a tutor in law, was peering out of his ground-floor window. “You’re Tomlinson, aren’t you?” he asked. Upon hearing of Tomlinson’s plans to join the navy, he said: “If you ever change your mind, but would like to try your hand at another form of government service, let me know.”

That same month, Ben Macintyre approached his tutor at a graduation party and made some “clumpingly obvious remarks” about his interest in foreign

“
Every Cambridge college reportedly had a talent spotter
”

affairs. He and his tutor exchanged significant glances - perhaps a hitched eyebrow or two - and, soon after, a brown envelope arrived with an invitation to meet a Major Halliday in Whitehall.

The classic tap on the shoulder, a glass of sherry with a wheezing tutor, a handshake in an ivy-clad court. The University has produced a long line of spies, not least the infamous Cambridge Five. At least until the 90s, every Cambridge college reportedly had a ‘talent spotter’ like Pilchard. “The chaplains were often how it was done,” Andrew Lownie tells me over the

telephone. He read history at Magdalene from 1981 to 1984, during which time he was President of the Cambridge Union. “Any don with a close connection to the intelligence services was asked to keep an eye out for possible recruits. Maybe they had written about it or served in it, or maybe they were just good chaps.”

Richard Dearlove, former SIS Chief, was Master of Pembroke until 2015, and now chairs the Cambridge Security Initiative, which remains a hub for ‘academics and practitioners from the intelligence and security communities’. As recently as 2011, a Caius student claimed they had received an anonymous letter containing an invitation to Whitehall, followed by a meeting about working for MI6.

Spotters weren’t the only recruitment channel open to Cambridge finalists. Annie Machon, who studied classics at Girton from 1986 to 1989, initially applied to the Foreign Office. “I got a letter from the Ministry of Defence, apparently, saying there may be other jobs I’d find more interesting,” she tells me over video call, back perfectly straight, hair perfectly coiffed. “There was a number they asked me to call and that was it. My gut instinct was, fuck, it’s MI5. [...] Ten months later, there I was.”

What sort of people were they looking for? In particular, the Cambridge talent spotters targeted students with foreign language abilities. “I know that one of my friends was recruited because he had travelled in ‘strange places’ during his year off,” says Lownie.

Some things, it seems, haven’t changed. Last Michaelmas, the AMES faculty circulated an email advertising positions for Mandarin speakers at GCHQ, MI5 and MI6. A representative for the Careers Service told *Varsity*: “We interact with the Secret Services the same as we would for other employers. We have sent emails to AMES students for some of their vacancies and presentations in the past, as they wanted to advertise to students with particular language skills.”

Once the existence of the Secret Services entered official public territory in the late 1980s, MI5 began placing cryptic advertisements in newspapers. Former MI5 officer David Shayler responded to an ad emblazoned with the words ‘Godot isn’t coming’, thinking it was a call for journalists. Soon after, they began openly advertising for recruits. “20,000 people would apply, out of which perhaps five would actually get recruited,” said Machon, who was trained as a recruiter herself. “It was always the James Bond wannabes who were immediately ejected from that process.”

The recruitment and training process remains shrouded in mystery, but the SIS website tells candidates to expect security checks, including an ‘honest conversation’ about lifestyle, finances, and relationships. Macintyre wrote about being vetted for homosexuality in his first meeting (“Are you, um, you’re probably not, are you?”), while Tomlinson described being assigned a pub “in which we had to approach a member of the public and extract his or her name, address, date of birth, occupation and... passport number”.

“
The James Bond wannabes were immediately ejected
”

The stereotypical spy is white, chino-clad, and publicly-educated. “This may have changed,” says Lownie, “but they used to bring in people who were clearly all-British, maybe had a family tradition with the intelligence services or the Armed Forces.” Until 1973, women were required to resign if they wished to marry, to say nothing of the double-edged image perpetuated by Bond films and similar media.

In recent years, there has been an attempt to dispel these ossified stereotypes. Technology is the new intelligence frontline, which means “computer geeks” are now in high demand. MI5 has been named the UK’s best LG-BTQ+ employer.

Last year, MI5, MI6 and GCHQ altered eligibility requirements for new recruits, no longer seeking at least one British parent, which caused the BBC to declare that ‘the days of the tap on the shoulder at Oxford or Cambridge are long gone’. The words ‘Apply Now’ lie in bold white letters at the top of the SIS website. MI6 launched its first TV ad in 2018, and they now actively seek recruits from minority ethnic groups. “We have to go to people that would not have thought of being recruited to MI6,” Alex Younger, then SIS Chief (‘C’), said in 2017.

These bids for diversity aren’t simply a gesture of goodwill. “When the war on terror started twenty years ago, the specialist surveillance teams were still mainly white,” says Machon. In some situations, these



agents would “stick out like a sore thumb.”

Cambridge’s association with the Secret Services spans almost a century. Could the old Oxbridge tap on the shoulder really have escaped the institution? “I’m sure it still happens,” says Machon.

“Interesting people in interesting places, you know, but I think it’s probably a far smaller proportion of recruits that way now.”



Comment

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short 100 word pitch!



Clarissa Salmon

It's rare that I go a day without walking past King's College Chapel. Postcards and university prospectuses swim with its spires, and walking tours begin at its doors as hordes of camera-bearing tourists crowd around for their perfect Cambridge snap. Towering over the city both literally and metaphorically, the chapel is about as Cambridge as it gets.

In scandalous news, last week Cambridge City Council approved a planning proposal for installing 492 solar panels on the roof of the chapel. "Call the police! Call the porters!" I hear you yell in outrage. Our beloved chapel, defiled by the environmentalist agenda?

Well, that's what Historic England had to say, warning of irreparable "dam-

Debating King's solar panel plan is pointless

Why are crucial environmental changes harder than they need to be?

age [to] the architectural character and interest of the building". Michael Proctor, the King's Provost, made sure to quickly redress these concerns: "As the Planning Committee noted, the panels will have only a very minimal impact on the visual appearance of the Chapel ... we are inherently aware of the duty we have to protect the Chapel as a building of exceptional significance."

“

If we refuse to
sacrifice anything
then we're not mak-
ing any change at all

”

The backlash to the planned renovations of the chapel has been blown predictably out of proportion, despite other historical places of worship, including cathedrals, having successfully

undertaken similar ventures recently, and forecasts that the solar panels will reduce annual CO2 emissions by over 27,000 kg, generating enough energy to power the chapel with surplus.

My question to you: when will environmental policies stop needing to justify themselves? With every climate change mitigation measure (and believe me, as JCR Green Officer, I've seen a lot of failed attempts) comes relentless backlash and questioning. "But how will this impact X? How can we afford Y? Is it really necessary?" Remember the ferocious resistance to Cambridge divesting from the fossil fuel industry? Despite the backing of rigorous evidence, environmental policies are swamped by a sea of doubt that consistently generates U-turns and cutbacks. Just look at the tragic (non) state of climate change on the cabinet's agenda. The focus is always on what we must sacrifice, rather than on the gain, because cutting carbon does not tick the box of short term "big win" which local and national governing bodies seek.

Credit is due here to King's College

and Cambridge City Council for pushing forward this plan for the chapel despite fierce objections. However, I can only hope for a day when policies like this aren't branded as radical and threatening. Of course the building is of historic importance, and the College do not dispute that. If we refuse to sacrifice anything to implement essential climate change-prevention policies, regulations, frameworks and laws, then we're not making any change at all.

There are resounding parallels between this example of University-level policymaking and national government. In 2018, the "yellow vests" protestors in France campaigned against a fuel tax rise. Macron relented and U-turned. Concerns over cost prompted Australia to abolish its carbon pricing scheme in 2014. Just last Saturday, Slough Borough Council opposed plans to expand London's ultra-low emission zone, again using a cost-of-living argument. Let's not get started on the Greater Cambridge Partnership's similarly controversial plan for a Sustainable Travel Zone...

I'm by no means suggesting that en-

vironmental policymaking is beyond scrutiny, or that it's always perfect. However, it faces a unique breed of backlash which cannot abide sacrifice. Everything is too expensive, too outlandishly different, too solar-panel-on-roof visible. This argument disregards the fact that change-making has got to break rules - and perhaps break a few roof tiles - if it is to be truly innovative. It's hypocritical to invoke the very cost-of-living crisis your government is causing to oppose the climate change policies, a favourite hobby of the Tory Net Zero Scrutiny Group: solving one crisis cannot prohibit facing the other.

To future freshers: I'm sorry you won't get to see the historic tin roof of King's College Chapel, or if a stray solar panel creeps into your vision. Eyesores weren't exactly a priority during the industrial revolution. Or, more to the point, they weren't considered during Covid-19 and World War Two. The climate crisis is just as urgent: it's about time we got on with solving it and sucked up the reality that progress sometimes causes discomfort.



Maia Livne

When the Peter Pan play first premiered in 1904, a generation of English children were told they could fly - so long as they truly believed. Later that night, many bewitched boys and girls were to jump off their beds, only to crash to the ground; its author J.M. Barrie was obliged to add the crucial requirement of "fairy dust" to the practice of flight.

Over a century later, children are not the only ones captivated by the promise of thinking things into being. More often than I find magic among dew drops and morning mists, I encounter it on my TikTok feed, as the algorithm transforms my 2am interests in positive thinking and dubious psychology hacks into a rabbit hole of magical thinking. Manifesting, the law of attraction, lucky girl syndrome - this magical mindset comes in many names and forms, almost all directed towards girls.

Such practices are not new. The 19th century introduced the "New Thought" movement, centred on a belief in a globally-shared divinity which dwells in all

Manifesting our way back into sexism

TikTok 'magical thinking' is harbouring the return of conservative gender roles

people. It described practices like "the law of attraction", according to which the energy you give out attracts other energies of the same sort. This religious spiritualism has seen more secular reincarnations, as the 21st century seems to have embraced capitalist Karmic systems of spiritual success. Women-targeted media harboured the idea of a spiritual plane in which energies and auras interact, initiating and influencing events within the world of reality.

Vogue has been more than keen to teach girls how to "manifest anything you want" and positively think your way to success. Oprah's enthusiastic promotion sold Rhonda Byrne's pseudo-scientific self-help book "The Secret" more than 30 million times, which claimed positive energy can totally change your life. It's no surprise that these ideas continue to gain more and more traction in social media, as social media itself encourages us to separate life into planes of semi-physical operations, and creates entire metaverses for its consumers to deal with personal communication, self-image crafting, and career prospects.

These beliefs may come from a place of goodwill, but they end up trapping us in mediums of passivity, and encourage a worrying detachment from the world. Their gendered aspect effectively herds women into a field of pretty, domestic thoughts.

"I don't chase, I attract", a popular TikTok affirmation, is a glossy way to put into words the life-changing decision to never work for anything. Much like Regency damsels waiting for their ball card to fill with invites, you too can spend your time in a corner at a safe distance from the action, sneaking dainty, blushing looks at your own fate.

Of course, some things will end up coming your way, as is the way of the world. Providing you don't commit completely to the lifestyle of a hermit, the loser "chasers" among us might even invite you to a party, or recruit you for a project. This, in turn, will make you feel valued and attractive; after all, it's not a bad gig to feel something positive simply by sitting in your room, doing nothing of your own initiative.

To believe passivity is the path towards feminine success is, well, sexism. Sure, no one wants to look desperate, but branding women as desperate is a classic sexist tactic to demean those who are not afraid of failure or rejection along the way. Though desperation may not exactly be cute, there is really nothing more desperate than hiding from your goals for fear of seeming desperate.

This is not to take away from the power of a positive mindset. A positive outlook set on finding and engaging in positive patterns is the key to an active, happy and kind life. Choosing to

see the good luck and beauty hidden under the mundane is precisely what should give you the time and energy to flourish. Fads like "lucky girl syndrome", which suggests every win is the result of providence, can occasionally be useful mind hacks, tricks to play on your own brain - but the emphasis should remain on "moving forward" and acting on these premises.

Magical thinking trends are lying to you, as they'd have you believe that the endpoint of action is thought - and yet it never is. Some methods reach even greater levels of delusion, viewing discreteness in the real world as their ultimate goal: the "whisper method", for instance, offers you thought exercises to make a guy text you first. This suggests that cosplaying as a sorceress in your bedroom is less embarrassing than sending a text.

Believing your power lies in your passivity means that your power is determined entirely by the actions of others, and that doesn't just strip you of your own agency: it places the blame of other people's actions on the brightness and spark-factor of your aura. Feminine passiv-

ity camouflaged as spiritual activity is just another way of assigning social and emotional responsibilities to women.

It is no wonder that Google searches for "manifesting" rocketed during the pandemic, as people were quite literally confined to the realm of positive thinking. But your everyday thought process should not be built on the same foundation as the emergency escapist mindset of a global pandemic. To manifest is to operate within the world of wishing. Instead of getting things done, you waste your time tidying your stars into neat but ultimately meaningless alignment.

The association of women with magic has historically served abuse and discrimination, and though it may seem tempting to reclaim its aesthetics, it is crucial to remember that assigning yourself power in the metaverse of thought is to remove yourself from the real world of action.



Comment

CARTOON BY
HANNAH GILLOTT ▶

A match made in... heaven?



“Dating in Cambridge is not hot. It is luke-warm at best”

Your favourite *Varsity* writers give you their hottest takes on the Cambridge dating scene

Lotte Brundle



Dating in Cambridge is not hot. It is lukewarm at best. My hot tip is to lock someone in from your hometown before uni starts. Now this may seem counterintuitive. Who actively wants to do long distance at uni? But if you put romance aside (and three years in, my boyfriend and I definitely have) it's incredibly time-effective on the academic side. Is it sad? Yes. Do you miss them? Heartbreakingly so. However, you have ample time to do your essay when your partner is literally miles away. Equally, as each year passes, I am exposed to more and more of Cambridge dating life. I have seen the options – and they are less than desirable. Overworked and erratic narcissists who care more about topping tripos than topping you. Being repeatedly overshadowed by a Cambridge overachiever? No, thank you. I get enough academic chat in my seminars. Hometown hotties grounded in the real world are definitely the way to go. Not to mention their adult salary...

Clarissa Salmon



Having committed the cardinal sins of Cambridge dating, I feel I waived my right to a nuanced opinion a long while ago. Flatcast? Done. Same subject? Ticked that one off the bucket list. Moving in together for Covid-19 lockdown after only a few months... also guilty. I almost went as far as the altar of college marriage, but luckily mustered some self-awareness in the nick of time. While I don't have a shockingly new hot take to offer, I am here to reassure you that your judgement can only be better than mine! And that it's possible to derive something practical from the clichés of failed relationships. Of course, student life is not just about romantic love, no matter what the Pizza Express Valentine's menu tells you. We're not recreating Take Me Out on a University scale. But if you do have a good gut feeling, why not throw caution to the wind and shoot your shot. Just make sure you get some solo matriculation photos in case things go south.

