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VARSITY

New SU president: 'We're in a pit and we've got to get out of it'



Michael Hennessey & Erik Olsson
Senior News Editors

Fergus Kirman has been elected Student Union (SU) undergraduate president for the next academic year. Turnout in the election was only 10.8%. Acknowledging this, Kirman told *Varsity* "we are in a pit and we've got to get out of it. Change is coming."

Kirman beat Eve Blain, former co-chair of Labour club and co-chair of the SU ethical campaign, by 58.4% to 37.1% of the vote. Voter turnout was at 10.8%, lower than 12% last year and 18% the year before that.

Kirman thanked his supporters and told *Varsity*: "The message for students is we hear you. We hear that you want change, and change is coming. The SU will do more for you, it isn't just a slogan. You will find the SU can actually work for

students." Kirman's election was not welcomed by everyone in the room. Many outgoing sabbatical officers did not clap.

Kirman campaigned on the promise to pursue tuition fee refunds due to strike disruption. Referring to this policy, Kirman said: "It was a really opportune moment to talk to students and understand what they wanted. For too long we've been trapped in this denial and orthodoxy that doesn't align with student's interests."

He continued: "Education should be free but it is not. It is the job of the Student Union to put students first. I will always put students first, and that includes demanding tuition fee refunds. I don't care about ideological debates that were fought and lost twenty years ago. I care about students now."

Kirman is treasurer of Christ's JCR and has been chair of the SU council. He ran

on a platform of tackling health inequality. His flagship policy is free NHS prescriptions and subsidised student dental care. He has also promised to push for the Cambridge bursary to increase in line with inflation, amid the ongoing cost of living crisis.

Eve Blain said: "Thanks to everyone who helped with my campaign and to everyone who voted for me - I'm sorry not to be able to deliver the changes I'd promised, but wish the committee the best for next year."

In the other contested elections, Sam Carling was re-elected as University Councillor, fending off competition from Sam Hutton and Noah Rouse. Harvey Brown was also elected to serve as welfare and community officer in the other contested election.

All uncontested candidates were elected. Varese Pratap has been elected

as postgraduate president. Caredig ap Tomos will serve as undergraduate access, education and participation officer. Anastasia Perysinakis was also elected in the equivalent postgraduate position. Ell Gardner-Thomas will also become disabled students' officer.

The BME and women's officer will remain unfilled as no candidates stood in the election. A by-election will take place in Easter term.

Zaynab Ahmed, outgoing SU undergraduate president, warmly greeted Kirman after his election. She told *Varsity*: "This week watching everything from afar has been really interesting and exciting. All of the candidates ran incredible campaigns, so I want to congratulate them on their hard work. And there were some incredible manifestos, and I'm incredibly excited to see what the next sabb team do next year".

Queens' slammed over halal food confusion

Ella McCartney

Queens' College has been criticised by students over confusion around the provision of halal meat at both an Algerian event (31/01), and a Turkish and Syrian event (14/02).

Students were reportedly incorrectly told that lamb dishes were halal, at the events which offered themed meals around the cuisines of Muslim majority countries.

One Muslim student told *Varsity* that they had been assured that their food was halal, before being told that this was not the case after the meal had been eaten.

He said: "It's infuriating that they [Queens' College] are using Muslim majority countries to seem more cultured and inclusive, but then are making it so that Muslim students can't even eat the food".

The anonymous student said the incident demonstrated a lack of understanding and education on the college's part, describing the college's actions as "nothing but blatant cultural appropriation".

The incidents have raised broader claims from students that they have previously felt excluded from hall food, with many Muslim students opting to eat elsewhere. Another student told *Varsity*: "I feel discouraged to go to hall, and feel that there is a lack of care from college".

When asked for comment, Queens' College told *Varsity*: "The Catering team and wider college community at Queens' works very hard to provide a schedule of themed events and appropriate meals for our students and customers. At the most recent Algerian and Turkish & Syrian themed events, all the options were halal except one and menus are carefully prepared to ensure food is served as advertised. Vegetarian and vegan options are always available and we endeavour to provide options that cater to a variety of dietary requirements."

"The recent Syrian and Turkish theme day on Tuesday 14 February was added to the diary at the suggestion of our Chefs and Catering department."

The spokesperson added: "The themed events we hold are always popular and we have not received any direct complaints or feedback regarding incorrectly prepared halal options following any of our recent events. If any students or customers have concerns, we would welcome your feedback and suggestions for improvement to our service."

'Mouldy Edwards'
Student disgust over
black mould in
accommodation
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Au re-Voi?
Cambridge
e-scooter trial to
end
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V Editorial Week 7

“Cambridge is heaven, I am convinced it is the nicest place in the world to live. As you walk round, most people look incredibly bright, as if they are probably off to win a Nobel prize.” - Sophie Hannah

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EDITORS Meg Byrom & Famke Veenstra-Ashmore editor@varsity.co.uk
DEPUTY EDITORS Esme Kenney & Hugh Jones deputyeditor@varsity.co.uk
VULTURE EDITORS Hannah Gillott & Daniel Hilton magazine@varsity.co.uk
NEWS Michael Hennessey & Erik Olsson (Senior), Bella Shorrock, Eric Williams, (Deputy), Bethan Moss (Investigations lead) news@varsity.co.uk
FEATURES Taneesha Datta & Harry Hult features@varsity.co.uk
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SCIENCE Suchir Salhan & Tom Malloch science@varsity.co.uk
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ARTS Emily Lawson-Todd & Leo Kang arts@varsity.co.uk
FASHION Isabel Dempsey & Eden Keily-Thurstain fashion@varsity.co.uk
FILM & TV Kezia Kurtz & Daisy O’Connor filmandtv@varsity.co.uk
MUSIC Georgie Atkinson & Alex Brian music@varsity.co.uk
THEATRE Alex Parnham-Cope & Theo Chen theatre@varsity.co.uk
HEAD OF MEDIA Minsung Son
CHIEF SUB-EDITOR Jane Usher subeditor@varsity.co.uk
ASSOCIATE EDITORS Lotte Brundle, Emaan Ullah & Bethan Moss associate@varsity.co.uk
BUSINESS MANAGER Mark Curtis business@varsity.co.uk
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Editorial

The new SU President has bridges to build

By Friday morning, our new SU will have an incoming president and a team of sabbatical officers. With dwindling turn out rates, poor engagement, and an increasing sense that “*Varsity* is the only place where my friends hear about the SU” (a reference made by an SU candidate at hustings this week), The SU’s fresh-faced candidate has many challenges ahead.

Candidates have been vying for votes across Cambridge and our social media timelines. With a collection of leafleting efforts and awkward memes, attempting to appeal to our student electorate. However, there is an inconsistency as students ask themselves what exactly the SU is, what the University Councillor does, or what the recurring buzz words of the campaign cycle actually mean in practice.

Turn out rates have been in decline for some time. Simultaneously, falling interest and engagement with the SU have coincided with a weakening of the college system. Most students have never spoken face to face with their tutors, communal spaces are disappearing

from bars to bops, and welfare support is being franchised out to the central university. When students need greater representation centrally, support of our SU, our central representation, is withering.

The new SU president must build bridges. Students need to feel the genuine impact of the SU throughout their studies for anything to change. Representation of ‘student voices’ must go beyond the activist groups and student led campaigns that circle around the institution. Communication with their voters has to go beyond features in our news reporting or disgruntled comment pieces.

Distrust or apathy: pick your poison. The SU must be better this year. Students deserve another choice.



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



“Compulsory lessons in the importance of students journalism during freshers’ week”

“More University-wide events and the opening of the SU building”

“War with Oxford / France”

If you could make your own SU policy, what would it be?

“Provide or lobby for cheaper food for students at lectures”

“More support for student societies! Why is it so hard to book a room for events!”