Gwenno Robinson



Too many of my romantic endeavours have ended with the crushing realisation that the curse of the Cambridge-based phenomenon, “The Overlap”, has struck again. In its milder, gentler form, “The Overlap” can manifest itself as a course-mate or acquaintance you might have in common with your newfound lover. At its worst, it has been known to strike in the form of a best friend, or worst of all: a housemate. The curse of “The Overlap” is enough to halt any date plans in their tracks, before you've even had the time to say “Franco Manca”. Perhaps a product of my own drunken decisions, this unfortunate situation is not helped by the severe dearth of eligible straight men in Cambridge for me to pursue. On that note, think you recognise me from Hinge, the bowels of Clare Cellars or the Lola's dancefloor? No. No, you don't.



Sam Foo

Forget rap, opera is misogynistic too

It's time to rethink the moral double standards we apply to the western canon

I was watching a football compilation video on YouTube when my attention strayed to the rap song probably chosen at random as backing music: I started growing uncomfortable as I became aware of how misogynistic the lyrics sounded. As my listening preferences are predominantly classical, I was rather unprepared for the sexism that's apparently par-for-the-course in a lot of rap lyrics. But before I could clutch my pearls and bemoan the degeneracy of contemporary culture, I stopped short at the thought of how much misogyny ran amok in the opera I listened to growing up.

The Mozart-Da Ponte operas were my gateway to the genre, but boy are they problematic. The best-known aria in *Don Giovanni* catalogues the serial womaniser's numerous conquests, while its second-most famous aria describes his plan to pick up girls from the street and ply them with drink in order to “augment his list”. *Così fan tutte* is infamous for its

protagonists deceiving their girlfriends with the intention of proving the titular claim that “All women are fickle”. Sure, the chauvinists get their comeuppance in the end, and I might have drawn some vaguely feminist moral from these shenanigans. But, turning our attention back to the stories actually being presented,

“Moral failings amass in every crevice of the Western pantheon.”

one cannot help but wonder what all these relics of 18th century misogyny are doing in modern theatres.

Opera's history of racism is just as bad as its sexism – and it hasn't gone away. Even a boycott from an esteemed black soprano didn't stop a prestigious venue using blackface in a 2022 production of *Aida*; operas like *Madame Butterfly* and *Turandot* are rife with Orientalist caricatures of Asia at the apex of Western art.

Theatres and venues may proclaim their commitment to diversity and equal-

ity, yet how much change can we really create when show calendars continue to depend on staging the same depictions of cultural appropriation, racism or sexual coercion?

Beyond opera, moral failings amass like dust in every crevice of the Western cultural pantheon. Schoolroom and stage remain suffocated by a canon shockingly dissonant with ‘modern’ values. Shakespeare's Caliban prefigures centuries of imperialist stereotyping of native peoples as primitive savages. *The Taming of the Shrew* is hard enough to read even before remembering it was written for a stage from which women were banned.

Of course, it's not as simple as placing all the blame on dead writers for reflecting the moral shortcomings of their age. None of us wants to admit our generation's greatest works will probably be shunned by 25th century critics. In the meantime, postcolonial rewrites of classics or genderbent castings are a tempting cop-out. But such strategies only attempt to find a way to live with the elephant in the room, instead of trying to get rid of it altogether. In essence, they absolve all faults through rebaptism under a different creed.

And the more we dance around the root of the issue, the more we find

ourselves trapped by the same old hierarchies. Doing A-level Literature on the Singapore syllabus, the only nod to non-English culture in the texts we studied was the stipulation that one of the unseen poems be Singaporean. Somehow the horny, half-rhymes of the 17th century English Metaphysical poets were assumed to be worthier of attention than the works of any other time and place in literary history.

In a world where the humanities are

“It is crucial that we stop putting morals from bygone eras on a pedestal”

already under attack from the STEM-worshipping vultures of Sunak and co, surely we wouldn't like to give them the argument that the humanities aren't just useless, but actively harmful as well, putting problematic morals from bygone ages on a gilded pedestal.

Yet maybe the values we are so keen

to shun in disgust still dominate our stages precisely because they are endemic to the modern world which pretends to have outgrown them. The sexism and racism native to the canon aren't sequestered in yellowed manuscripts: they lurk among us still, barely concealed by the patina of political hypercorrectness. We struggle against the canon the same way we struggle against present injustice, against the darker demons of our nature, the subconscious biases wired centuries-deep into our culture.

When looking out from our cocoon of Western liberalism at parts of the world where women are disempowered or racism abounds, and when keeping in mind the stories we have passed down through the ages, we can reach the necessary realisation that we aren't all that different from them – give or take a couple generations.

And despite this, these selfsame stories, the deeply flawed classics we grow up with, constitute some of the greatest achievements of Western art. They embody the best and worst of humanity all at once, a stark reminder that the one often comes with the other. Pope sums it up in his *Essay on Man*: we are “Created half to rise, and half to fall”.

Interviews

“We’ve gone from clapping to slapping doctors and nurses”: Cambridge’s medics on NHS junior doctors strikes

With junior doctors voting on further action, Varsity speaks to the sixth-year medical students about to enter the profession

▼ WIKIMEDIA COMMONS



Francesca Gilks and Lewis Andrews

Could junior doctors be the next to strike? It seems that many have had enough, and may very well be joining the record-breaking list of NHS staff who have taken to the picket line. The BMA are currently voting on a proposal to undertake a three-day strike in March, with the ballot-box closing on 20th February.

Recent headlines have been dominated by reports of NHS underfunding, staff departures and continued strain from Covid and flu season. In a summary of its grievances, the BMA highlighted “fifteen years of real terms pay cuts for junior doctors in England”, and called the 26% decline in pay since 2008 “staggering and unjustifiable”.

In light of this, what are the concerns of medics about to enter the profession? The current crop of final-year medical students have, after all, experienced their clinical years under unique circumstances, entering the wards for the first time at the peak of the pandemic. We spoke to two of the Cambridge cohort to discuss their expectations, opinions and hopes for the future.

Aaron* had nothing but positive things to say about the intellectual challenges of the degree and didn’t even seem phased by pandemic-related disruption to his clinical years – “you’re going to be doing medicine for your whole career, there will be opportunities to do all these things that you may have missed because of the pandemic.” Despite his admiration for the consultants he has seen in his clinical rotations, he remains certain that he doesn’t want to continue in the field. “You see up close why doctors might complain [...] I constantly speak to doctors who are at a place in their career where they are stagnant.” Ben* echoed this sentiment: “Junior doctors I met while at clinical school paint a grim picture of medicine.”

I was slightly surprised at Aaron’s certainty that he wouldn’t want to continue in the profession – his father had trained as a doctor in Nigeria, meaning that he grew up under no illusion of the challenges of the

profession, and Aaron had spoken with an almost relentless optimism about his time at university. I asked Aaron if he’d considered alternative careers, and, with the same beaming smile with which he’d described his love of the work, came the surprising reply: “Oh yes. I’m actually actively trying to leave medicine”.

Ben’s anecdotal report was even more bleak: “I’d guess at least three quarters of medical students I’ve met

“Three quarters of medical students I’ve met while I was in clinical school were considering other careers”

while I was in clinical school were considering other careers”, and mentions the other medic in his graduate house who is sending applications elsewhere. Ben’s desire to leave medicine “comes in waves: when you’ve had a particularly tough shift or are particularly skint you begin to consider alternative careers more earnestly.”

The students’ concerns echo the BMA’s demands – a need to address pay erosion and worsening working conditions – so it was unsurprising that both felt strikes were justified. “The pay just doesn’t reflect the level of responsibility doctors have.” Aaron tells me that just speaking to junior doctors “would convince you it is justified to strike [...] Strikes are so rare, and they are sorely needed.”

Ben consistently prioritised patient care in his assessment of the strikes, stating that “if I were a patient, I would want nurses and

paramedics who were well paid, so they were giving me the best care possible”. He added that the junior doctors’ strikes of 2016 had resulted in no excess deaths: “consultants took over the wards [...] data doesn’t show that there’s a patient safety risk.” BMA guidance for striking doctors also emphasises patient safety, directing doctors on shift when the strikes begin to ensure that their patients have been safely transferred to the care of another doctor before leaving work.

Stagnating pay was a major reason for Ben’s support: “As a junior doctor you earn about £14 an hour – the same as I was earning before university when I was working in a shop [...] doctors are dealing with the seriously ill every day. It’s not sustainable for them to be paid less than £20 an hour.” This is not surprising from clinical students whose experience of hospital has been during the pandemic years, when doctors and

nurses were physically and emotionally burned-out by the record number of deaths: “There was such an enormous wave of deaths: doctors who didn’t usually experience many deaths on the ward suddenly had a high volume of patients arriving and dying very rapidly.”

When we asked them whether there was anything Cambridge-specific about their sentiments, they agreed that the “proximity to other people going on to do other interesting things, often at higher salaries” further turned their heads. BMA statistics show that even consultants are looking elsewhere, while four out of ten junior doctors are ready to hang up their surgical scrubs as soon as they find another job. The lure of lucrative alternative careers isn’t new, but the students il-

lustrate it has become greater.

Addenbrooke’s Hospital declined to comment on the junior doctor strike proposals until a verdict had been announced. Like the students we spoke to, the medical profession seems to feel a sense of nervous apprehension about what the future may hold.

*Names have been changed



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Interviews

Stand-up, sex and saying it how it is with Grace Campbell

Ahead of her show at Cambridge Junction, Grace Campbell educates us on the power of "taking the piss"



“I can be a slut, and at the same time never deserve to be assaulted”

Famke Veenstra-Ashmore and Chris Patel

Waiting for Grace Campbell to join us, we tap through her Instagram story. She has reposted perhaps the most jarring and awkward video of Matt Hancock yet, very proudly demonstrating his ability to iron a shirt. Funnily enough, nine minutes into our interview, Grace brings the video up, as an example of how absurd the men in our politics and lives can be, as well as how social media can make or break modern celebrities. Social media is an essential part of Grace's comedy too: "I think there's only a few creative things you can do now and not have an online presence, and stand-up is just not one of them."

Grace's online presence is defined by her headstrong, outspoken nature, but who is she onstage? "It's the version of me when I'm on a night out, and I'm trying to, like, make everyone laugh", she replies. "I get on stage and then suddenly I'm this ridiculous version of myself — me on speed, me on crack."

"Women love [my stand-up]" Grace explains. "They feel seen. They feel like I'm speaking to them and their friends." What about men? "I don't think men don't like it, they feel more attacked, more like the butt of the joke. But actually, the show I'm doing at the moment has a lot [of] very observational stuff about men — and I actually think men enjoy that stuff. Because they're like, oh, at least she's talking about us."

Breaking into the world of comedy as a woman is a tricky venture. "You just have to be quite ruthless, I think, when you're trying to start doing standup. You have to pester people." Grace tells us that persistence and getting over the initial embarrassment of begging for slots are essential: "You have to be a bit annoying — that is very out of my character because my whole life I've been desperate to be cool."

Grace's current comedic inspirations include Chelsea Handler and Joe Lycett, and she sees glimpses of herself in both of them. "When I watch Chelsea Handler, I can see myself when I'm her age being that kind of vibe. She just doesn't give a shit." Grace acknowledges the importance of those who came before her — figures like Mae West and Joan Rivers, who empowered her to speak her mind: "All of the women that I've admired in comedy are people who say really uncomfortable things," she tells us. "It's a great way to encourage other women to call out [...] bullshit".

Female support networks have been vital for Grace, stemming from a positive environment at her all girls' secondary school: "I think the power of normalising things in a room of loads of other people where we can all laugh about it relinquishes shame and therefore makes women feel more comfortable in themselves."

Confidence seems a natural part of Grace's personality, but she still faces the challenge of getting around her unavoidable association with Alastair Campbell — her famous political father: "[At the start, people] definitely defined me too much by who my dad is [...] but I think now I'm at this

point where actually what I'm saying is interesting enough." This isn't enough for some, though, who still try to reduce Grace to her relationship to a famous man, even during her own shows. This used to rattle her, but when it happens now, she's unafraid to call it out: "I'm like, that's so sexist of you. I have done enough now to not be someone's daughter."

Last year, Grace went public about being raped while in the States. She admits that this decision was "really terrifying", and tells us that her main reason for speaking out was to anticipate criticism from those who would blame the assault on her sex-positive comedy, or ask, "How can you talk about this when you haven't gone to the police?" She didn't want to put herself through a foreign justice system in which almost "no rapist is ever convicted," and affirms that she "can be a slut, and then also at the same time never deserved to be assaulted or raped. [...] Those two things can exist at the same time and not cancel each other out."

“

I think men love the idea of me and then hate the reality of me

”

Overall, Grace confirms, the response was "incredibly supportive", but the way in which certain men responded was "very fascinating". "I have had some amazing messages for men [...] but men I was dating or men who were trying to shag me around didn't really acknowledge it" even though "it was kind of unmissable. That just felt really odd to me and actually put me off a lot of men. I think men love the idea of me and then hate the reality of me. They love that I'm really confident and loud. But then in reality that means [when I] call them out on shit and am very opinionated, they can't handle it. That was what I felt when the piece came out."

With her new tour, *A Show About Me(n)*, coming to Cambridge in March, Grace definitely isn't going to stop talking about these issues anytime soon. From deadly serious to Matt-Hancock-ironing-a-shirt levels of silly, Grace knows from personal experience that "if you can make those things that have happened to yourself funny as well, it can really help to connect with other people. Nobody should ever underestimate the power of comedy."

▲ SARAH HARRY-ISAAC

Science

Why Cambridge needs more therapy dogs

Alex Berry

After a stressful week of work, I can't think of anything much better than spending even just 10 minutes with a dog, cat, rabbit or any other cute pet. When introduced to such a friendly face, it seems easy to find yourself relaxing and forgetting about a stressful few days of work.

The recent death of Darwin Kershbaum, the Girton therapy dog who had been serving the college since 2018, highlighted how strong the affection we feel for them is. But what exactly is it that leads humans to form these loving relationships with animals in the first place? And what benefits do we really get from them?

The relationship between humans and animals is a mutually beneficial, dynamic relationship influenced by many emotional, physical and psychological interactions. This bond has been evolving for over 15,000 years, initially as a working relationship before the domestication of animals led to us see them also as companions.

The production of Oxytocin increases the levels of affection we feel for animals and its production in animals also increases the affection of pets for humans when we interact with them. Although the effects of this are greatly enhanced by spending lots of time with a pet, a single meeting is enough to see a measurable increase in Oxytocin.