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

Mouldy Edwards: Student disgust over black mould in accomodation

Amelia Platt
News Correspondent

Students have raised concerns about problems with accommodation at Murray Edwards College, including mould due to limited ventilation.

Windows were boarded up at the Buck House accommodation block at Medwards, due to installation issues. According to affected students, the boarding up of the windows caused mould to form.

One student, who wished to remain anonymous, said: "They didn't really tell us how that would affect the rooms, so they didn't really tell us to ventilate properly. ... I wish they would have told us this... so that I can know how to take care of my room so that it doesn't get to this."

A student told *Varsity* that repairs had taken place after the windows had been broken. They said plastic had been installed on the window so that it can be tilted but not opened.

The student also said that the college

had recently attempted to resolve the problem and had "removed the mould around the windows and on my bathroom tiles."

The student said it took accommodation services around two weeks to deal with the issue of mould growing around the boarded-up windows.

The student also claimed that the member of the maintenance staff carrying out repairs said that the issue of mould was widespread, and not just limited to Buck House. While repairs were happening, the student had to move to temporary accommodation in Pearl House.

The student said that they reported the situation "three or four times" and each time the College said "we're going to make a plan of action or something".

The experience was particularly stressful for another student due to their allergies. As a child, the student had an allergy to mould. They claim that they made accommodation services aware of this fact from their first re-

porting of the issue.

The student said that because of the issue "my head hurt, I was sneezing, I was feeling really dizzy and everything. It was just a really stressful week".

The student said that since the situation had been resolved they "feel really good in my room now...So right now I'm really happy it got sorted."

Varsity spoke to another student who claimed that the mould problem in their room has not yet been dealt with.

The student has been told they must move into a new room at the end of term "because they've got contractors in". However, the student claimed, "the only reason they're pressuring me to leave the room quickly is that I'm asking them for a rent reduction, and they don't want to give me that... so they're forcing me out of the room".

The student claimed: "When my tutor spoke to them and said she needs compensation, they were like, today we're just going to email her and tell her to get out of the room. She has another room, so we don't have to give her anything."

According to the student, the College has offered them £100 to use in Medward's dining hall as compensation, which the student has turned down.

The student said the Medward's accommodation team have "been really passive aggressive towards me, and very gaslighty as well". They claimed: "They only ever respond when my tutor gets involved".

After their window broke when the hinge snapped, the broken window was not cleaned up for a week after it had fallen. It was boarded up, which the student claims led to mould.

The student told *Varsity* that when they saw the black mould, they report-

ed the issue to the College at the end of Michaelmas, and it was not resolved when they returned in January.

According to the student, they experienced health problems as a result of the mould, as they told *Varsity* that their asthma meant it "messed up my breathing quite a bit" and "there were nights I literally couldn't sleep because I could not breathe".

The student said at the same time as the issue with mould they "had to go to the doctors and they had to give me allergy tablets, and new inhalers". The student claimed that their doctor told them these health issues were being caused by the mould in their room. They added that they are yet to show the report to the college.

Murray Edwards has the second most expensive rent of the Cambridge colleges. Undergraduate rent prices vary from £4,951 to £7,002 a year.

One student said "the amount we pay in rent is not good value for the room that we have". Responding to this fact one student said: "I just think the accommodation team here are very inefficient, they don't care, and they just do things to make themselves seem like they're in the right [...] There's so many maintenance problems across Medwards, I understand it is hard to deal with all of them at the same time."

They continued: "Instead of putting their hands up and saying, yes, we understand this is wrong, they try and defend themselves which makes everything worse, and it just puts more problems on their plate."

According to its website, Murray Edwards College is a certified Accreditation Network UK landlord, following the code of practice for the management of student accommodation. The code sets

out expected standards of service in accommodation provision for students, including rights and notification of access, repairs and maintenance obligations.

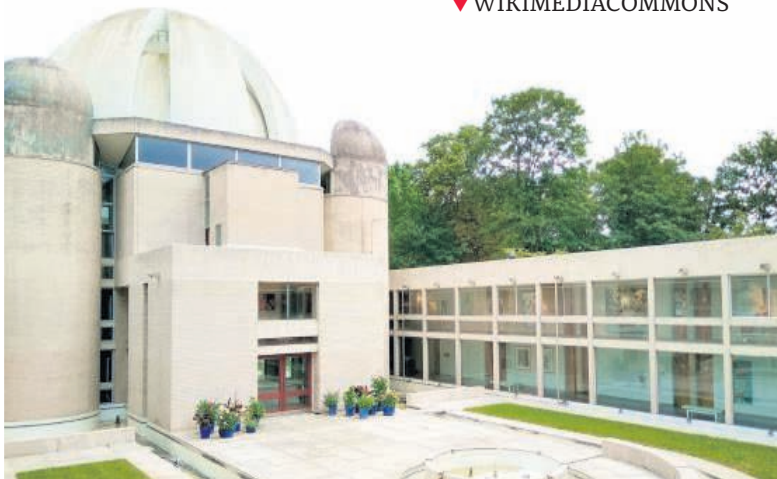
A spokesperson for Murray Edwards responded to the allegations and told *Varsity*: "In the seven years prior to October 2022, we received three reports of minor cases of mould in Buckingham House which were addressed immediately."

"In October 2022, a student reported a hinge on a window on her room was broken. The maintenance team who attended noted the window frame had buckled and a temporary window frame was installed. The window was not boarded up at any point. The student was offered immediate alternative accommodation of an equivalent standard. When she looked at the alternative room, she noticed traces of mould on the silicon sealant round the top of the glass and said she therefore declined to move into this room. The mould traces were removed and there is no mould in this room."

"However, she has continued to decline to move into the alternative room preventing our maintenance teams from fixing the window in her room. This window will be mended when she leaves over Easter. Our professional teams do everything possible to assist students and we are confident they dealt politely and appropriately with this complaint. Separately, in February this year, during a routine room inspection, traces of mould were identified on the silicon sealant on the windows of several rooms. This was removed within days by cleaners. No complaints were received on this matter."

Interviews were conducted by Kareena Rippingale.

▼ WIKIMEDIACOMMONS



Uni street lighting is 'unsafe' says Girton

Joe Bray
News Correspondent

Students have raised concerns at the lack of adequate lighting being provided by the University on the Ridgeway, a passage between Girton College and its off-site accommodation.

Until recently, the Ridgeway only had cat's eyes, and a singular light halfway through the passage.

Temporary sensor-activated lights were introduced last term. One student told *Varsity* that these lights were dim and lit up only "after you passed them, making it feel like a spotlight in an otherwise extremely dark path". Another student said the "temporary lights are dim, irregular and unreliable".

Recently, the University installed new solar-powered lights. Yet, one student told *Varsity* that these new lights "are temperamental at best and horrendous at worse". The same student reported that the lights "simply do not turn on" most nights.

A spokesperson for Girton College said: "We have raised the issue of inadequate lighting on the Ridgeway path several times now with the University

Estates team. It is extremely disappointing that, despite assurances late last year that action would be taken to address the problem, the path remains poorly lit and unsafe. It is putting members of the public, and our own students, at risk, and we continue to push the University Estate Management Team to deliver an acceptable solution to this and other issues at the Eddington site."

Responding to concerns, Girton porters announced a trial of a new free taxi scheme to and from the central college site from the off-site accommodation. The email notes that this is "in response to the lamentable lack of effective lighting on the Ridgeway path [...] despite continual lobbying of the University by Girton".

The Girton JCR commented that the dark path has "long caused issues of night-time safety", causing great risk and "fostering widespread feelings of vulnerability".

The JCR similarly signalled their frustration to the University: "We are appalled [...] at the evident disregard for our students immediate safety: No implementation of lighting from the start, a failing to now provide adequate

temporary measures, and most recently ridiculous alternative suggestions such as the use of better bike lights and avoidance of the Ridgeway altogether via a notoriously dangerous junction for cyclists."