One 2018 study saw significant reductions in stress levels and increases in happiness immediately after dog therapy sessions for university students, but also saw that these effects diminished after several hours post-session. Regular animal meet-ups are therefore the most sustainable way to improve happiness and decrease stress, but it can't be denied that even single sessions hold a significant impact.


Multiple studies have also shown that interactions with animals cause almost immediate reductions in the physiological symptoms of stress, not just perceived emotional effects. Another study showed that interactions with therapy dogs resulted in a significant reduction in blood pressure, a physiological marker for stress, after only 15 minutes with the dogs, alongside the students reporting a reduction in anxiety.

Spending time with animals has also been shown to help those struggling with loneliness. A 2020 study concluded that spending large

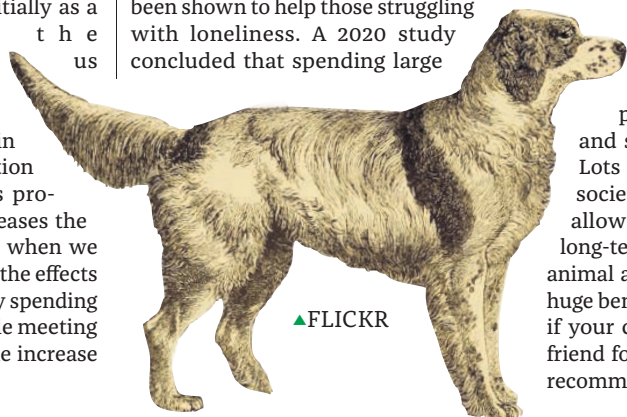
amounts of time with animals throughout the Covid-19 lockdown mitigated some of the detrimental psychological effects. Dog therapy could show huge benefits in university students that struggle with isolation.

The same study also concluded that the animal-human bond did not differ significantly between animal species, reminding us that not only dogs can be useful therapy animals. Lucy Cavendish has previously given residence to therapy Guinea pigs to reduce exam stress, which is probably a more unconventional approach but popular nonetheless!

Even if your college is not one of those with a permanent therapy animal, many societies hold animal related events. One of those societies is Student Minds Cambridge, which holds multiple dog therapy sessions throughout the year.



in what can be an intense and stressful environment, having therapy animals available for well-being sessions can provide a much-needed break and stress release during Week 5. Lots of events run by colleges and societies throughout the year that allow students to do this, but the long-term effects of having a therapy animal available year-round could see huge benefits to student well-being. So, if your college or society has a fluffy friend for when you're feeling down, I recommend giving them a visit.



Research Round-up

Suchir Salhan and Tom Malloch



150kg? Discovering the largest penguin that ever lived

Uncovering trans healthcare inequalities

A team led by Cambridge researchers has found that trans and non-binary adults are more likely than the general population to experience long-term health conditions, including mental health problems, dementia, learning disabilities and autism. First author Dr Katie Saunders, a statistician working in the Cambridge Centre for Health Services Research, said that “knowing that a trans or non-binary patient is more likely to be autistic or to be experiencing mental health difficulties, for example, where guidelines do exist, could help GPs prepare for seeing their patients.”

Breakthrough in Greenland Ice Sheets

An international team of researchers, led by the University of Cambridge, have found that the movement of glaciers in Greenland is more complex than previously thought. The formation in regions of warmer ice containing small amounts of water accounts for motion that had often been assumed to be caused by sliding where the ice meets the bedrock beneath. They hope to use this improved understanding to build more accurate descriptions of ice motion for the ice sheet models used in predicting future sea level rise.

Cambridge achieves first in origin of life research

A Cambridge-US study has advanced research into the origin of life on earth. The team made tweaks to the standard approach of experiments seeking to understand the origins of life, with the use of "dirty chemistry" - adding salts and other minerals to the traditional distilled water used in similar experiments.

With this approach they became the first team to successfully synthesise ATP with a single set of conditions. ATP is a vital molecule for transporting energy about within our cells, and the research highlights a new pathway towards understanding the science of the earliest life forms.

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Science

Meet the NatSci supervisor scouted for Big Brother

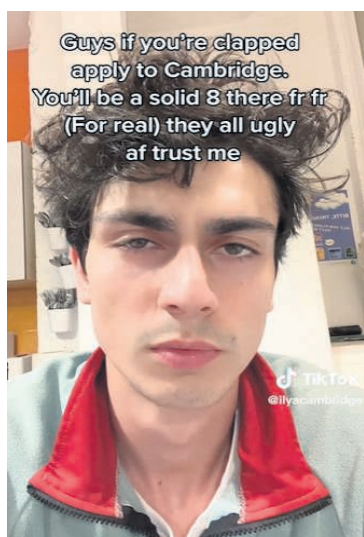
Suchir Salhan speaks to Ilya Carey about being a NatSci Supervisor, TikTok, his thoughts about the Varsity ski trip and his experience selling stick insects

Suchir Salhan

NatSci student, Ilya Carey, decided to start a YouTube channel during the long vac before his third year. Now working as a supervisor and a *bone fide* content creator, Ilya discusses his thoughts on the Varsity ski trip, being scouted for Big Brother and his side hustle of selling stick insects.

Ilya just finished his MPhil in Biological Sciences in June, spending a year looking at DNA replication initiation in human cells. After spending Michaelmas working as a supervisor for a second-year BioNatSci paper at Selwyn and Clare, he is currently taking a well-deserved break before starting a PhD program in Switzerland in May. We arranged to meet as Ilya was on the train travelling from Toulouse to Barcelona and we later reconvened once he arrived in Barcelona.

Ilya decided to start his YouTube channel principally for two reasons. First, “to make a bit of money” – he’d previously earned £12 an hour working at a tutoring company to teach A-Level



@ILYACAMBRIDGE/TIKTOK ▲

el Chemistry. Secondly, he thought he would be “good at giving application advice” as he had a “good understanding of the admission system”. Although he admits that his first few videos were “quite shit” and doesn’t “really look back at them”, Ilya notes that the “content wasn’t that hard to make”.

Ilya is, in some ways, the nepo-baby of Cambridge study tube. His college aunt was the infamous Jesus College YouTuber

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”

PaigeY and he wasn’t afraid to tap into “a bit of nepotism to boost the channel”. Alongside his early content describing his “interview experience, the Cambridge-application process and his personal statement”, Ilya interviewed other Jesus College-based YouTubers like Astrid Godfrey. He also discussed the process of getting into Graduate Medicine with Shirley Bekker. He said that his channel boosted in popularity when it was shared by PaigeY and Ali Abdaal.

Ilya says that he likes to share the stories of “impressive individuals” on his channel. He spoke with a fellow NatSci Jonathan Bostock who represented Great Britain in the 2018 International Chemistry Olympiad, winning a gold medal. Ilya said that “doing well in an Olympiad can be a gateway for getting into Oxbridge” and getting advice from current students can be really “valuable”.

“Not knowing how to study is a significant barrier” for students getting into Oxbridge. Ilya admitted that he, perhaps like the majority of Cambridge freshers, “didn’t have to develop good study techniques until my first year”. He’s a big advocate for studying efficiently, which is reflected in some of the more popular

content on his channel.

Ilya filmed a video called “CaM-bRiDgE iNtErViEw (colourised)” while he was “cooped up” during Michaelmas 2020 with COVID, describing it as his “first funny video”. He’s “not sure what inspired it”. Despite initially “worried about whether it was funny or not”, Ilya showed it to his housemates who encouraged him to post the video, which eventually was submitted for the Cambridge Footlights Online Smoker.

Ilya is critical of the “toxic productivity” perpetuated on social media – with StudyTubers – unironically “getting up at 4 am and reading a book”. “That’s what people want to see, what gets the views”.

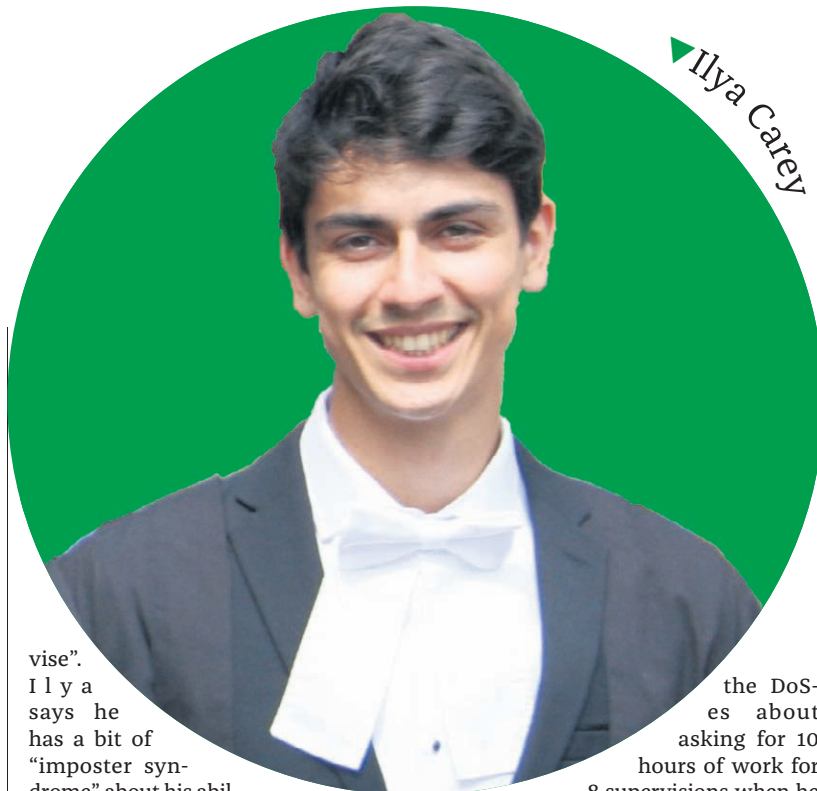
Among the things he has documented is a recent side hustle of growing stick insects. “These Pokemon, bland little things become fancier as they undergo their developmental stages”. He was given a dozen stick insects by a friend-of-a-friend in his second year and resorted to selling the eggs that they laid on eBay, making a 100-pound profit.

Ilya’s been on the last three Oxbridge Varsity ski trips and decided to “do a few Mash Foshs-style videos” in the Val Thorens ski resort. “In general, they’ve been fun”.

“With 3000 Oxbridge students in the alps, the Varsity ski trip is the biggest, oldest, and probably poshest ski trip in the world.” Ilya recounted how “on the coach to the resort, some girls from Oxford were talking about their trust funds and how to avoid inheritance tax”. It “came across a bit out of touch”.

While Oxbridge students are typically “defensive about their privilege”, flexing their privilege “really comes out” on the ski trip.

Ilya worked as a supervisor for the Part IB BioNatSci paper, Evolution and Animal Diversity, teaching four students (one of whom dropped out) at Selwyn and Clare. The Department would “take anyone to be honest” and “no training of any sort, or guidance, was provided – you kind of have to turn up and super-



vise”.

I l y a
says he
has a bit of
“imposter syn-
drome” about his abil-

ities as a supervisor. Although Ilya said “he probably wasn’t the best supervisor, he adds: “I was better than the worst supervisor I had, a PhD student who hadn’t studied as an undergrad at Cambridge, who couldn’t answer questions or get back to me”. As Ilya had sat the same Tripos paper three years ago, he hoped that he could provide his students with useful practical guidance on how to do well.

“
The supervision
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”

Ilya described the supervision system at Cambridge as “a lottery” and commented that the “pay isn’t good”. The Cambridge supervision system does not enumerate supervisors for marking, but Ilya further elaborated that he “was not told how to mark essays” and had to be inspired by previous supervisors. He hopes that there could be “better communication from DoSes and course organisers”. He got into a disagreement with one of

the DoS-
es about
asking for 10
hours of work for
8 supervisions when he

provided a few ninety-minute supervisions. While this was eventually resolved, Ilya remarks that “there’s no way he could be a supervisor long-term”.

As Ilya starts a new chapter in Switzerland, so does his channel, which will be renamed soon as Ilya tries to get away from Cambridge. He will be working on Evolutionary Biology, editing DNA in Bacteria and working in bioinformatics. Although he has “years to decide”, he wants to do “something he enjoys rather than Consulting or Banking”, and maybe will go into industry or academia if he enjoys research.

On the topic of a potential career in reality TV, Ilya commented that the “average Cambridge student wouldn’t fit on Love Island” as “most Oxbridge students don’t have the same social skills or experience with partners” and there are “some emotionally and socially stunted students”. Yet, the Cambridge STEM stereotype clearly hasn’t put off “someone who scouts for Big Brother” from getting in touch with Ilya to be on the show.

Although he’s not sure that he will get enough allocated holidays on his PhD program to cover a six-week stint in the Big Brother House, Ilya hopes to accept it if he “gets an offer to be on the cast”. While Ilya is moving on from Cambridge, he may end up gracing our screens very soon.

Trinity Hall Medic YouTuber, Rosia Li, talks about faith and productivity

Suchir Salhan and Tom Malloch

One of the newer faces of the Cambridge YouTube scene, Rosia Li is a lifestyle vlogger currently in her second year at Trinity Hall, studying medicine. She started her channel back during GCSEs, encouraged by friends asking for study tips. Now her channel has grown to more than six thousand subscribers. We reached out to her to discuss what motivates her to create videos and how she thinks it has helped improve student access.

Rosia’s videos provide an opportunity for people to learn more about Cambridge in a less formal way, and with-

out the difficulties travelling here can pose. Her viewers are prospective Cambridge applicants looking to glean more information than can be found from faculty websites and open days. Similar to her motivation to study medicine, Rosia said that she has an “external motivation to help different people”.

With that comes a more challenging question; we ask her for her views on the danger of ‘toxic productivity’ and presenting a misleading picture of Cambridge. Rosia tells us that she makes an effort to be as true to life as possible in her vlogs – although she feels that didn’t highlight how “Cambridge isn’t easy” nor did she “record her mental break-

down” last year.

Being Christian, she expresses genuine gratitude for her work and life that’s easy to lose sight of during term, assured that her life will be fulfilling regardless of deadlines or short-term challenges. “The most important lesson at University is not the Krebs cycle – although that’s cool”. Cambridge students should “reframe work as a privilege rather than something that pulls us down. The world is still spinning”, even if you don’t finish a problem sheet or an essay. “Even when it’s overwhelming, it’s important to realise your own limits”.

Rosia has spent the last week help-

ing organise the *Human* events week run by the Cambridge Christian Union, a week of events exploring ‘what makes us who we are’. She seeks solace in the rational and finite nature of life. “One thing about medicine is the pressure”.