Girton's MCR told *Varsity*: "Despite the best efforts of the College... the lighting along the path is frighteningly insufficient even after 'improvements', and if a student doesn't take it upon themselves to bring a light with them, they genuinely cannot see in front of them. Even several attacks on students in Eddington and around the Ridgeway weren't enough for our welfare to be taken seriously."

In response, a University spokesperson said: "The University has made a series of improvements that respond to concerns raised about lighting and safety which include the provision of temporary lighting at Eddington. The Estate Management Team has undertaken night-time inspections and found the paths to be well lit but will investigate any concerns that have been raised. There is a network of cycle and pedestrian paths that provide people with a choice of routes to get to a range of local destinations."

Inside the debate tearing Town and Gown apart

'Climate change doesn't exist anyway': protesters hit the streets in congestion charge rally



News

'Those first few days I don't want to ever relive'

Ukrainian students reflect on the anniversary of the Russian invasion

Bella Shorrock
Deputy News Editor

One year ago, Russian troops launched a full-scale invasion on Ukraine — the biggest invasion in Europe since World War Two. Ukrainian forces have become a symbol of international strength and the world has rallied to show solidarity against the illegal invasion.

Varsity has been speaking to Ukrainians in Cambridge about their reflections on the past year and how the conflict at home has changed their lives.

Danny, a third-year student who studies Chinese at St Catharine's College, moved to the UK from Kyiv when he was fourteen, but still has friends and family in Ukraine. He told me that his life has “changed completely” since the war broke out and that the days after the invasion were “the strangest time of [his] life”.

“I felt completely hopeless, like I was trapped in the Cambridge bubble [...] those first few days I don't want to ever relive again”.

Danny spent his summer working in an army camp as an interpreter and continues to do what he can to support the war effort from Taipei.

One student told me that their studies were a good way to focus on something other than the news about the conflict. “When the war started, it was week six of Lent term”, they told me, “and maybe being in week six helped in that respect”.

Some of the others we talked to expressed concern that the urgency of the war has faded from people's minds. Andrii Smytsniuk, from the MML Faculty, worries about “Ukraine fatigue”. “It's pretty much my job to make sure people don't get tired of talking about Ukraine”.

When the war broke out, Andrii co-founded the Cambridge4Ukraine, and now spends much of his time working with Ukrainian refugees in Cambridge. “Overall, we housed over 170 families from Ukraine in Cambridge”, he tells me proudly.

But he worries about the future for these refugees. When the six-month sponsorship period ends, many host families can no longer support them. He tells me that some will even have to return to Poland or Ukraine.

But, Andrii tells me, there is cause for hope. “The support that Ukraine received has been phenomenal [...] it is often surprising that a country that is so far away, on the other end of Europe, is supporting Ukraine. It's great to see so many Ukrainian flags everywhere, even on Sidgwick Site.”

Danny expressed similar gratitude for the way the Cambridge community responded to the war, telling me that the solidarity has been “amazing — I couldn't be more grateful”.

He added: “As soon as we forget about Ukraine, that's when they [Russia] will win”. What about hopes for the resolution of the conflict? Andrii tells me that the war is like the “David and Goliath story” come to life; “Ukraine has stood strong and more importantly, free.”

“It shows that if you are right, you are going to win. There is no doubt in my mind that Ukraine is going to win. It's just a question of time.”

Andrii told me that the focus of the war's grim anniversary is highlighting elements that are shared by countries across Europe. “This is a global issue; all countries have been affected”.

▲ People gathered on King's Parade last week to hold a vigil to mark the anniversary of the invasion (BELLA SHORROCK)

Au re-Voi? Cambridge e-scooter trial to end next year unless extended

Sam Hudson
News correspondent

While bright orange scooters may have become a ubiquitous sight around Cambridge streets over the past few years, Vois may soon become a thing of the past.

The e-scooter trial which has allowed Vois to operate in Cambridge, despite a nationwide ban on e-scooters, is due to expire in May 2024.

Since 2020, the Department for Transport has allowed certain cities to conduct trials of e-scooter services, such as Voi. The DfT claims these trials were put in place to gather information to inform future legislation. But despite the trials running for over two years, no new legislation has yet been announced.

While Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority extended the trial by a year in October 2022, Voi has called (08/02) on the Government to offer greater clarity regarding future e-scooter legislation.

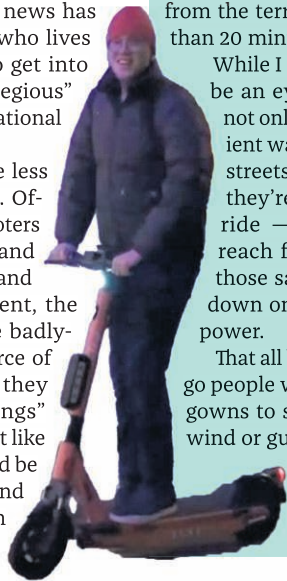
Appearing before the Transport Select Committee, Head of Public Policy for Voi in the UK, Matthew Pencharz, said that the company did not “have certainty after

May next year when the trials are currently due to end”, citing the lack of a timeline for the implementation of new legislation.

Stockholm-based Voi operates in several other European countries like the Netherlands and Germany, but unlike the UK, these states have amended legislation to partially legalise e-scooters.

Student reaction to the news has been mixed. One student who lives at Girton and used Vois to get into town called the move “egregious” and claimed Vois were a “national pastime”.

Others, however, will be less sad to see the scooters go. Often cited concerns were scooters being parked improperly, and becoming both an eyesore and an obstacle. For one student, the process of reporting these badly-parked scooters was a source of frustration; while saying they didn't have “strong feelings” about the news, they did not like the fact that the “onus would be on [them] to take pictures and send them to Voi to get them removed”.



Comment

Daniel Hilton

“Non-cyclists of the world unite! You have everything to lose (including your chains)”

They say you never forget how to ride a bike, so you can imagine my embarrassment every time I'm asked to go on a cycle to Grantchester and I have to gingerly admit that I can't ride a bike. Vois, then, have been my saving grace every time I make the mistake of travelling to Girton and leaving after the last bus, or getting caught out at Sidge in the rain without an umbrella — they emancipate the bicycle-challenged from the terrors of walking for more than 20 minutes.

While I can accept that they can be an eyesore, the scooters are not only a practical and convenient way to traverse the dreamy streets of our beloved city, but they're also objectively fun to ride — especially when you reach full speed and overtake those same cyclists that looked down on you for rejecting pedal power.

That all being said, at least if they go people won't idiotically get their gowns to soar behind them in the wind or guarantee a trip to Addenbrookes by pretending to be mediaeval knights and using them to joust.

King's College confiscate food from brunch imposters

Claire Gao
News correspondent

King's College has been accused of wasting food, despite environmental commitments, after allegations were made by students over an incident earlier this month (19/02).

Students from Queens' College, while attending brunch at King's, reportedly had their food confiscated before being asked to leave.

After being accosted by King's staff and asked whether they were students of the College, the group were asked to leave. The food the students had purchased was removed.

The incident included four students, taking place at the college servery, which runs a self-service system.

The students claimed that after the food was confiscated it was thrown away.

One of the students noted that King's College “tries to be environmentally conscious and sustainable, even having the carbon footprints of each meal printed on their menus, but were willing to waste food”.

Students have used the incident to draw attention to wider criticisms across the country, after 2022 figures reported by 'Materials Recovery' suggested that



▲ King's College dining hall

the UK wastes an estimated 1.3 billion tonnes of food annually, generating as much carbon as a fifth of all UK road vehicle emissions.