It “helps to draw on internal joy as a Christian. It’s okay to be stressed and anxious. If you fail your exams, you still have resits. If you fail resits, you still have Christ. If you die, you still have heaven.” This message of positivity underpins and encapsulates the spirit of Rosia’s channel. “My deep-seated happiness cannot be taken from me”.

ROSIA LI ►



vulture.

The brightest band in the galaxy: An interview with Quasar



Georgie Atkinson

Encyclopedia Britannica happily informs me that the definition of Quasar is, “an astronomical object of very high luminosity found in the centre of some galaxies. The brightest quasars can outshine all of the stars in the galaxies in which they reside”. This interesting naming convention is clearly a nod towards former band member, saxophonist and astronomer Matt Nixon. Quasar burst onto the scene post pandemic, evolving from the band Syzygie (another astronomical term, as you can tell

there is a theme), occupying a unique place in the Cambridge band scene. I sat down with band members Felix and Fin to chat to discuss where they saw the band’s place in Cambridge, and how the band’s unique blend of Hip-Hop and Jazz is subtly taking Cambridge by storm.

What immediately struck me was the academic diversity within the band from a medic to an architect, to a PhD physicist, the band perhaps reiterates that within Cambridge you often find yourself interacting with people you may never have encountered otherwise. Whilst the photoshoot was perhaps a logistical nightmare to organise, it is clear to see that when you remove the chaos of a Cambridge

timetable — the band perform with an ease and relaxed nature that can calm even the most frantic of Undergraduates.

Felix has an impressive background in the Cambridge music scene, usually if there is a Hip-Hop society, Ensemble or Jazz Orchestra, Felix may have only been a stone’s throw away. Felix’s organisational skills clearly play an important role in galvanising the band as well as playing guitar and keys. Fin also happily moonlights as the drummer in the Ilfords, demonstrating that there is a musical pedigree running through Quasar.

Post-Covid, Felix and former Syzygie members felt the need to reset the band, and when the op-

portunity arose to have not just one, but two rappers, they jumped at the chance. Admittedly, one of the rapper’s (Vince) is on a year abroad, but having seen the band perform after headliner’s Rudimental at John’s May Ball last year, I can confirm that the band’s unique blend of rap and lyricism produces a delightful result, especially with two rappers. The full list of band members include: Fin Gerand on Drums, Gabriel Duval on Bass, Feliz Asare taking up both the Keys and Guitar, with Tom Joashi on Saxophone, Sarah

Continued on page 23 ►

Keeping time in Cambridge

Isabella Bottle on making time in a city that doesn't run like clockwork

The things we do to make something of our time here, the ways Cambridge marks time for us, and our attempts to make more of it as the future looms are what shape each eight-week term in this city. Having seen so much of it pass in such a conscious way, Cambridge as a place seems to have gained much of its character through its attempts to mark time, with each of the twentieth-century colleges and accommodation blocks having been built in the hopes of making something ahead of its time, while simultaneously predicting what timelessness might look like. In this sense, we students share the very same concerns, with the real stress of Cambridge life being that we do something that means our time here leaves a mark in some way, and in doing so allow our future selves to feel that being here was time well spent.

Amongst the lectures and deadlines that make up the framework of a weekly metat-

ble, the fabric of the city itself and the way we move through it seem to act as another clock entirely, and for far more than telling the time. The chimes of college chapel and church bells that ring on the hour, and in some places every 15 minutes, are less indicators of the time than a way of making you think about how far you've moved since the last one, how much you've made of that time and how long you have left until it's time to move on.

Similarly, the swathes of graduating students drawn across town into Senate House every now and again force us to ask the same questions, like a changing of the seasons but instead of the trees looking again as they did last year there are people dressed exactly as you did for matriculation, and exactly as you will when it's your own time to move on. In the passage beside Senate House there is a sundial clock, which, like the gold Corpus Clock and the faceless clock at St John's, seems impossible to read but again somehow makes time



◀ DANIEL HILTON

move in a different way as you pass it.

Perhaps its not that these objects are clocks at all that encourages you to at least think in slow-motion as you notice them, but, like with much of the architecture in Cambridge, maybe it is that incomprehensible sense of history that we hope through looking, and through slowing down, will make a mark on us somehow. Yet Cambridge also has a way of making time move unbelievably fast, partly in the way that running through the city is a river with punters who cruise at a pace that seems so completely detached from the deadlines you are rushing to meet, but also in being a space where we can both expand and slow time down ourselves. Hearing choirs from college chapels, seeing rowers on the river, watching a play or making one happen are ways that we shape time to mean something more than its tendency to escape us somehow. Even in the run up to the end of term when all that time seems

to have drifted past so easily in retrospect, these are the things that make it seem so fast and yet so slow all at the same time.

While the essay deadlines and hours spent reading seem to consume our time in ways most noticeable when people-watching through a library window, the ways that Cambridge marks our time and what we do to make more of it seem to stop time from consuming us completely. Maybe then working up until the last minute, running late and running out of time is encouraged by the way time works in the city itself, by that rush of people you join on bikes at ten-to-nine on a weekday morning, or by the urge to walk with an especially livened pace to move through the crowds of tourists on King's Parade, who seem to have all the time in the world to ponder a clock that seems impossible to read, and strikes a hammer on a coffin to mark the passing of every hour.

Why I'm a concrete hater

Sofia Johanson explores Cambridge's more scenic buildings in hope of finding inspiration

Have you ever seen the Wolfson building at Trinity? Rising like a monstrous geometric shark fin from amongst the charming passageways and wide bay windows that make up Whewell's, this diabolical edifice provided me with a home during my first six months at Cambridge. Not one that I wished to spend much time in. Aside from the curious incident of a stolen toilet seat (culprit still unknown), I was desperate to stay out of my barren, sterile room as much as physically possible, avoiding doing any work there and always arranging to see friends in their accommodation.

Why? Because it was so unbelievably ugly, and I am genuinely convinced that the lack of any sense of warmth robbed me of comfort, spurring me on to seek new spaces where I could truly feel at home. My distaste is certainly a result of being disgust-

ingly spoiled when it comes to pretty buildings with historical significance. The building where my secondary school is located housed Handel as composer-in-residence in 1717, and my primary school is a listed building that appears in Stanley Kubrick's *A Clockwork Orange*, and provided Second World War spy Eddie Chapman with a home. So I've clearly been conditioned to learn and explore in places defined by beauty and history. This made transitioning to the Raised Faculty Building a challenge.

You will be relieved to learn that I have managed to cope. No, I haven't learnt to love the lack of windows in the MMLL Library, the undeniably phallic design of the UL, nor the striking (read: awful) Queens' building that you can see from the Backs.

I often grit my teeth and tolerate the ugliness of the aforementioned buildings.

I tell myself that I really need a stable internet connection to get my essay done, and rather than sit in Michaelhouse Cafe unable to access JSTOR, but able to gaze up at the ceiling and marvel at the genius idea of putting a cafe in a church, I roll my eyes and wander over to the sliding-door insulated 'bunker' in the MMLL library.

But when I always find I've found Trinity the Knox

I have the choice, you will me elsewhere. This year myself in Emma chapel, Hall hall (haha), and Shaw room at Sidney, each location providing me with memories in a beautiful setting. Simply put, when I look back on my time at Cambridge, I don't want to think of brutalist architecture and austere classrooms, and with such an abundance of beautiful courtyards, pretty librar-

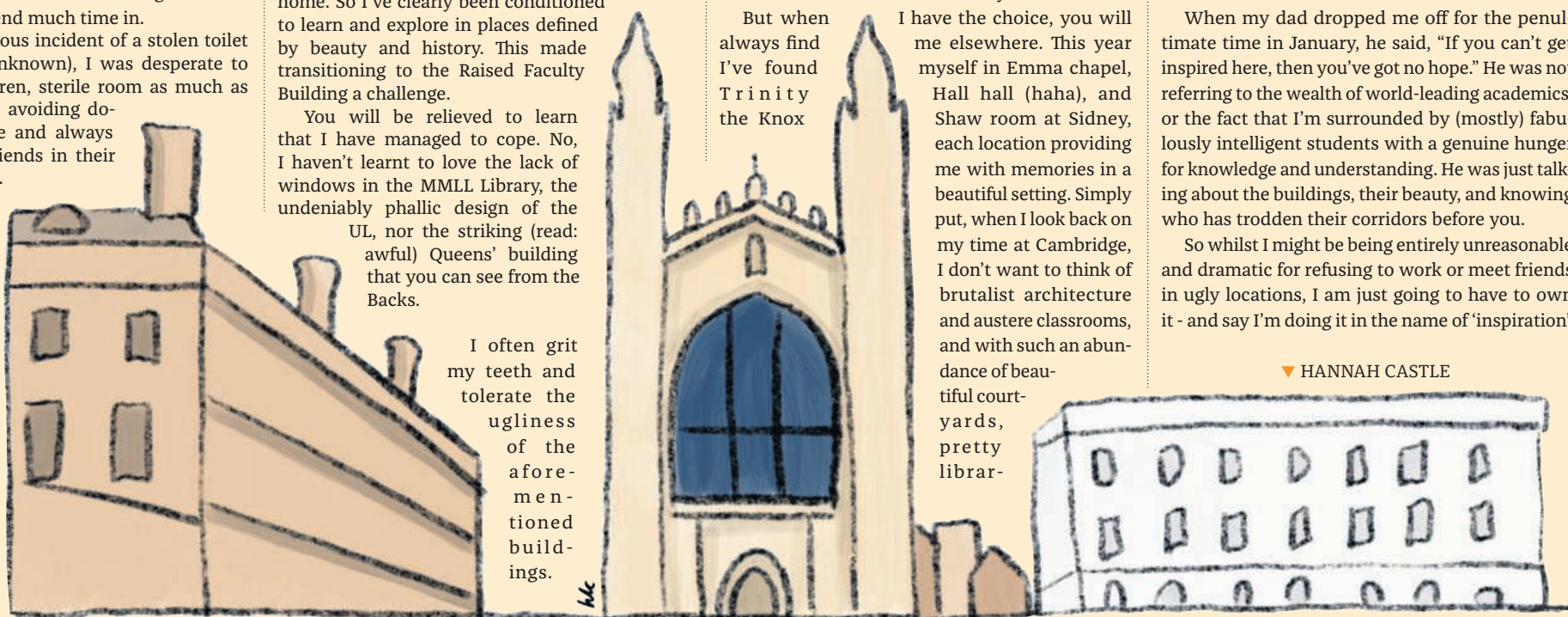
ies, and bay windows, why would I allow this to become a possibility?

I'm sure many people simply couldn't care less about what the room in which they are studying, eating, socialising or sleeping looks like. Excellent: you won't take my spot on King's Parade where I can stare at that Caius turret.

When my dad dropped me off for the penultimate time in January, he said, "If you can't get inspired here, then you've got no hope." He was not referring to the wealth of world-leading academics, or the fact that I'm surrounded by (mostly) fabulously intelligent students with a genuine hunger for knowledge and understanding. He was just talking about the buildings, their beauty, and knowing who has trodden their corridors before you.

So whilst I might be being entirely unreasonable and dramatic for refusing to work or meet friends in ugly locations, I am just going to have to own it - and say I'm doing it in the name of 'inspiration'.

▼ HANNAH CASTLE



The Cambridge legend of inter-collegiate beef

Paddy Davies Jones ruminates on the legend of Corpus-Kings rivalries...and cows

Cambridge has a whole menagerie of associated animals. The heraldry of the University and its colleges is replete with cockerels and pelicans, owls and eagles, deers and unicorns, lions of questionable shades (I refer of course to the strange blue cat that Emmanuel College seems to have mocked up in MS Paint ...) But let's not kid ourselves. Magdalene can cling to its peacock; the true animal that represents Cambridge is the cow. The humble *Bos Taurus* plods across the city's fens and greens with a heavy sort of gracefulness, eliciting delight from residents, students, and tourists and that frequent, joyful exclamation – "Cows!"

The most iconic of these cows are of course those that graze on the field of the King's College backs. They occupy the foreground of endless bucolic snapshots, reproduced in postcards and Instagram stories. These cows seem to embody Cambridge at its most glorious, most aggressively picturesque. They're iconic enough to have been the subject of an April Fools' prank in another Cambridge-based student publication that shall not be named.

Yet, like so much of Cambridge, they are also a subject of rumour. The internet attests to the (almost certainly apocryphal) suggestion that they graze their field in order to block the construction of new John's accommodation, or the (distinctly more plausible) tale that they have occasionally

been slaughtered and served up at college hall. Yet I'm aware of one rumour regarding these cows that seems yet to be posted online, so I feel a personal duty to spread awareness on this urgent matter.

Ask any student of Corpus Christi College – of which I too am a member – and they'll probably inform you, with a distinct sort of central-college confidence, that *the cows are ours*. King's College, in its regal shamelessness, stole our cows!

A desire still burns in the
Corpus student body to get
our cows back

How exactly this is meant to have happened is the subject of some dispute. One suggestion has it that the land on which the field sits was originally the property of Corpus, and that when King Henry IV appropriated a chunk of central Cambridge to be the site of his Eton Mark II, he took our bovine with him as well. As far as I could tell this is entirely untrue. It's also less fun than the other version of the tale – that we lost the cows to King's College in a bet.

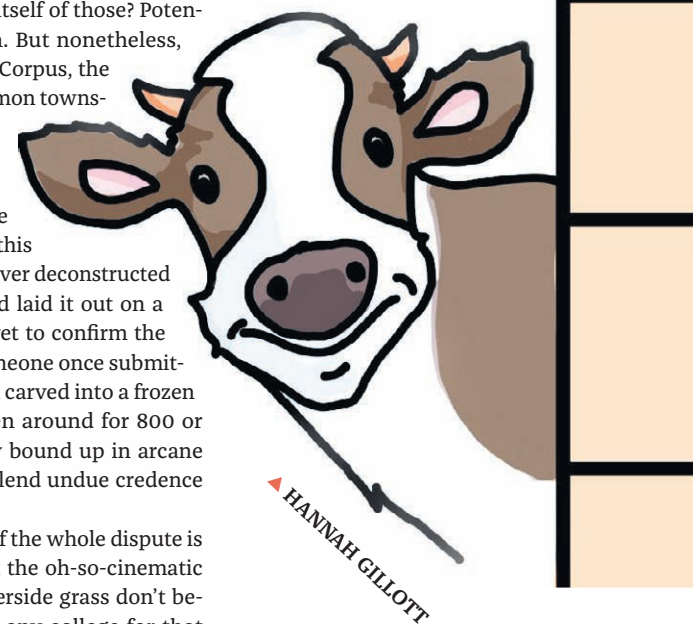
A desire still burns in the Corpus student body

to get our cows back. I've hatched a few drunken – mostly joking, but what if? – plans to steal them back with fellow Corpuscles. Could one, for instance, spirit them off up the Cam in a get-away punt? Or dress them up as tourists and have the always thorough King's porters turf them out onto the A1134? Wrap them in communist flags, since King's seems to like ridding itself of those? Potentially flawed plans of action. But nonetheless, the perception remains that Corpus, the only college founded by common townspeople, had its herd snatched away from it by the whims of a monarch.