As a popular tourist destination, it is not uncommon for external students to be kicked out of King's College. However, students have noted that King's has no explicit policy on dining in the college for non-member students, and cited the common occurrence of other colleges allowing outsiders to sit and eat in their halls as evidence that their removal was unjustified.

King's College has been contacted for comment.

VARSlTY THE VARSITY TRUST

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Alumnus of Pembroke College



News

Inside the debate tearing Town and Gown apart



▲ Local residents, and some protesters from across the country, marched through the city centre to Parker's Piece (MICHAEL HENNESSEY)

Michael Hennessey
Senior News Editor

Cambridge residents, students and politicians, as well as some outside groups, continue to be fiercely divided over the Greater Cambridge Partnership's (GCP) proposal to introduce a £5 per-day congestion charge for driving in and around Cambridge, after a large march and rally on Sunday (26/02) that involved a number of anti-vaccination protesters and climate change sceptics.

Varsity spoke to local residents at the rally, who were particularly concerned about the potential injustice of the scheme and the University's role in supporting the congestion charge.

Although local residents were united on the unfairness of the proposed charge, a vocal minority of anti-vaccination and climate change sceptic protesters also descended on Parker's Piece to a mixed level of support. As reported by *Varsity*, Piers Corbyn, an anti-vaccine activist and brother of Jeremy Corbyn, was attending the event.

Corbyn told *Varsity* that he opposes the congestion charge as he believes it would make Cambridge a "fifteen minute city" and he sees the scheme as part of the "long-term plan of the World Economic Forum to end all car ownership". The concept of "fifteen minute cities" has become part of a wider conspiracy theory about "efforts to remake the world as it emerges out of the pandemic".

A leaflet that Corbyn and his supporters were handing out at the protest made various claims, including that "climate change does not exist", "the coronavirus was a lie" and that "5G towers are data expressways to control you". Corbyn's leaflets also described the ongoing Russian invasion of Ukraine as a "war con"

and called on his supporters to "respect the democratic self-determination of parts of Ukraine". This claim echoes the attempts of Russian propaganda to justify the invasion.

Another member of an anti-vaccination group said that he had travelled to the protest from Essex in order to "oppose fifteen minute cities". The man claimed that the congestion charge would lead to a "climate change lockdown" and that "climate change doesn't exist anyway". Like Corbyn, this protester also claimed the COVID-19 vaccine was an "experimental poisonous gene therapy" created to kill people by "changing their DNA".

The man had travelled to the protest from Colchester as part of a group, having travelled on a coach to Oxford with fifty others to protest on "fifteen minute cities" the previous weekend.

After the announcement that Corbyn would be attending the protest with fellow anti-vaccination campaigners, three Conservative politicians pulled out of the rally due to a "security warning". Corbyn told *Varsity* that this was a "nonsense story" that was "made to divide people".

Some local residents welcomed the presence of Corbyn and his supporters at the protest, as one resident told *Varsity* that Corbyn's views were "not an issue" because "they're genu-

ine people". Another local resident made a similar point, arguing that the presence of protesters from outside Cambridge, including anti-vaxxers, was only representative of the fact that "people all over the country are concerned".

However, some local residents were unhappy with Corbyn's presence and told *Varsity* that they "haven't got our best interests at heart".

Leaflets were also distributed at the protest responding to Corbyn's claims. One leaflet urged residents to "keep the far-right out of Cambridge" and "fight for local democracy". The leaflet said that "far right groups" were trying to "co-opt and infiltrate a peaceful democratic demonstration". The flyer said Cambridge residents should not allow these groups "to hijack this movement and turn it into one of hatred".

Archie McCann, a Cambridge student, attended the rally in a counter-protest with a sign that said "Piers Corbyn is a nitwit". McCann was confronted by Corbyn's supporters who told him that he was "brainwashed". The police told McCann to take down or change the sign because he may have been causing "harassment, alarm or distress". McCann says that the police have subsequently apologised.

One local told *Varsity* that "the University should stand up for Cambridge residents" because residents "already put up with a lot having the University here". Another protester said the University should stop the congestion charge "because they've got a lot of control" and the charge will "kill the city and people won't bother coming".

In a statement last month, the University confirmed that it

supported the planned measures, on the grounds that it would help to "deliver against their climate ambitions" to produce "an integrated transport solution" to the "biodiversity crisis and social inequalities that the region faces".

A resident, whose daughter works at the University, said the University spokesperson does not represent the

What is the congestion charge?

The proposals would mean that on weekdays drivers in the congestion charge zone, which stretches about three miles out from the city centre, would have to pay a toll of £5.

The proposed scheme also aims to improve the bus network through more services and cheaper fares, increase walking and cycling links and reduce air pollution and cut congestion.

A petition opposing the charge has been signed by over 14,000 people. The petition will be presented to the GCP later this month. The GCP will then make a recommendation to the council on whether to proceed with the proposals later in the year.

views of University workers.

As well as expressing their anger at the University, most residents at the protest believed that the proposed charge would be unfair, because "things are hard enough as they are" and the scheme is an example of "gross unfairness".

Sunday's protest was the largest gathering in opposition to the congestion charge so far. Local residents, including one member of University staff, told *Varsity* that "voters feel they haven't been given a proper democratic choice on the matter" and as a result "feel increasingly disenfranchised".

The University staff member said

Cambridge residents are angry because they "have no say at all over the university and business representatives who sit on the executive board" of the GCP.

Neil McArthur, vice-chair of one of the groups responsible for organising the protest, the Cambridgeshire Residents Group, has previously told *The Guardian*: "It's clearly the gown driving the town, not the other way round. It [the university] has so much impact on what is proposed and agreed, irrespective of the needs of the residents."

Cambridge student and Labour councillor Sam Carling told *Varsity*: "The City Access proposals have the potential to bring a lot of benefit to students - reducing traffic in the city centre, making cycling safer and providing better buses has potential to seriously boost students' experiences, especially in less central colleges."

Cllr Carling continued: "There's a lot of misinformation out there about the proposals, some of which has arisen from the GCP not always getting the comms right, but I do think the hijacking of the protests against the charge by right-wing groups with their own agendas, including the local Conservatives, is contributing a lot to that".

Carling concluded: "What we as local politicians are doing right now is listening to residents, and pushing for changes in the proposals to address as many concerns as possible. For example, I want to explore the option of giving residents a number of 'free days' to use each year where the charge would only apply to days of car use above that number. In the end, I'm hopeful we can reform the proposals into something a majority of residents can get behind, as residents' support will be crucial if the scheme does go ahead."

Cambridge students launch Turkey earthquake bursary fund

Ritika Singhal
News correspondent

Cambridge students have launched a bursary fund to provide support to university students in Turkey affected by the recent earthquake in the country.

The initiative has been pioneered by three PhD history students from Turkey – Elif Yumru, Mehmet Dogar and Zeynep Olgun – in light of the devastation caused by the earthquake, which led to the death of over 50,000 people in Turkey and Syria and left several hundred thousands homeless.

Yumru, Dogar and Olgun believe that the devastation caused by the earthquake will outlast current media attention. While resources and support are

currently being diverted to Turkey and Syria, they consider it unlikely for this to sustain after a few months. Because of this, the students launched the fund to address the long-term consequences of the disaster, particularly for university students. Dogar said, “we wanted to create a long-term initiative, because there are students who are going to need help for years.”

For these students, this devastation may be geographically distant but it is emotionally close. Yumru said: “It’s devastating to see the place that you grew up in reduced to rubble. I have relatives who died there, so it’s been incredibly personal. Working on this project has been very helpful, it’s really helped keep us focused over the past week.”

The students are collaborating with

the Turkish Education Foundation UK (TEV UK), an independent UK-based charity to help students from Turkey access equal educational opportunities, for identifying students affected directly by the earthquake. All donations will be transferred to the charity, which in turn will distribute these in Turkey.