Expect of course that, like most Cambridge mythology, this is all total bunk. No, nobody ever deconstructed the Mathematical Bridge and laid it out on a lawn in the 1960s. I'm still yet to confirm the veracity of the claim that someone once submitted their English coursework carved into a frozen fish. The University has been around for 800 or so years – in a place already bound up in arcane quirkiness, it is tempting to lend undue credence to urban myths.

But in truth, the premise of the whole dispute is unfounded. It turns out that the oh-so-cinematic cows that munch on the riverside grass don't belong to Corpus or King's or any college for that

matter. And as far as I'm aware no one has ever subjected them to a bet or nicked them. In actuality, they belong to the local farmer who rents the field and who, I imagine, is tired of the speculation. Vive les vaches – may they graze in peace.



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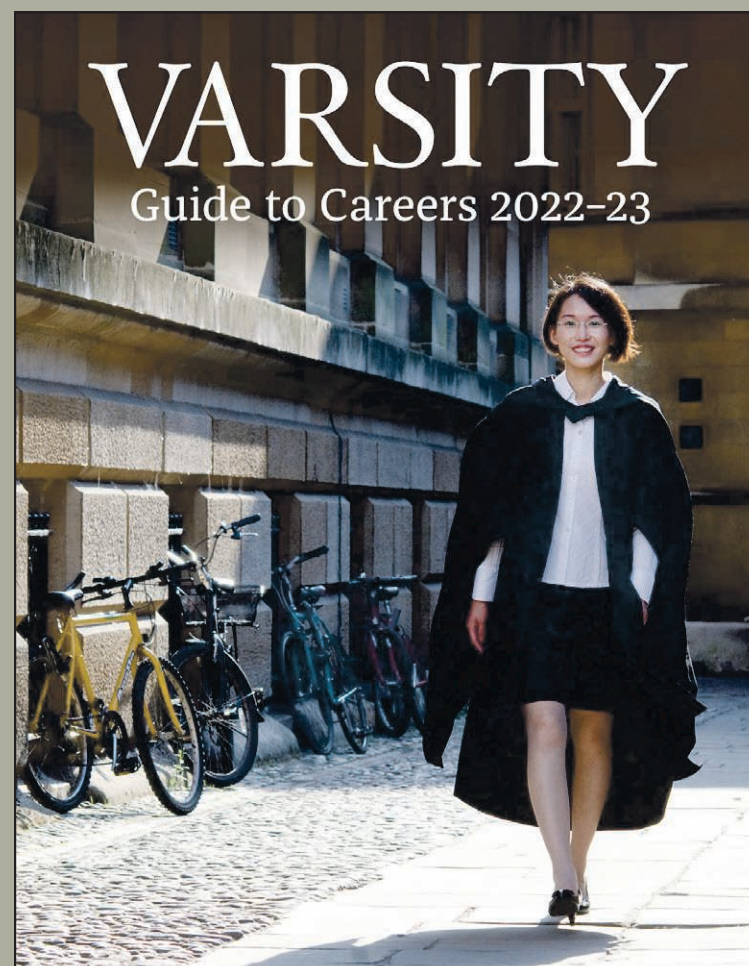
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Arts

The history of the love heart

Anna Wythe delves into the complicated and bloody history of the popular romantic symbol

Shiny. Succinct. Cute and cartoonish. I can't deny I'm a frequent user of the heart emoji. The bouncy red symbol is at my fingertips for even the most trivial of occasions. There's something oddly fascinating about sending these plump little dopamine hits into the world. I have an infinite supply and they cost me nothing, except perhaps my soul.

The love heart symbol has little in common with the organ that pumps blood around our bodies. We've done away with the ventricles and the arteries that bind it into our veins. In fact, we've utterly decontextualized it. The symbol exists outside of the body as though it was always that way. There is no sense of the wrenched or torn. My phone screen doesn't fill with blood each time I ping away a cartoon heart.

Just about the only cartoon I've ever watched is *Tom & Jerry*. On the crackly TV screen, life-threatening injuries disappeared in a matter of seconds. The antagonistic cat and mouse could be crushed by telegraph poles or trapped in freezers and bounce back to full strength while their enemy still was gloating. A cartoon heart has the same resilience, and the same unreality.

The iconography of love has a dark side. More martyrdom and meta-morphosis than sheer mawkishness.

Of course, love can be sweet, and I have no argument with those who find in it only care and affection. Yet, part of the miracle is finding yourself suddenly undergoing open heart surgery with no anaesthetic. In love, we reach for art. We twist words to articulate the wounds that leave no mark, the sense that everything is ruptured and our bodies are inside out.

In Joseph Plunkett's poem about Christ, the world of the lover is saturated by the beloved; the flowers are saturated with his blood.

It commemorates the idea of love as sacrifice, an idea which has seeped darkly into our minds, for better or for worse.

It's no secret that St. Valentine was a Christian martyr. He earned his romantic reputation by scribbling a note to his sweetheart in the hours before he was killed. This story finds a curious parallel in Plunkett's own life. Our poet was an Irish Nationalist. In 1916, he joined the Easter Rising, a rebellion against British rule, only to be captured and sentenced to death. He married his beloved in the prison chapel mere

hours before his execution.

"I see his blood upon the rose." Plunkett's poem brings us to the other Valentine's Day staple: an overpriced bouquet from M&S. Flowers might lack the obvious body horror of a love heart but they lead us once again to the theme of violence. In Greek mythology, every tear or drop of blood seems to burst into bloom. The blood of Adonis gave us windflowers; the blood of Hyacinthus gave us the larkspur; the tears of Echo gave us the Narcissus flower. Such flowers seem hard-won, not only bled but mourned into existence.

I have no desire to ruin 14th February for you, quite the opposite. Something is lost when we flatten and commodify the iconography of love. Love has the ability to recalibrate the boundaries between the self and the world, the self and the beloved. Such upheaval is, at least metaphorically, a violent process, not to mention the possibilities of grief and sacrifice it binds us to. Love is rarely cute. It certainly isn't pre-packaged and nougat-centred. Perhaps then, it's no bad thing that our roses are stained with blood and our emojis are torn from our chests.

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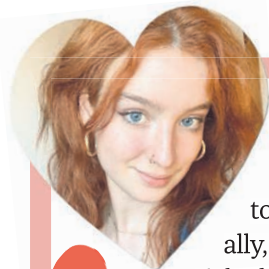
Romantic or Romant-ick? Arts Editors **Leo** and **Emily** go head to head on love poetry

Leo: Shoving pieces of ourselves into similes and stanzas can be difficult, vulnerable, and honestly a bit cringe. In the words of Elizabeth Bishop: "There's nothing more embarrassing than being a poet". But poetry is also brilliant for the very same reason. It gives us the chance to get creative with everyday life, to make memories speak in surprising voices. In my opinion, the best love poems are subtle. They are as in love with life as they are with any specific person. When Wendy Cope finished a poem with "I love you. I'm glad I exist.", she spent the rest of it talking about how happy a "huge orange" made her. So yeah, if you're itching to pen a Shakespearean sonnet this Valentine's Day, don't. But if there's an afternoon you spent with people you love – friends, family, or a partner – why not try putting it in a poem? Even if it does feel a bit cringe.



Vs.

Emily: Call me heartless and unsentimental, but the thought of a love poem being penned in my name is enough to make me want to take a permanent dip in the Cam. Actually, the germs in the Cam would probably make me feel less sick than a romantic poem addressed to me. I shudder to think what bad metaphors could be attached to me, or the fact that I'd have to just grin and bear it as I listen to 14 lines of a sonnet. If it's really the thought that counts, please be thoughtful enough to just take me out for coffee because I am not the soppy romantic gesture type. Or am I? Is this reverse conditioning that I'm doing right now, desperate for someone to write me a soppy sestina? Anyone brave enough to find out, please email me your declarations of undying love in verse form on 14th Feb, I dare you.



A classically literate guide on how *not* to find love



Is your love life practically non-existent? Can't muster up the courage to talk to that hoodie-wearing STEM bro in your lecture hall? Getting jealous of your flatmate and their sickeningly cute relationship? Well, what could be better for you, the romantically-challenged but well-read Cambridge student, than looking to your favourite works of literature for tips on how to improve your love life?

1. Dress up as an old woman in an attempt to get your crush to confess their feelings for you. Lock up your mad wife in the attic – there's no need to bother your fiancée with that information just yet. Bigamy is chill as long as she doesn't find out. (*Jane Eyre*)

2. Dance reluctantly, maintaining a surly persona. Insult her looks, malign her family and social position, then ardently declare your love. Extra points if you have a nice house. For additional romance points, make sure you are utterly toe-curlingly awkward throughout. (*Pride and Prejudice*)

3. Idealise her beyond belief ... but if she brings up actual feelings (ew, disgusting), change the conversation to cows. (*Anna Karenina*)

4. Break and enter through her window to watch her slumber. Tell her that you sparkle. Say things like: "This is the skin of a killer". Introduce her to your family who are always one papercut away from munching on her like a Gardies kebab at 2am. So brooding. So appealing. (*Twilight*)

5. Tell her husband that a biblical flood is coming to wipe him out, causing him to sleep in the bathtub so you and her can get some alone time. Lies and infidelity are the perfect way to set a ro-

mantic vibe. (*The Miller's Tale*)

6. Stab her cousin. Nothing says 'true love' like violent and bloody murder that will inevitably lead to your exile. After all, everyone likes a bad boy. (*Romeo and Juliet*)

7. Stab her father. This will never not work. (*Hamlet*)

8. After your numerous advances are inevitably rejected, marry her sister. (*Little Women*)

9. Leave her with a baby and die of shame very, very publicly. The more public the better to be honest. (*The Scarlet Letter*)

10. Die and haunt him, knocking on his window and roaming the moors. You may be dead but romance definitely isn't. (*Wuthering Heights*)

Alternatively, for a romantic ambience taken from the some of the greatest writers, date in graveyards, because fancy restaurants are just so overdone these days. This tip was brought to you by Mary and Percy Shelley (and because that's not extra enough, they met each time by the gravestone of her dead mother). Equally swoon-worthy pursuits include only being romantically involved with people who have the same name as you (hello, Samuel Taylor Coleridge). And this above all: you are the authors of your own cringe-worthy stories.

And there you have it! Follow any of the utterly romantic examples here and you'll never be unlucky in love again. Good luck, all you hopeless romantics out there! (Note: *Varsity* does not take responsibility for any embarrassment, bodily harm, or restraining orders that may occur from following the advice in this article.)

Welcome to the jungle!

Dylan Sudworth asks DJ Norpell all about the 'London-centric' genre

I met Norpell just after a lecture at the 5 Blends Coffee House on Mill Road. He cycles into view with a large grin on his face. Norpell is a second-year philosophy student at Caius, deputy head of policy at the Wilberforce society, model, and outspoken advocate for Tibetan independence. Fresh off a main stage set playing at Cambridge Junction, he is a mainstay of the Cambridge music scene, synonymous with a trademark smile, gun fingers and energetic presence. As well as distinctive with his own brand of Jungle, layering complex, faced paced, erratic beats with elements of Reggae and Dancehall. I first came across Norpell DJing for a



▲ PHOTO BY NORPELL WILBERFORCE

friend's college engagement party. Tucked into the corner of a College gatehouse, playing to a room of still slightly awkward freshers — turning a somewhat strange college party into what could have been a club dance floor in a matter of minutes.

Perched with a coffee overlooking Mill Road, he was full of passion and caffeine. I asked him what drew him to Jungle specifically. "I actually remember the moment I heard my first jungle song — it was then that I turned from a boy into a man". Recalling a hazy party in his hometown of Hastings at the age of 18, he had a eureka moment. "Someone put on mbeat (one of Jungle's eminent producers), as soon as I recovered my senses I asked my mate for the song and that was the start of a beautiful relationship".

His life prior to Cambridge is clearly a big influence on his music. He DJs on a set of decks given to him by a friend's dad. He described him as an "old school Northern acid house head", a DJ in the 90s rave scene. It seems fitting that Norpell carries on this legacy, (a DJ so inspired by the sounds and styles of a rave scene before his time), to be using equipment baptised in warehouse raves from the golden era of raving.

I was curious to ask Norpell about what makes Cambridge particularly unfriendly to the Jungle scene. "It has remained a pretty London-centric genre (at least to the average person) and associated with the underground and therefore the racial and social backgrounds that

tend to correlate with that, the very same social and racial backgrounds that I don't think Cambridge represents".

He seemed anxious to talk about misconceptions around the Jungle genre and its general perception around Cambridge: "when people ask me what I mix and I say jungle, I'm met by a look of bewilderment". He argues that most people "try to bracket

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Jungle...smother it into DnB and raving". He noted that people consider the genre to be simplistic, associated with drug abuse, and regarded with little appreciation of the distinctiveness of Jungle itself. "Jungle is one of the most culturally and musically sophisticated things to come out of the UK scene and it deserves a bit more credit than that".

Norpell is especially disparaging about the majority of Cambridge nightlife. "Cambridge club nights are very musically uninteresting", adding that the typical experience of being "in the smoking area of Revs with someone's elbow in your right ear

and someone's kneecap in your left" wasn't particularly to his liking. "Last term of last year, there was a Grandma Groove night and I think this particular grandma grooved a little bit too hard, there may be some personal reasons for maybe not wanting to meet a couple of bouncers again".

It remains to be seen whether Norpell's aversion to Revs is due to a lack of identification with the music, or whether he is simply banned. I decided not to press him further in case of bringing up some Grandma Groove related trauma. I instead question whether there are any good alternatives. "On the surface, the Cambridge music scene is pretty homogenous but there are definitely pockets of the good stuff. Big shout out to ArcSoc, they're doing the most to make an antidote to the usual Wednesday revs".

He adds that he is planning his own event to celebrate Tibetan New Year (the 21st February) and to raise some funds for Tibetan charities. It seems an apt combination of Norpell's passions; fresh off a Tibetan Buddhist retreat in Northern India in the Summer and with his own experiences in a Tibetan refugee camp as a child. Norpell is extremely passionate about Tibetan independence, and clearly wants to utilise his talents to do some good whilst showcasing an alternative side of Cambridge nightlife to more people.

Norpell leaves me with some recommendations to give me a better insight into the genre. As a clearly talented DJ, he is definitely someone to look out for in events around Cambridge. I'm left with both a strong desire to listen to some Jungle, and a crushing sense of inferiority. He is just so annoyingly cool.

Continued from cover

O'Callaghan as the Singer and Reece D'Souza being the band's Rapper.

At most May Ball's renditions of Valerie seem to be perpetually played, however Quasar have carved out a place for themselves. Felix noted that there is definitely a place and demand for more Hip-Hop in Cambridge but when looking for another Hip-Hop based band to perform with, the other acts are not necessarily there.

When listening to the band perform, the Ezra Collective immediately springs to mind. There is an ease to the flow and blend of the arrangement, with Reece's bars being impressive and seemingly never-ending. On asking about how the compositions come into being, Felix noted that the band improv a lot together and Reece will rap over the top with, "an infinite well of bars".

It is this limitless nature unique to Quasar, that allows the band to perform in a style that is refreshing on the Cambridge landscape.

It will be admittedly rather cheesy of me to say but akin to the definition of Quasar itself, the band perhaps outshine the other bands on the Cambridge scene. Due to perform at the Beyond Borders gig on the 21st of February at Revs, it would be a worthwhile endeavour to undertake in Week 5.



The Anti-Hero — Taylor Swift versus ChatGPT

Emmy Warr sees whether Taylor Swift can be matched by AI

Taylor Swift has won it all: 12 Grammys, 40 American Music Awards, a doctorate from New York University, the hearts of millions, my laptop home screen. I could go on. But one question remains: can she beat the bots?

Putting aside my absolute certainty that she is the greatest songwriter of all time, and my deep, existential fear of artificial intelligence, I asked ChatGPT to write a Taylor Swift song. The results, my fellow humanities students will be glad to hear, were dreadful.

Maybe it's a testament to how extensive and varied Swift's discography is, but without specific direction, ChatGPT coughed up incomprehensible drivel. Prompted with "write a Taylor Swift song", it produced something so vague and discordant, it was practically a word cloud with "love" in the middle. Surely the technology responsible for talking fridges and self-driving cars can do better than this.

After some experimentation, I landed on "write a Taylor Swift indie-pop song about Joe Alwyn (her partner of seven years) but don't mention his name", which seemed to be the best way to have the AI emulate her more recent music.

At long last the song produced was almost passable as an imitation of a Swift song, opening: "I met

someone special in the dark/ with eyes so blue, they lit up my heart". It's clunky and basic, but the broad features of a *Reputation* track are here: themes of dark and light, secret love, a vague description of Alwyn that doesn't give too much away. If you squint, it could be Swift at her most mediocre.

As the song comes into its chorus, the clichés, which were previously giving directions from the passenger seat, take over at the wheel. "You're the beat in my chest, the air that I breathe/ the home that I rest, the love that I need" sounds like a nursery rhyme written by The Chainsmokers.

By the time we reach the end of the bridge ("together we'll chase our dreams and hold on tight/ 'cause our love will conquer all, day and night"), it is painfully clear that this is not a song written by a human- not because it's emotionless or cold (although it certainly is both of those things), but because it doesn't quite make sense. The stiffness of the wording, the frantic jumps between ideas; there is nothing here that even aims at fluency, never mind coherent storytelling.

Swift has a habit of delivering the simplest lines in the most gut-wrenchingly meaningful way, and there *are* phrases in this song that have the potential to be heavy-hitters: "this love is real", "you're the best thing that's ever happened to me", but their

context betrays them.

The simplicity of "It's me, hi/ I'm the problem it's me" (from Swift's "Anti-Hero") is clearly deliberate, when it is featured alongside lines as deeply incisive and cleverly constructed as "did you hear my covert narcissism/ I disguise as altruism/ like some kind of congressman". ChatGPT doesn't have this contrast — the simple lyrics really *are* just simple. This highlights the fundamental problem with AI generated "art": it lacks intention and focus. It can only ever be an amalgamation of things already made: it will never be original.

For now, at least, she can rest easy knowing that nothing, human or otherwise, is coming for her crown.

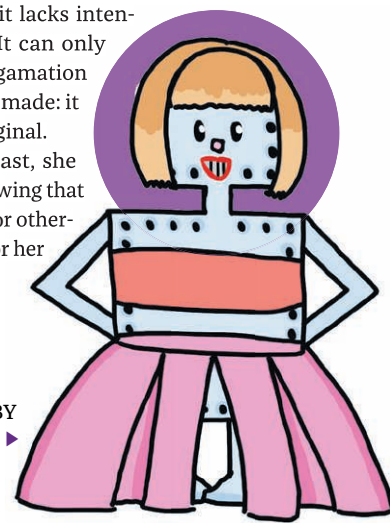


ILLUSTRATION BY
FAMKE GILLOTT ▶

Fashion



The season of love is upon us. Romance is in the air, birds are chirping, and sweet nothings are getting sent in to Crushbridge. For those braving the Cambridge dating scene, the excitement and nervousness of a first date is enough to handle without the dreadfully daunting task of figuring out what to possibly wear. Although Valentine's Day is usually visually awash with dainty red hearts, lacey frills, and plenty of pink bows, your Pinterest board probably isn't a good indicator of your actual date fits. Partaking in some very serious investigative journalism, we explored what Cambridge students are wearing in their romantic pursuits by setting them up on some incredibly fake first dates. Sparks are flying (or hopelessly sputtering?) and many a cosy knit is being worn: here's how Cambridge dresses for affairs of the heart.

Joining his fake date for a coffee on King's Parade, Elliot tells us: "My logic is to dress up a bit more than just jeans because I think everyone likes to feel like they've had an effort made for them on the first date". Opting for chinos, a shirt and a long coat, he keeps it smart, but adds interest with his "Keith Haring high top shoes with matching socks" and his astronaut pendant necklace (not an Among Us charm as his date, Audrey, originally feared). Audrey has a similar approach but is more cautious of the long-game implications saying: "I do want to look my best, but not too extra because then they're only going to see me looking worse from then on". We appreciate the realism. Breaking Elliot's no jean rule, she opted for the classic "nice top and jeans" combo, sporting a red cami vest with lace detailing along with a gold necklace for a cute Valentine's touch.

Other daters favoured these similarly more casual looks, such as Yuval, whose approach was "effortfully trying to be effortless" or Kayinsola who goes "quite casual on the first date", with "makeup and jewellery to accentuate". On his "romantic" stroll around Cam (bouquet of half-bloomed Mainsbury's flowers in hand) Azim revealed how he chooses to take effortless chic to the next - worrying low - level. Wearing a jumper that was "the first thing in my wardrobe" he says his criteria for a first date outfit is "if it's not sweaty and it's been washed recently". At least



Valentine's with Varsity

Sparks are flying (or hopelessly sputtering?) and many a cosy knit is being worn. Eden Keily-Thurstain & Isabel Dempsey explore how Cambridge dresses for affairs of the heart

Photographer: Daniel Hilton

Creative directors: Eden Keily-Thurstain and Isabel Dempsey

Models: Yuval Amichay, Kayinsola Amoo-Peters, Beatrice Coulter, Elliot Kelly, Jade Lai, Audrey Lim, Ed Lucas, Azim Patel, Varun Ravikumar, Quinn Vakharia

Cutouts: Eden Keily-Thurstain. Andrea Stöckel



Fashion

he's being honest – what more did we expect from a mathmo?

Discussing this mathmo stereotype on his riverside pizza date, Varun argues: “We mathmos are not likely to be showy – especially not in a rare interaction in the real world with a member of the opposite sex”. For many, dressing for a first date is about being true to yourself and expressing your personality. For vegan Varun, it was important for his outfit to be “entirely vegan and cruelty-free”. In this same vein of self-expression, Jade made an effort to stay true to her personal style with her accessories: “I am known in my friend group to always have hair accessories, so I thought I was very true to my character” she says, showing off the delicate pink gems and flowers dotted around her hair. However, it's also important to flatter your best features too. Ed reveals, between bites of ice-cream, that he chose his jumper because he “was once told that green brings out my eyes so I thought that was a good decision to make”. Wise choice on his part.

Others went more daring in their self-expression, really re-



joining in the spirit of the Valentine's vibes. Beatrice gave us plenty of pastels and (in her words) a “ridiculously short skirt” in her look. She tells us she has “a complicated relationship with my body. So I always try to show it off wherever I can just because I've worked really hard for it and spent a lot of money on it” she quips. Discussing her pansexuality, she says she'll usually consider “who's the person and what are they into? Like, if it's a guy I will usually dress differently than if it's a girl or a non-binary person”. Also explaining how their sexuality affects their style, her fake date Quinn jokes about how much of their outfit from the “turtleneck” and “odd socks” to the “cuff jeans” and pride flag “gummy bear earrings” is due to their gay and trans identity.

The most important rule for any dating experience is to be true to yourself – and that includes your style. However, in the same way you might not choose to reveal your Pokémon card collection for the first few dates, you might want to amp up your average fits a little more than usual. And maybe (just maybe) consider putting in a tad more thought than pulling your first non-sweaty jumper off the bedroom floor.

Film & TV

Who you are based on your go-to Valentine's Day flick

Put the ice cream away and get ready for a roasting based on what soppy movie is your Valentine's Day go-to

Our Film & TV team aren't as sentimental as you lovers might expect and, for us, Valentine's Day is a welcome opportunity for some good old social anthropology. Put the Ben & Jerry's away and get ready for a roasting based on what soppy movie you class as your go-to. Single or taken, we're fed up with you all...

Portrait of a Lady on Fire

You're probably an MMLer with a superiority complex, and you've self-diagnosed what's causing your love life to fail: it's not your rusty rizz but English people. So you welcome your pending year-long escapade to Paris as an opportunity to penetrate a new culture in more ways than one. You think that the English have lost the key to romance and you'll finally be wined and dined on your Tinder dates as you deserve. But after getting over the 'she knows about wine' and 'OMG she's read Camus!' you'll realise that 'she' is just as predictable as the home-county rowers from whence you came. Your ability to converse in the language of love will not save you from the fact that people are awful everywhere (including yourself).

Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind

If emotionally unavailable was a movie... Sadly, you can't remember why this film is in your Letterboxd top 4 beyond your teenage fixation on Kate Winslet and that it gives you major cool points with any ex-Tumblr aficionado. Like

your inability to remember any plot-line ever, you're unable to remain interested in someone for longer than this movie's runtime. You're the type to write your crush sonnets before ghosting them out of boredom or, as you put it, your 'existential inability to love.' This Valentine's Day please consider swearing an oath of celibacy, to protect the rest of the sidge-dwelling population from your emotional scabies.

Inès Goes-Marlière (Staff Writer)

Friends with Benefits

You're a flatcast-addled horndog. You don't have to venture to the Revs smoking area to arrange a clinically emotionless sleeping arrangement — just head to your kitchen! Whenever that deal invariably ends in a hot, steaming mess and your friendship group is ruptured right down the middle, that's w^h--- you hit the town. A club night for you is like ChristianMingle.com come to life! On the prowl trying to find your Justin Timberlake, the best you'll go home with is a 2013 Justin Bieber lookalike instead. Remember to bring comfy shoes for the walk of shame!

About Time

You're either a male manipulator or a ginger apologist (same thing some would say). Either way, you crave paternal validation and yearn for the tender, lov-

ing embrace of Bill Nighy. A chronic overthinker, you spend way too much time obsessing over your most-klutzy brain-farts and have absolutely locked yourself in a cupboard, fists clenched, and eyes screwed shut in an effort to take it all back.

Sarah Higgins (2nd year MMLer)

The Notebook

You're a Camfess fiend who loves the drama. Quick on the draw with behind-the-scenes intel about Gosling and McAdams' real-life turbulent romance — 'did you know they actually hated each other while filming the movie?!' The Notebook's tear-jerking love story is positively packed with pathos and will give you full cathartic license to let your inner drama queen reign. Also, Noah definitely would've written a crushbridge about Allie.

Notting Hill

You're a college-puffer-wearing, Wednesday-revs-going normie. You see no harm in sticking to what you know, and Britain's favourite rom-com fits the bill perfectly. After all, is it really Valentine's Day is you've yet to get an eyeful of Julia Roberts' 1000-watt smile or an earful of Hugh Grant's trademark posh muttering? Like your standard Rumboogie, Notting Hill is littered with familiar faces but

still manages to throw up a few surprises (*wait - what's the guy from Downton Abbey doing here?*). Bound more by tradition than desire, you watch because you have to. And so, when Valentine's Day rolls around like a long-anticipated Wednesday night, you sheepishly press play. But hey — if it ain't broke!

Imogen Barnes (Staff Writer)

When Harry Met Sally

I'm guessing you're stuck in that awful, torturous purgatorial back-and-forth of the Harry and Sally will-they-won't-they sitch. Well, guess what? Unlike Ross and Rachel, no one cares if you will or you won't! Stop saying you're just friends when we all know what's happening behind closed doors. And stop boring us with your talk of "the one" only to go out and sleep with the fifth "one" this term. What's the biggie with monogamy these days.

10 Things I Hate About You

With poetry to make any English student cringe, 10 Things I Hate About You is that guy that turns up at your door fully decked out with boombox, chocolates, flowers and off-key singing. Maybe he's doing everything right but somehow, for all his bad-boy charm, you still feel lonely in his arms. With its naff rhyming couplets and its grand romantic gestures — all in the blasphemous name of Shakespeare — 10 Things I Hate About You is really 10 things that give me the ick.

Kezia Kurtz (Film & TV Editor)



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Cambridge film scene is a ‘community of chaos’, says film soc president

Is film doomed to be forever compared to the behemoth that is Cambridge theatre?



▲ PHOTO BY CUFA

Kezia Kurtz

Cambridge University has all the ingredients for a vibrant cinema scene: creative, ambitious students and lively Facebook pages to connect on, an established theatre scene full of aspiring actors, and equipment available to rent through CUFA. There is not a lack of originality, enthusiasm or artistic verve here. So, what's going wrong?

Sitting down with this year's CUFA President, Daisy Samra, I tried to get to the bottom of these questions. Asking her how she would describe the Cambridge film scene she slips out, "Well, I need to go for a positive one — not just chaotic. It's got a lot of potential."

"I didn't really know how to get started and I know that's the same for a lot of people," Daisy says, sympathising with the plight of motivated young filmmakers who enter this "community of chaos." "We want to grow it, [...] and make sure there are things that are easier to find, so you can dip your toes in first." While freshers stumble into sport, theatre, and even student journalism, there's no equivalent falling into filmmaking at this university. It requires a concerted effort to find opportunities, let alone sustain any attachment to them.