Besides providing financial support to university students, the three students hoped for the fund to reflect “solidarity and signal clearly the University’s commitment to the pursuit of education all around the world.”

Numerous academics and members of the university have supported the bursary

fund. Professor Yael Navaro from the Department of Social Anthropology said: “People are dealing with horrible, apocalyptic situations of having to look for loved ones in the rubble.” She added:

“We’re very much in touch with people out there, and we know what kind of help is needed. That’s why I’m so happy to support this project, working with

the Turkish Educational Foundation which has the ability to reach university students who are actually in need.”

As of the end of February, the initiative has raised over £6,000.



Students 'let down' as physics department fail to provide supervisions

Finley Brighton
News correspondent

Some students taking Part II physics have been informed that they will not receive supervisions this term, due to a lack of available supervisors.

Earlier this month (21/2), part II students received an email from the Director of Undergraduate Education in Physics informing them that it is “impossible to find enough supervisors for the Astrophysics Fluids and the Soft Condensed Matter courses”, meaning that many students will go without any supervisions this term.

In place of these missing supervisions, the University Physics Department, the Cavendish, said it would provide ‘example classes’. These classes will differ enormously from supervisions as there will be up to 40 students per class. Varsity understands that Physics supervisions normally have no more than three students in them.

The department told students that it is individual colleges and Directors of Studies who are “primarily responsible” for providing supervisors for all years. The email emphasised that colleges were responsible for setting supervisor wages,

meaning the department is unable to make supervisor roles any more desirable. However, Varsity understands that in recent years, it has been the department that has often found supervisors for part II students.

Students have expressed considerable annoyance about this issue. One student told Varsity that they feel as though “the department puts more effort into coming up with excuses for not organising supervisions than actually trying to organise supervisions”.

This is not the first time the Physics department has been criticised by students. Students in previous years told Varsity that supervision systems rarely ran smoothly. One complained that they are still awaiting their final supervision of Michaelmas term in week six of Lent term.

In a statement given to Varsity, a spokesperson for the department said “we are acting on what the department can control”. They stated that, by offering the example classes, the department is giving an “alternative form of teaching to ensure our students get the support they need for their education”. The department has also said they will continue to work with colleges to find a “sustainable solution”.



▲ Queens' College's Mathematical Bridge has been decorated in the colours of the pride flag in February to mark LGBTQ+ history month (DANIEL HILTON)

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PETERHOUSE THEATRE

News

New Tesco opens its doors in city centre

Cambridge's newest Tesco Express opened its doors on Tuesday (28/2). The new shop opened to customers at 9am on Petty Cury. The store has been a source of much excitement among students. One second year, who was one of the first customers to visit, said that they will "continue to go to Sainsburys for their 40p donut. But for anything else, Tesco. 2 words", they said, "Club. Card."

Cam students given £100k in library fines

Cambridge University has handed out more than £100,000 in library fines since 2017/18, figures have shown. One student was handed a fine of £1,000 - one of the most expensive fines from a university in the last decade. However since coronavirus, the University said it has waived fines for students to make library services more "inclusive" and to "reduce student anxiety".

Uni bans ChatGPT over plagiarism fears

Cambridge is among the 8 of 24 Russell Group universities that have banned the AI tool ChatGPT. A spokesperson from the University said it had drawn up specific assessment guidance for each department. They said that content produced by AI platforms would be considered "a form of academic misconduct". Sanctions for this would include an automatic mark of zero.

Fellow slams SU vote on meat ban

Dr Chris Smith, of Queens' College, has spoken out against last week's SU council vote to consult the University having meat-free menus. He warned that embracing "faddy diets", would lead to students "under-performing". He asked if this was "the outcome we want at one of the world's best universities", and cited Charles Darwin as an example of a meat-eating Cambridge academic.



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▲ FAMKE VEENSTRA-ASHMORE

University watch

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

Oxford students protest Union hosting Israeli ambassador

The Oxford Union hosted Israeli Ambassador, Tzipi Hotovely, amidst protests last week (23/02) reportedly involving over one hundred students.

Hotovely, appointed by prime minister Netanyahu during his fifth term, is a former Settlements Minister and self-described "religious right-winger".

The event marked the second time the Union has invited Hotovely in the last year, and backlash has led to the Union President facing a no-confidence petition.

Staff at Queen Mary resign over strike response

Several staff at Queen Mary University have resigned over working conditions and the university management's approach to strikes.

One resigning staff member, Professor Laleh Khalili, cited the use of "snitch forms" encouraging students to report the discussion of strikes in class as the "final straw" that made her hand in her notice.

Co-Chair of the Queen Mary UCU Branch, James Eastwood, has accused the university of using "sinister" tactics in the ongoing row over pay, conditions and pensions.

Alongside "attacks on academic freedom", Queen Mary University has also been charged with implementing "punitive pay deductions" beyond the pay lost on strike days.

Manchester students face 'formal disciplinary action' over occupation

Manchester University released a statement on Tuesday (28/02) stating that students that were involved in the occupation of University buildings will "face formal University disciplinary action".

The Mancunion has also reported that the University is commencing "formal legal proceedings to regain possession of occupied buildings".

The Manchester occupation emerged out of rent strikes which saw hundreds of students taking part, demanding a 30% cut on monthly rent payments, as well as a fee rebate.

Why are women getting fewer firsts in the humanities?

Varsity investigates the difference between male and female achievement in three core subjects

- Since 2011, men have consistently been awarded more firsts than women in English, History and MML
- The gender gap for MML reversed after the pandemic
- More women tend to study humanities than men

Famke Veenstra-Ashmore
Editor in Chief

Esmé Kenney
Deputy Editor

Since 2011, the average proportion of male undergraduates that receive Firsts is 33% to just 25% of women, as *Varsity* has previously identified.

There is historical interest in this issue – in 2003 Cambridge commissioned a report reacting to concerns over the disparity. Recent efforts to fix the gap remain either sparse or stuck. Its slow movement has inevitably been impacted by the pandemic and consequent fluctuations in data.

Girls outperform boys throughout the education system – it is only at an undergraduate level where the gender attainment gap begins to favour men in these subjects. Though there has been much interest in disparities in STEM, it remains an important issue in the arts and humanities.

61.5% of men achieved a first
*The English Tripos, 2021

32.8% of women achieved a first

English:

In 2021 71.2% of Finalists were women, and it was a particularly damning year for the gender attainment gap: 61.5% of men achieved a First or starred First compared to only 32.8% of women. This is a consistent trend in English, with 2019 the only outlier. 2022 saw only 42.7% of women achieving Firsts, compared to 54.1% of men.

Jason Scott-Warren, previous Chair of the Athena SWAN Committee for English, wrote that the Faculty has “taken various steps to try to close [the gap], but with very limited success. The pandemic gave us an unexpected opportunity to experiment with different modes of examination, but we were surprised to find that these did not improve the situation.”

“There may still be scope to experiment with different models and to learn from other universities that do

not have this problem. The attainment gap remains a matter of serious concern; we would welcome any feedback from current and former students that might help us to address it.”

MML:

The gender split in those studying MML is similar to English: the average proportion of women studying MML between 2011 and 2017 is 68.9%, compared with 31.1% of men.

However, more men have been awarded Firsts every year within that time frame, apart from 2015. The biggest difference in male and female attainment was 2014, with a gender gap of 18.7% in favour of men.

As Dr Jenny Mander points out, the gender gap “was inverted and widened in favour of female candidates” after the pandemic.

She said: “Over the three years of the pandemic this differently gendered awarding gap has narrowed somewhat.” She added that this could be a result of “male and female candidates preparing differently over the year for at home exams.” According to Prof Geoffrey Kantaris, the Chair of the MML Faculty, the “EDI and Undergraduate Studies Committees are currently analysing the way in which the change in assessment formats has affected attainment gaps in gender.”

Although he stresses that there are significant variations across different parts of the Tripos, he suggests: “On the face of it, the shift to coursework-based assessments for most content has had a significant effect in reversing or equalizing the gender attainment gap.”

History:

Although more women study history than men, the gender imbalance is far less pronounced than English or MML. However, the gender attainment gap has been a long-standing issue. With the exception of 2021, male finalists have consistently been awarded more Firsts than their female counterparts.

In the History Part I examiners’ report for 2022, the external examiner expressed “serious concern” over the gender breakdown of Firsts. They highlight that men were “unexpected beneficiaries of this year’s largely undiluted assessment regime of open book exams”, which “does not chime well with what is admittedly anecdotal experience of

the gendered impact of open book assessments.”

History Professor, Peter Mandler, suggested the current disparities in history to be down to grade inflation during the pandemic, and the bunching of women at high 2:1 marks. As the proportion of Firsts rose, more women were brought into the highest bracket. And conversely, as the rewarding of Firsts grew stricter, it declined.

Modes of assessment:

In the case of MML, Mander notes that prior to the pandemic, the University helped the Faculty to conduct a paper by paper analysis, in order to understand the gender gap. They found that the most significant gender gaps were “not in the essay writing ‘scheduled papers’ sat in the exam hall, but in the language papers, especially ab initio language papers.” Meanwhile, the long essay and dissertations did not have a significant impact on gender gaps.

“

An external examiner expressed “serious concern” over the gender breakdown of Firsts

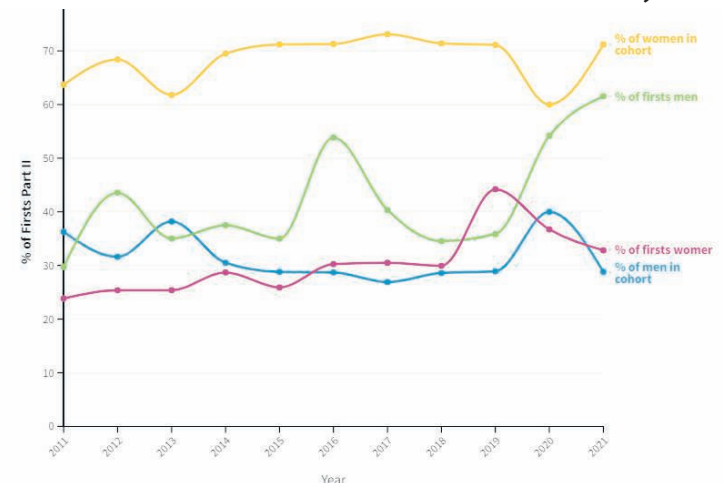
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Both History and English have recently undergone Tripos reform, and one of the many changes that have been implemented include diversifying forms of assessment.

In the case of English, Dr Phil Knox (Director of Undergraduate Studies) pointed out that Part I of the Tripos had been reformed to “give a clearer sense of progression through the different stages of the degree”, and that the “key aim” of this was to “help close the gender awarding gap.”

Mandler meanwhile hopes the reformed History Tripos will even out some of these inequalities. It places a greater weight on coursework, which he points out tends to favour women. Mandler is also an advocate for online exams, arguing that in-person assessment just “didn’t make sense pedagogically.”

Mandler is critical of the traditional examination format, coining it a “test of machismo.” Reflecting on his days at Oxford undergrad, Mandler described the examination process as “like a haz-



▲ Gender Attainment Gap for English Tripos

ing ritual” which saw three years worth of exams crammed into five days. Mandler’s overall view is that it simply “is not a good assessment of your skills as an historian.”

Writing styles:

Another possible explanation is the emphasis examiners place on writing style. Anecdotally, women at Cambridge have found themselves told to ‘write like a man’. Academic studies highlight the gendering of different kinds of discourse, with qualities like rationality often considered characteristically ‘male’.

When asked if the examination criteria placed an emphasis on gendered kinds of style, Mandler disagreed: “Criteria advises away from this.” His colleague Dr Melissa Calaresu noted that qualities such as “flair” have definitively left the vocabulary of academics and examiners in the Faculty. Chair of the English Faculty, Raphael Lyne said: “This is the sort of thing we keep under review, as we’re not complacent about any aspect of our examining.”

The cultural gendering of subjects:

The current culture surrounding academia also has a significant impact on the gender attainment gap. Mander, who is Chair of the EDI Committee for MMLL, commented: “One of my personal gripes about languages [...] and gender is that they have become ever more gendered in the public imagination and this impacts at school level.”

“Given the gendered take up of computer sciences, engineering and physics, and given the economic, political and cultural importance that is attached [...] I fear that this has compounded cultural indifference towards languages in the UK and a yet wider sense that the arts and humanities are less useful in today’s society, something reflected in funding.”

Support in the academic ‘pipeline’:

Mandler admits there is a “limited amount you can do at a university at the very end of a young person’s [academ-

ic] journey to account for inequalities which emerge in society. Inequalities will pop up somewhere else.”

One reason for this is due to how decentralised gender equality is at Cambridge: it is often faculty based and led. Very few institutional mechanisms exist to tackle the issue.

Mander offered another perspective, writing: “It is always helpful to consider the local in the context of the global [...] Recognising the repercussions of the return to these sorts of oppressive gender hierarchies may incentivise our own desire to make teaching and learning open and equal.”

Current and future efforts:

Several faculties have undergone working groups to assess the situation and compile solutions. In 2016, the History Faculty took part in several exercises aimed to reduce unconscious bias – such as a handwriting workshop.

Female students tend to perform better when provided with female role-models. Mander told *Varsity*: “The MMLL survey revealed a strong sense of there being good role models for female undergraduates, but there is always more that we can do in a context where finding postgraduate research funding is very challenging.”

The move to more online-assessments post-pandemic has had diverse ramifications. In 2021, whilst female Finalists in History Tripos were awarded more Firsts than men, the gender gap for final year English students widened.

English will return to in-person exams next year, and so will certain language papers within MML. “It will be interesting to see whether this changes outcomes,” Mander commented.

Despite the lack of attention towards the gender attainment gap in the humanities, the University has recognised the issue for some time and faculties are trying to fix it. Nonetheless, whilst the impact of tripos reform is yet to be seen, it is clear that there is still work to be done to close the gap.

The University and several faculties were contacted for comment.

Features

Ukraine's first female sappers

A year after Russia launched a full-scale attack on Ukraine, **Xia Gray** travels to Kosovo to meet the women training to be Ukraine's first female bomb disposal operators



▲ PHOTOS BY XIA GRAY

Anastasia jokes about making dumplings, as she uses a small rolling pin to morph the plastic explosive. Her humour covers a deeply serious reality: she and her fellow students must prove that they can safely detonate mortars, mines and bombs.

It is December 2022: the final week of their advanced Level 3 Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) course, before they go back to commence life-saving operations in Ukraine. The next time they do this work, the slightest mistake could mean death.

A 21-years-old linguistics student turned EOD trainee, Anastasia faces a mortar lying innocently on the ground. It is the size of a 20cm ruler, British-manufactured during World War II. Hassan, their key instructor, says that if it were to go off, everyone in a 25-meter radius would be dead.

The women are guided by a cadre of instructors and their interpreters, Uliana and Zhenia, who risk their lives to ensure the students understand the intricate steps of explosive disposal.

They have come to a specialist EOD school in western Kosovo, Mine Action & Training (MAT). Like other schools, it has classrooms, dormitories, a canteen, even a bar. But across its four-acre ground, there are different bomb disposal scenarios: mine fields, urban and rural set-ups, even a genuine tank. It is one of the few places in the world where you can learn to handle some of the most dangerous objects ever made.