"You do see people making short films even though there's not much experience around," Daisy says, optimistically. But this is the exception and not the rule. People manage to succeed in filmmaking despite the absent film scene rather than because of it. Frustratedly, Daisy admits even she considered venturing into theatre as a more well-trodden avenue into the industry: "that's definitely something I've wavered on, because I'm very much interested in film and I think theatre's super cool but it's not really the same for me in terms of what I want to do. [...] Maybe I should get into the theatre scene because there's more available," especially regard-

ing "ways to get some kind of technical experience."

In some ways it's not surprising that the theatre scene has more fuel behind it. Invented just over a hundred years ago, cinema is comparatively new while theatre was around back when the first Cambridge college was founded in 1209.

Unlike the theatre scene, there aren't many entrenched schemes for young filmmakers to engage with. For example, the ADC runs an annual 24-Hour Musical project in which actors, directors, lighting technicians etc., produce and perform a musical in the crunch-time of 24 hours. This is perhaps a less trendy or attractive scheme than Fresh2Film, in which groups of creatives are mentored and supported by CUFA to make a short film over Michaelmas term. However, the 24-Hour Musical runs every year to a fabulous turnout, while some of the

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Maybe Footlights
is a more credible
avenue into the
industry
”

Fresh2Film schemes fall flat after just a few weeks. The momentum that the ADC can rev up because everyone is so eager to get involved is energy that student film projects cannot seem to sustain. While making a film you can quit anytime, so you have to be self-motivated. You don't have the boss of Corpus Playroom breathing down your neck to fill your Week 6 late-show position.

So, with alumni like Emma Thompson, maybe Footlights is a more credible avenue into the industry than to just pick up a camera and start rolling.

Cambridge theatre's long and prestigious history is tried and tested, while the film scene is still comparatively young and nervous in establishing itself on the Cambridge scene. Social climbers, nepo-babies and networkers alike roam the ADC's halls biting their lips waiting for their big-break. Is the film scene doomed to forever be compared to the mammoth that is Cambridge theatre?

"The thing we're still working on is trying to institutionalise it a bit more," Daisy says, imagining her ideal student film scene. "It would be more unified because there's a lot of little film things that crop up which is amazing (like more college-led screenings), but then the problem is that when it's based within the college if the next year nobody in that college wants to do it then it falls apart again." Not to mention it having a much smaller reach across the student body.

In CUFA's lent schedule, it's running its weekly film club on Wednesdays at 7pm. Its Cambridge Shorts Showcase, an evening of student-film screenings and lively discussion with the respective student filmmakers themselves, will take place Tuesday 21st February at 8.30pm in the Palmerston Room at St. John's College.

So, things *are* happening in the cinematic sub-world of the Cambridge bubble. There's not *nothing* out there. The mystery that shrouds the film scene might fool you into thinking that something exciting is happening underground, behind closed doors that you can't open. Really, if you pull back the curtain this is a vacuum-pocket of Cambridge culture that's waiting for someone with a trick up their sleeve to fill it. It's asking for some oomph!

It will take a long time to establish a culture with the same kudos and prestige as the theatre scene — but being so early on in this process is an exciting opportunity to shape what Cambridge film might look like in the future. "Because we're the ones running things," Daisy admits, "we're making the rules." How freeing!

Why Best International Film is patronising

If you've seen *Fleabag*, you'll be familiar with the scene where Kirsten Scott Thomas talks about her character's "Best Woman in Business" award. "It's infantilising bollocks!" she says, "a subsection of success." She's separated from her peers by her gender regardless of her merit. But, if the category didn't exist she likely wouldn't receive any award, yet winning is made to feel like an insult. Looking at this year's Oscar nominations, it's hard not to apply the same principle to the Best International Film category.

The category has been regularly awarded since 1956. Before this it was an honorary award, given out some years and forgotten in others. Overwhelmingly, the awards have gone to European countries who have won a whopping fifty-seven. The next continent is Asia with just six wins. In Bong Joon Ho's words, *The Oscars* 'is actually quite local'.

Crucially though, the award goes to the nation the film was made in rather than the director themselves. It wasn't until 2014 that international directors were allowed to have their names engraved on the statues awarded to their own films, a privilege not afforded to Best Picture winners. The people that are studied and lauded as the 'auteurs' of cinema (cough cough Federico Fellini) have never had their name on an Oscar, regardless of how many they've been presented with (cough cough FIVE), disregarding their effort, artistry and dedication.

But the biggest problem is that it gives the Academy an out for international films across the board. The executives behind *The Oscars* seem to have the logic that because international films are neatly tucked away in their own category, they don't need to be mentioned anywhere else. They are effectively kept in a corner while other films sweep up nominations across the board.

At the 93rd Oscars, Youn Yuh-jung was presented with Best Supporting Actress for her role in *Minari*. She is one of six actors to ever win any Oscar for acting while not speaking English and the *only* person to win while speaking a non-European language. Among those six actors is Robert De Niro for his role in *The Godfather Part II*.

De Niro, while a wonderful actor, is American, so I hardly think his award suggests that the Academy is particularly interested in commending international actors.

Hopefully, nudge by nudge, we're starting to witness a sea-change in Oscars culture. I think everyone is familiar with Bong Joon Ho's Oscar sweep a few years ago, that saw *Parasite* become the first international film to ever win Best Picture. That night Bong Joon Ho also took home the second Best Director award ever given to an international director, the other going to Alfonso Cuarón the year before for *Roma*. Let's hope these "firsts" become seconds and then thirds and, ultimately, the norm.

Giving international films their own category is great; it means that more people are exposed to a more diverse range of films, and it's lovely that some talent is praised. But Best International Film is also condescending. It treats its nominees as though they are not worth the same level of praise as the American ones. Cinema is not and has never been a solely American pursuit and on the Academy's own website they call themselves "the world's preeminent movie-related organisation." To invoke Bong Joon Ho again, I think their version of world might be a bit too "local".

▲ ILLUSTRATIONS BY
HANNAH GILLOTT

Heidi Atkins

Theatre

If Shakespeare be the food of love, play on

Friends, Romans, students, lend me your ears: a review of the last 15 years of Shakespeare in Cambridge by **Abigail Collingwood**



▲PHOTO BY DAN KARAJ

The difficulty in directing Shakespeare is that each play has been done hundreds of times, challenging each new generation of directors to come up with increasingly original concepts for their own productions. Cambridge student directors have taken on this challenge with undeniable enthusiasm over the years, leading to several iconic (and a few insane) interpretations of the classics. I hope to celebrate these ideas and to offer some inspiration to new directors tackling the task of making Shakespeare their own.

Gender-swapped casts have found success in several productions around the world. This concept has found resonance in Cambridge theatre, including in a 2016 production of *Richard II* and a 2014 production of *Romeo and Juliet*. *Richard II* was lauded for its subversion of the traditionally male-dominated play with its all-female cast.

The transformation of *Romeo* into a lesbian drug dealer, meanwhile, certainly gave *Romeo and Juliet* a gritty update, which contradicted the typically conservative reputation that Shakespeare has perhaps unfairly gained. This modern update extended to the script itself, inserting the occasional “oh my god” or “f**k” into Shakespeare’s dialogue, hilariously undermining the lengthier poetic passages of the play.

By far the most popular directorial decision in student Shakespeare is the use of a different time period or setting for the play. A fascinating example

of this is a 2017 production of *The Tempest*, which transformed the remote island of the play into a dystopian factory setting, with the oppressive wizard Prospero acting as a demanding executive surveying his spirit servants, now factory workers: a creative translation of the oppressive figure through a modern lens. Meanwhile, a 2016 production of *Love’s Labour’s Lost* saw the setting of the play shift to 1930s Cambridge. The period of pre-Second World War certainly fit the light-hearted tone of the play, and allowed students to see themselves in the characters as they experienced the familiar sights of Cambridge.

More politically-minded Shakespeare plays have been adapted to allude to real life figures, as was the case for *Julius Caesar* in 2010. Caesar became Margaret Thatcher in this production which was set in the 1980s ministerial cabinet, a creative and highly original attempt to show history repeating itself and, in my eyes, one of the most interesting interpretations of the play.

On the slightly more absurd end of this spectrum lies a 2012 production of *Richard III* which saw Richard become a 1990s Vladimir Putin. This production must be one of the most ridiculous and entertaining in Cambridge history, with all the characters becoming a series of outrageous Russian caricatures. The most bizarre example of this has to be a shirtless, vodka drinking Earl of Richmond Cossack dancing to Russian pop music on top of King Edward’s

grave. Did it make sense? No clue. Do I now wish that every Shakespeare production was set against a soundtrack of nothing but Europop? Obviously.

In 2009, a production of *Macbeth* had the witches’ prophecies be delivered by dunking Macbeth’s head in a bucket of blood; an addition appreciated by the audience, if not by Macbeth himself. The following year, another production of *Macbeth* successfully terrified its audience by playing loud electronic sounds and screams as they entered the theatre, as well as having its witches rise from debris as they were introduced. This helped to place the play in a dystopian wasteland, allowing the script’s paranoia to truly be felt. Another original choice of setting: a 2017 production of *The Merchant of Venice* cleverly situated the events of the play in a game show, accompanied by references to Tinder and Nintendo to quirkily translate the play to the modern world. It was certainly an intelligent idea, though I would sadly refrain from calling it perfect due to its distinct lack of Russian pop music.

Shakespeare plays have seen their fair share of updates and re-imaginings in the hands of student directors, achieving varying degrees of success. The one point I would most like to make is that these highly creative productions are also the most memorable. If a director wishes to make their mark in Cambridge theatre, a fearlessness of experimentation, regardless of the outcome, may be more important than anything.

Behind the curtain: Presidential realness

Gina Stock

Being Footlights, CUADC, and Marlow society presidents respectively is a huge undertaking for some of the most experienced people in the Cambridge theatre community. For Ayush Prasad, Jonathan Black, and Thea Melton, these are the roles they are about to be succeeded in, having fulfilled them for the past year. Looking back on their tenures, I asked them to share their insights, experiences, favourite moments, and personal achievements, as well as pass on some advice for future student theatre enthusiasts.

Let’s start from the beginning. A running theme in Cambridge theatre is that the gateway to involvement is usually small performance roles; think bar nights, open mics, smokers, small late shows and rehearsed readings. Ayush Prasad, current Footlights president, started with the BME smoker in 2018. He recounts: “The night itself was incredible – a fantastic lineup, a sold-out ADC, and a really supportive crowd. I got way more laughs than I deserved – during my set, a chair

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A support network
[...]can make or break a
person’s future com-
mitment to Theatre
”

fell over backstage and made a bit of a racket, and I just froze and panicked for a few seconds, but somehow that still got a laugh”. Smokers are a wonderful way to try a set in front of a crowd far from sober, and Ayush has gone on to perform in many more.

In their time in the ADC crowd, I asked about their most memorable projects which they hold particularly close to their hearts. Thea Melton, co-president of the Marlowe Society, explained: “My favourite project I worked on was *Heroes* which was written by my amazingly talented friend Chakira. It really related to my own life experiences living in a working-class community of immigrants in London ... [it] encouraged diversity and real life authentic stories”. The Marlowe Society supported this piece of new writing by awarding it the Other Prize; *Heroes* went on to do a London and Edinburgh Fringe run.

Going deeper, I was interested to hear how each of these presidents were drawn to their respective roles. Jonathan explains he was “keen to help shape the Cambridge theatre environment – to ensure it was welcoming and inclusive and to be a strong representative for students”. His particular focus as CUADC president was being a key contact for the freshers’ show, being an experienced and supportive guide is important in shaping fresher experiences of Cambridge theatre. As a fresher who was initially fairly anxious and reserved within the Cambridge theatre community, a support network in one’s first shows is something I know to be significant, and can make or break a person’s future commitment to theatre.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 30

BE INSPIRED

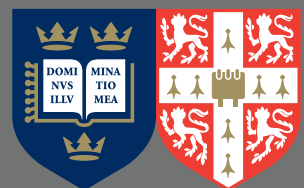
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Designed by Sir Robert Smirke, the architect responsible for the British Museum, the Club's impressive façade illuminates Pall Mall. Inside, a burgeoning social scene sees a host of diverse events take place each month, including Cocktail Making Masterclasses, Wine Tastings and Themed Dinners, as well as visits from highly distinguished speakers, including politicians, authors, ambassadors and academics. Members needing somewhere quieter can seek inspiration in the Club's impressive library – home to nearly 20,000 volumes – or head to its dedicated business area.

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Theatre

Meanwhile Thea explains she “wanted to be president with Cassia as we both wanted to widen participation and make it more accessible especially to marginalised groups”. The Marlowe Society runs a showcase in London for graduating students every Michaelmas, inviting agents and creating showreels, and Thea’s commitment to accessibility meant this year they were able to scrap the participation fee. Similarly, CUADC was able to introduce the Edinburgh Fringe Accommodation Bursary, improving accessibility for students.

The role of president for such promi-

“
Their commitment to accessibility and representation in theatre will be passed on
”

nent societies is bound to change one’s perspective of Cambridge theatre. Ayush explains that being primarily a performer means neglecting to consider the technical team behind each show, however as president, he has “a lot more appreciation for directors, producers, management and especially technicians and backstage crew”. Jonathan agrees, elaborating: “The overwhelming takeaway is that I have appreciated the enormous wealth of talent and creativity in Cambridge theatre”.

Cambridge theatre itself has also undergone changes in the past few years, mostly positive, as Thea reflects on the return after Covid and the increased focus on wellbeing, safety and acces-

sibility, and efforts to make student theatre a safe space for everyone who wants to get involved. Ayush, however, gives the key reminder: “Representation has improved in some respects over this time, but there is still a lot more to be done and we can’t pat ourselves on the back just yet”. Cambridge theatre has undergone many changes to improve representation and accessibility, with the ADC publishing statistics about successful pitches and their representation – but it remains true that Cambridge theatre still reflects the structural underrepresentation across theatres in the UK.

Finally, I asked for the golden advice each president would give to new participants in student theatre. Four key themes emerged. Don’t overstretch – Ayush advises: “It’s better to do one show really well than do four shows running on fumes”. Don’t let the competition get to you, as Thea explains: “It can be incredibly competitive and fast paced [...] the right roles will find you eventually”. Appreciate each other and be kind, especially to your tech team because if a stage manager drops out, the show can’t happen! And lastly, have an open mind: try out new roles such as tech, directing, producing, performing because there is so much on offer.

So, what to take away from some of our most experienced representatives of Cambridge theatre? Undoubtedly the importance of a president role is being an approachable, friendly and supportive point of contact, and their joint continual commitment to accessibility and representation in theatre is something to be passed on.

Week 2-4 Review Roundup

Marie Antoinette

★★★★★

This take on the French Revolution figure as a modern-day nepo-baby is both amusing and absurd in its examination of the culture of privilege. This production weathered jumpy chronology to bring humour and heart to the doomed French aristocracy.