Ben Remfrey MBE is the school's managing director. A former Commando and veteran of Northern Ireland, the Gulf War, Syria, Iraq and Libya, he claims that women make for better students: "Men try and do what men do – they know they are being watched, they can be macho. The women watch, the women think."

First, the women survey the site from

a distance. Then they approach, laying a smaller explosive at a precise angle, millimetres from the bomb – aiming to either knock off the fuse or trigger a controlled burn of the explosive. This is the job of a "sapper".

Before the 2022 invasion, only Ukrainian men were allowed to learn these skills. Now this group of women, volunteers from all backgrounds, including teachers, secretaries, and mothers, are training to be the first female Ukrainian sappers.

As they work, they laugh, blowing onto the plastic explosives to bless them. Pressing the detonator, the explosives go off, much to the delight of the sappers. The blessings clearly worked.

"It's not an explosion you can hear with your ears; it's an explosion inside – a joy – knowing that, pressing that button, at least one problem has gone away," says Kate. "I have stopped one more thing from killing people."

Bombs detonated safely still go off, not with a Hollywood "bang", but a

much deeper thump that you feel in your stomach, hitting you just before the air shock.

On the day of the invasion, the shockwave from a Russian cruise missile blew out the windows of Natalia's home. After ten days of dodging fire fights and enemy helicopters, she and her eleven-year-old son made it to the relative safety of Natalia's parents. Then she had to leave him to return to her job as a Junior Officer in the Ukrainian army. "He saw it all. When it came time for me to leave, he said he wasn't scared of the bombs or the dangers, he just wanted to be with me."

Major Maryna Labunets is the first female sapper in the Ukrainian National Guard. Since completing foundational training earlier in 2022, she has been clearing the liberated territories of Northern Ukraine. "I put off telling my family what I was doing for the longest time. When I finally told them they were shocked but supportive – after each day of demining, they call me to see how it went."



Maryna has seen the deep psychological terror the mines can inflict on communities: "Mothers ask me – can my children play in the playground? When can we return to the forests? For the children, it is much worse – they grow up with terror."

Kate and Ryta are both from the Donetsk region in Ukraine, which has been under constant attack by Russia since 2014. Prior to the war, Kate worked on the railways, and Ryta was a truck driver. Neither had expected to work in humanitarian mine action, but now both women have changed the course of their lives, driven by the desire to help their fellow countrymen and women.

Kate explains: "I want and wish that the children of Ukraine have the opportunity to play safely, and their parents can be confident that their kids don't bump into a grenade in the playground or a landmine on their way to school." As I heard time and again, "there is no safe place in Ukraine."

The average failure rate of explosive ordinance is 15%, but due to the poor condition of Russian armaments, the failure rate is as high as 60%. The majority of explosives dropped on Ukraine are lying in streets, in playgrounds, waiting to kill.

Anastasia looks right at me: "Every

day is dead people."

It will be a long journey in making Ukraine safe again, Pete LeSueur OBE, a senior instructor and veteran with over 50 years of EOD experience, explains. "You are going to have stuff around for years and years; I mean, we're still finding stuff from WWI."

The women already completed a course earlier in 2022, funded by Jersey Overseas Aid and Friends of Ukraine EOD, who both hailed it "an unmitigated success" – and so, the women were brought over again to further their training.

Trainees are away from their families for a month. The course has been extended and designed specifically for them because, unlike most students trained in EOD, they are going back into active conflict.

Ben explains: "Ultimately the conflict continues and a lot of the people we train become targets themselves, and we are acutely aware of that."

No one knows how, or when, this war will end, but one thing is for certain: for decades after, these women will carefully move across Ukraine, disposing of Putin's deadly legacy – so that their children can play safely once again.



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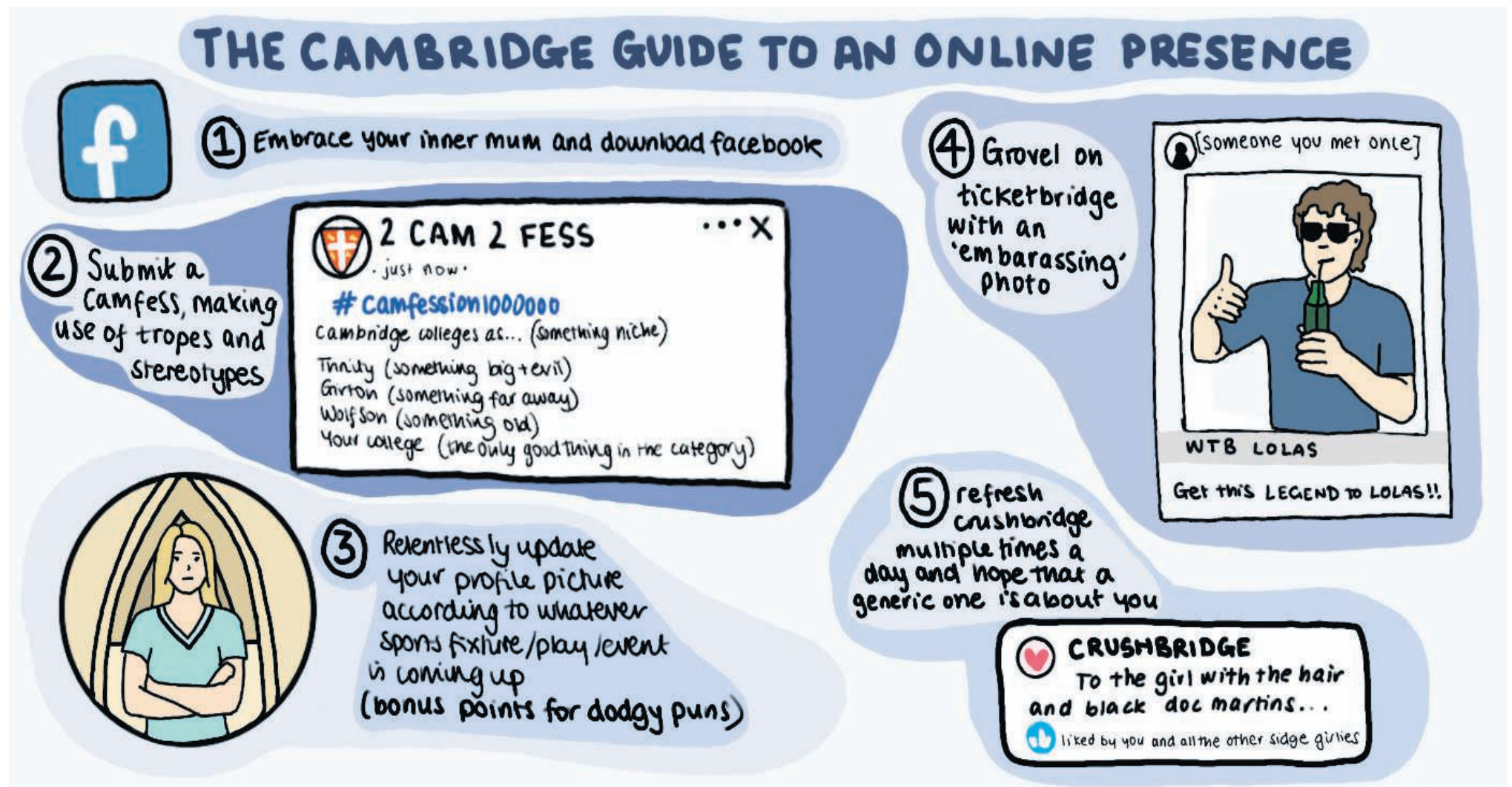
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▲Cartoon by Hannah Castle

Cambridge has a compassion problem

Rumours of a citizen's arrest at the Sidgwick Buttery shows what happens when this university's competitive culture goes too far



Asha Kaur Birdi

Picture the scene: it's a Monday night and you are perusing Camfess, the unofficial Facebook oracle for all things Cambridge. As you trawl through the usual ramblings about traumatic club nights and supervision blunders, you come across a shudder-inducing post. It detailed how, just a few days after the Sidgwick Buttery reopened, a student took it upon themselves to perform a citizen's arrest on another because they saw them – allegedly – stealing a sandwich. I was just as dumbfounded as you probably are reading this.