Macroevolution: Variant B

★★★

Bickering over board game rules, and grocery rotas, this inventive original explored three friends navigating university through playing “the longest board game ever made”. Social realism verged into the mundane, however, as the script failed to elevate this intriguing premise.

Sorry Sorry Sorry Very Sorry

★★★★

Uneven writing and an unsure sense of audience dampen the laughs in this Footlights production that varied between some hilarious original material and more stilted comedic clichés.

Sunday in the Park with George

★★★★★

Gina Stock and Orla Horgan reflect on this complex musical traversing the colourful legacy of painter Georges Seurat. Outstanding set design and costuming brought theatrical vibrancy to 19th-century France.

My Mother Said I Never Should

★★★★★

This revival of a 1987 domestic fable followed the lives of four women captures the changing and challenging familial dynamics across generations, although some dramatic portrayals were more convincing than others.

Playing Pretend

★★★★

Jake Fenton’s original script transported audiences to a world of imagination. This affecting new writing was sadly let down by abrupt plotting, but brilliantly captured the physicality of two worlds colliding.

Under Milk Wood

★★★★★

A charming and wistful production that observed the private lives of a sleepy Welsh village, embracing a sincere affection for its characters and bringing their intimate mysteries to life.

Miss Julie

★★★★

A failure of temporal specificity undermined this intimate portrayal of a constrained romance, remaining stirring but robbed of coherence.

Our favourite:

Indecent

★★★★★

There is much to laud about Elizabeth Laurence’s deft handling of this ambitious play. Spanning 40 years and reaching both into the past and future to ask searching, resonant questions about Jewish identity, anti-semitism, and the impact of art.

In assembling a stunning cohesive ensemble, performers all shone equally - whether acting, singing, or dancing. Sharp choreography and exceptional lighting design made *Indecent* an indisputable triumph.

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Water Polo 2nds left blue after Oxford defeat

A late Oxf*rd comeback ended Cambridge hopes of a league double over their rivals

Duncan Pinchen Oxford Correspondent

A flock of Oxford supporters strung themselves along the poolside, making up half the twenty-odd spectators. One by one, East Anglia's finest in Cambridge Blue shorts filtered out of the changing rooms and deposited themselves in the pool.

Water Polo is a contact sport, so a whistle from the referee brought each team over to check that fingernails are regulation length. Oxford seconds lined up for

shooting practice as their coach stood behind the goal, gesticulating tactics whilst pulling his jersey nervously over his fingers.

Beside the hallowed occasion and history, the result will be instrumental in determining third from fourth in the BUCS Men's Midlands Tier 2.

The clock struck eight, the pool cleared, and noise calmed. At a piercing whistle the teams charged at each other. Oxford reached the ball first and took the tipoff. A foul led to an Oxford shot, saved by Cambridge. In attack Cambridge fumbled the ball. Oxford defended well but their counterattack came to nothing.

Oxford's attempt at a long pass to Matt Courtis failed, but his pass to Warren Handley led to a long shot and they scored. Cambridge surged from the restart and kept the pressure all the way to the goal to equalise. Cambridge passed optimistically to the wing, pressuring the goal, but a dribble from Chung Chan led to a shot which went wide. A looping Cambridge pass in the danger zone caused one turnover after another and they eventually drew a save from the Oxford keeper. Nothing came

of the resulting play, despite a few tense shots either way. Cambridge eventually got the lead through Will Hipsey at the very end of the first quarter.

Oxford took the tipoff but quickly turned over two fouls. They then pressed the Cambridge line, drawing a firm save. Short plays from Oxford challenged the opposition upright to no avail. Cambridge gave away another foul, but the ball was quickly turned over and Cambridge extended their lead to two goals. Cambridge again challenged Oxford's goal, but the Light Blues couldn't create a meaningful chance. Oxford scored decisively on the counter-attack to reduce the deficit to just one.

Cambridge won a penalty, but their effort glanced the corner of the goal. They threatened but Oxford remained initially composed. However, they later left Cambridge's Ryan Ko unmarked and he was rewarded with a goal from short range right before half-time.

Oxford took the tipoff but called a timeout immediately. Restarting, they couldn't convert a chance and had a defender sin-binned. He returned to the action as Oxford pushed up the pool and were a man up as Cambridge were themselves penalised. They took advantage

and scored in the bottom left corner.

Cambridge probed, retreated, recirculated and attempted a shot. Oxford dispossessed Cambridge and dribbled with purpose, but their eventual effort was met by a rising defensive hand and a rapid counter allowed Henry Stuart-Turner to put one beyond the reach of the Oxford goalkeeper. Play then got stuck in the middle, but Oxford managed to thread a wondrous ball beyond Cambridge and into the net. Oxford equalised with an optimistic effort from the wing, but Stuart-Turner responded with a penalty arrowed into the bottom right corner.

Close plays offered Oxford a chance in front of the Cambridge goal, but it was squandered. Tired players began to string out across the pool, but an ambitious effort from Cambridge offered a brief pause. A Cambridge fumble left the score at 5-6 to them going into the final quarter.

One quarter remaining, eight minutes of work to do. Oxford took possession in their goal mouth and played decisively to create a chance which they converted to make it 6-6. A similar play ended in Oxford bowling the ball cleanly into the Cambridge goal to take the lead. Oxford

dominance in the midfield and a lob forward placed them in prime position and they scored to lead 8-6.

Cambridge shot aggressively at the top corner but Oxford's Joey Weinbren rose to the occasion to maintain their lead. A timeout with the shout of "1,2,3 Cambridge" did little to stop the next goal. The ball was lofted out in front of the furthestmost Oxonian who lifted it over Cambridge's Alex Humphrey easily. Cambridge responded by expertly stretching the Oxford defence, centring the ball and scoring to end their six-minute dry spell.

Oxford dominated possession before scoring to restore their three-goal lead. Cambridge enjoyed 30 seconds of possession until they were dispossessed by time. A clinical Oxford attack led to another quick goal. Play hung resolutely around the midfield with 40 seconds to go. Cambridge broke, probing forward to score, but it wasn't enough to stop the final score of 11-8. Oxford went third in the league meaning Cambridge had to accept fourth, and a long, journey home.

▲ ALL PHOTOS BY JONNY COFFEY

Fitz thump Homerton to help title hopes

Abbie Hastie Sports Editor

Fitzwilliam 1s thrashed Homerton 1s 5-0 on Saturday afternoon (11/02), to move three points clear at the top of the men's College Premier League table and lay down a marker for the rest of the season. The top-of-table clash between two perennial rivals, seemed finely poised before kickoff. Sure, Fitz won 3-1 when the sides met in the first round of Cuppers in Michaelmas, but today they only had 12 players. Nevertheless, they started the match as the better team, pressing Homerton's defence from the kickoff, and finding their wingers with through balls. They were helped by Homerton's tactics of playing a high line while pressing inadequately. This left Fitz midfielders Tom Randall and Cass Ashworth with plenty of time to pick out wingers Sonny McPherson and Asa Campbell, as well as their number 10 Lumi Kanwei. Fitz's pressure told midway through the first half, when a corner was headed in by their centre back Jake Parish after a Randall free kick went wide. They almost doubled their lead immediately, but Kanwei's shot went wide. This proved to be a catalyst for Homerton, and they grew into the game, retaining possession and finding their target man Kosi Nwuba. However, their momentum was halted by an injury to one of their midfielders, which led to a long delay. When the match resumed, Fitz were again on the front foot, with Kanwei and McPherson both shooting over the bar before the halftime whistle went.

Homerton emerged after the break brighter but couldn't make their pressure tell. Fitz punished them for this. McPherson received the ball from the midfield and pulled it back for Kanwei, who turned the Homerton centre back and finished tidily into the bottom corner to double Fitzwilliam's lead. Homerton again responded, this time with their best spell of the game. Again though, it was a tale of so near yet so far. Toby Linsell hit the post before Kosi Nwuba and Cyprian Kucaj fired over the top. Yet again, Fitz capitalised on Homerton wastefulness, as Kanwei scored his second after dribbling across the box.

The third goal extinguished any hopes of a Homerton comeback, and Fitz's quality in midfield and attack showed in the final stages. Kanwei was again at the centre of the action, nicking the ball in midfield before finding McPherson who stroked the ball into the far corner for Fitz's fourth.

Fitzwilliam's final goal was one of real quality. Randall received the ball in midfield, turned and found Campbell with a well-weighted ball. Campbell took the ball on the left wing, cut inside on to his right foot and scythed his way through the Homerton defence, before beating the keeper from short range. *Varsity Player of the Match*: Lumi Kanwei (Fitz)

Girton down Downing to take top spot in Second Division

A brace from Nikolaj Aksentijevic ensured Girton took all three points on Sunday afternoon

Jonny Coffey Sports Correspondent

Two goals from Nikolaj Aksentijevic powered Girton to a 3-0 victory over Downing in Sunday's (12/02) top-of-table clash in the second division of men's college football. After inflicting Downing's first league loss of the season, the Greens now sit in first place.

“Gutsy defending and sublime goalkeeping subdued their dangerous wide players”

An imperious midfield performance gave Girton the upper hand. Chris Butters and Alex Kennedy dictated the tempo from deep, while Aksentijevic starred from attacking-midfield. Downing threatened on the counter, but gutsy defending and sublime goalkeeping subdued their dangerous wide players.

Girton dominated from the off, controlling possession and finding space in behind. Ben Cohen threatened from the right flank, but struggled to convert in the final third, seeing two efforts saved in the early period. His unrelenting attacking play soon found a reward. Surg-

ing past his full-back, Cohen fired a low-driven cross towards the back post. The Downing right-back failed to clear, and Michael Arthur pounced to give Girton the lead.

With Downing struggling to maintain possession, Girton looked to double their lead. Cohen was once again the creative force, finding Butters at the back post with a delicate cross. However, the midfield maestro's finish was as inaccurate as it was unorthodox, a kneed effort that trickled beyond the far post. Another chance fell to the Greens on the verge of halftime. Arthur flicked-on a long-ball to find Jonny Coffey, who chested-down and fired goalward on the volley, forcing a good save from the Downing keeper. Downing, despondent in the first half, made an energetic start to the second. Blues winger Brody Wooding became more involved and looked to threaten from the left flank, but his advances were halted by stern defending from Josh Hickingbotham. Riding the pressure, Girton reasserted themselves. Cohen broke through on the counter, but his cut-back was poked narrowly wide by Coffey. Breaking with pace once more, Girton doubled their lead. A surging Aksentijevic latched onto a Cohen through-ball, bursting into the right-hand side of the box, and lashing into the far corner.

With a two-goal advantage, a cagey Girton gave Downing the initiative. The visiting side won corner after corner but

failed to find a finishing touch. Their best chance fell to Lemz Osei-Biney, whose precise volleyed effort was denied by an outstanding Charles Yang save. More defensive heroics from Hickingbotham kept Wooding quiet, and the Greens regained their attacking initiative, with the enterprising play of Cohen decisive once more. The wide-man won a free kick on the edge of the area, and Coffey's curled effort was only denied by the

woodwork. In the dying minutes, the Downing keeper brought Cohen down in the box. Sealing the victory and crowning a stellar individual performance, Aksentijevic fired into the bottom left.



Varsity Player of the Match: Nikolaj Aksentijevic

Sport

▲ ALL PHOTOS BY JONNY COFFEY

2nds left blue
p.31

Girton down
Downing
to take top
spot in Second
Division

p.31



Blue Steele: strike secures semi-spot for Women's firsts

Women's Football Blues reach the semi finals of National Cup

Abbie Hastie and Jonny Coffey

A brace from Neve Mayes and goals from Lucy Fell and Fran Steele ensured that the Blues beat Exeter 4-1 on a mild afternoon at St Catharine's pitches. The game was largely dominated by Cambridge, but the Blues rode out a concerted period of Exeter pressure at the end of the first half to reach the national cup semi-finals.

Cambridge started the game on the front foot, pressing Exeter as they attempted to play out from the back. This pressure eventually told about ten minutes in, as dogged tackling from Alissa Sattentau won Cambridge the ball back just outside of the penalty box. With multiple options running in behind, the striker found the surging Lucy Fell. The American beat the keeper from about six yards out to put Cambridge 1-0 up.

The goal led to even greater Cambridge dominance, as the determined Blues looked to cement their lead with a second goal. They made use of their superiority down the right-hand side of

the pitch. Full back Shannon Pickrell and midfielder Fran Steele found Lucy Fell and Abbie Hastie, who ran from deep to get in behind the Exeter defence, who were playing a high line.

Cambridge's second goal came from this connection. Fell ran down the wing before cutting it back to Hastie, whose pass to Neve Mayes set her up for a short-range finish. Malicious rumours of offside spread by Exeter did not sway the referee, and Cambridge's second goal stood. Exeter were buoyed by Cambridge's second goal, and made a concerted effort to keep their hopes of staying in the competition alive. They overran Cambridge in midfield, getting the better of them in possession.

In this they were helped by the frailty of the asthmatic Hastie and Davies, recently recovered from a chest infection. Exeter's dominance led to a goal from a corner, poked in after the ball bounced fortuitously off a Cambridge head after an attempted clearance. The goal increased the already significant Exeter pressure, and it was squeaky bum time

for the Blues, who were saved by some excellent defending from Alexia Dengler and Arden Dieker Viik. The brilliance of their keeper Emilia Keavney was also instrumental in ensuring they reached the halftime break in the lead.

If halftime came at a lucky moment for Cambridge, they used it to regroup. A stern talking to from their coach and the substitution of Davies for Ailie Rennie produced a rapid response. Pickrell drove down the wing straight from kickoff and found Mayes in the box. She finished expertly beyond the keeper to restore the Blues' two-goal advantage. The third goal calmed Cambridge nerves, and the reassuring defensive presence of Rennie in midfield allowed them to see off a potential Exeter comeback.

The introduction of midfielder Belle Rostron and wingers Epponie Howard and Ella O'Connell gave the Blues attacks more impetus. O'Connell and Howard frightened the Exeter defence with their direct running and incisive dribbling, whilst Rostron was a menace, consistently picking up the ball in dangerous areas on the edge of the

box and having multiple shots blocked. Cambridge's continued assaults on the Exeter box excited their substitutes who began to sing.

Whatever the actual impact of the slightly strangled rendition of Blue Moon, or the (at times screamed) encouragement of the onlooking Men's Blues made a difference, the Cambridge support gave the end of the match a convivial atmosphere. The party continued with a lovely finish from captain Steele, who swept home from inside the box, amidst Cambridge joy and screams of the virtues of manifestation.

The Blues will play in the semi-finals of the Aldi National Cup on the 1st March against the University of Birmingham.