While I cannot sit here and pretend in good faith that Camfess is the most trustworthy of journalistic sources, I was strangely unsurprised that something of this nature could happen in Cambridge. It felt like almost the natural product of an environment founded in competition

and hyper-individualism; a surreal manifestation of the “dog-eat-dog” mantra played out for all to see.

Those students who witnessed the event, likely just waiting for their 1pm paninis, were forced to reckon with how quickly their peers could turn against each other in pursuit of... well, I couldn't really tell you what precisely was gained here. Did the self-professed police officer of the scene feel it their duty to call in their peer as a law-abiding, undoubtedly upstanding young citizen – or were they just possessed by the spirit of The Karen?

One thing is surely for certain: their motives were informed by the intense and somewhat insidious Cambridge instinct to compete at all times. The instinct which sometimes reduces supervisions to a contest of intellectual superiority; the same instinct which makes Hall a battleground of voices, all vying to offer up the best story about their holiday travels or inordinate successes. First and foremost, it is the instinct to self-preserve and prioritise the individual, even when this comes at the expense of others.

While grade-based accommodation rankings may suggest otherwise – I'm

looking at you, Peterhouse, Christ's and John's – we must remember that our peers are not our competition nor a threat to our own progress. The tacky “relative gains” mindset of Cambridge, where we conceive power or success only in terms of our comparative advantage over others, needs to take a back seat. What may seem as a random Buttery spectacle, is rather a disturbing indicator of a rather nasty individualist culture that rears its head around this place more often than one would prefer.

A citizen's arrest is just cringe as a concept. Do you need special training for that? Were they prepared to just whip out their quasi-policing skills in the hopes that a future situation would call for it? I need context. Either way, pulling those moves out on another student is more than just embarrassing; it is humiliating and degrading, a searing indictment of our complicity in the Cambridge cult of individualism.

In this cost-of-living crisis too, with its severe squeeze on student life, it is not at all justifiable to publicly humiliate a student potentially just seeking a cheap lunch. I'm not going to act like

this was necessarily a Jean-Valjean-in-Les-Misérables situation, but legality and morality are not inherently synonymous. Maybe the student police officer in question should spend less time in other people's business and expend more energy campaigning for cheaper on-campus food – because, if anything, that is the real issue here.

Merciless, uncompromising law enforcement is one thing this country certainly does not need anymore of; let's not turn the student body into another vehicle of this, ok? In a year of serious economic pressure and widespread industrial action, student solidarity

is more important than ever. So the next time you see a peer struggling, help them keep their metaphorical punt afloat rather than pushing them overboard into the abyss of the Cam. Reject the spectre of individualism that haunts this institution and choose peace. And maybe keep the policing ambitions at home next time.



▲Bethan Moss



Lotte Brundle

The good, the bad, and the flirty: student journos have it all. If the phrase “student journo” didn’t already give you the immediate ick (in which case – what’s wrong with you), then you’ve clicked on this article for a variety of reasons. The first one being that you currently fancy a student journalist. You’ve been reading their red-hot Comment pieces for a while now; taking in their words; hungrily pursuing their syntax; getting hot under the collar when you see their name in print; finding yourself flushing when they use an exceptionally clever run of semicolons mid-article. You’ve got it bad. You’ve become infatuated with their prose style, and you’d like to get to know them on a more-than-words basis.

The second reason is that – like most of *Varsity*’s readership – you’re a student journalist yourself. No one loves reading a *Varsity* article more than its author. With a highly inflated sense of ego that only gets pumped up higher with every print byline, you’re outraged to find that your constant untimely interjections into the weekly News meetings might

Why you shouldn’t shag a student journo

Blushing over their bylines? Get out while you still can!

not have made you as “shaggable” as you initially imagined, but rather deeply unpopular. It’s a sad truth, but for many student journos, the only person getting turned on by their headlines is them.

The final option, of course, is that it’s too late. You’ve already committed the crime. In a moment of drunken madness you fraternised with a – shudder – journalist. Waking up to find yourself in their student room, print cut-out of their own past *Varsity* pieces glaring at you from the walls. As you picked your way shamefully out of their day-old, coffee-cup-littered, print-laden shrine to selfhood, you were desperate to find out where you went wrong. Luckily for you, I have the answers. The first thing you need to know about student journal-

anything else, we must have an audience. This tendency also carries through, after work hours in the office, into our social lives. The newspaper pub socials are a constant battle of “who can shout the loudest” thinly disguised by empty compliments such as: “Loved your piece on the SU last week”, really meaning: “Talk about how great *my* writing is, please”.

I hate to break it to you, but the first reason you shouldn’t shag a student journalist is that they are not interested in you. They were never interested in you. They were just interested in being listened to, and you are the unfortunate owner of a nearby pair of ears. Flirting, for journalists, is like pitching an article. Outlook formalisms replaced by less-than-adequate pub banter, and their latest hot take being that you should sleep with them.

The second thing you need to know is that, just as it is with writing, the thrill for student journalists lies in the chase. Journalism is about getting that big new scoop, scoring a famous name for an interview, or writing the most antagonistic Comment piece you can possibly muster, which is sure to get you thrown to the wolves on Camfess (and drive up clicks). Once the article is published, however, we grow bored and disinterested, until a tantalising new idea tempts our minds. The same applies to sex. Once the thrill of the chase is over, you’ll become just a notch in the

bedpost of a student journo: their mind will have already fixated on a new, more exciting pursuit.

The final reason you should never shag a student journalist – editors especially – is because they love to nitpick. They like things “just so”. They know what they want, and they aren’t afraid to ask you to make changes if they don’t think what you’re doing is good enough. Make a grammatical mistake in the throes of passion? Don’t expect it to go unnoticed. It’s actually likely they’d stop mid-fornication to explain to you the correct use of that verb/noun/adjective you flippantly yelled out mere minutes ago. Editors are, by nature, perfectionists, and won’t let something pass without first suggesting improvements, in the newsroom and in the bedroom alike.

Finally, and I cannot stress this enough, the primary reason not to shag a student journalist is that anything you say can and will be used as a pull quote. And if you’ve made the unfortunate mistake of engaging with a Lifestyle columnist, all I can say is good luck to you when their next “Sex and Relationships” column comes out. If you were mistakenly enticed into thinking a one night stand with a Theatre editor was a good idea, you’ll be sorely disappointed when you receive their review of your performance the next morning: “Promising production ultimately failed to deliver – one star.” With a newsie,

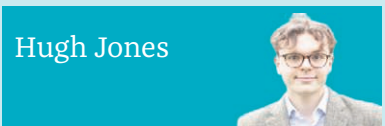
at least you’re getting a straight talker. Although “This week, studies show that News correspondent increasingly seeks amatory interactions with fellow student” is hardly a very sexy chat up line. The Interviews writers would doubtless ask some quick-fire quiz questions afterwards, killing the vibe immediately, and the Sports writers would be eager to write up your “match report” once the deed had been done.

All in all, the only truly sexy section is Comment. The problem with Comment writers though, as deliberate antagonists, is you’d never truly know if they were really into you. After all, we’d do anything to make a statement.

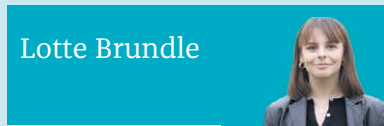


Rowing, sleep deprivation, or workload: What is the worst Cambridge flex?

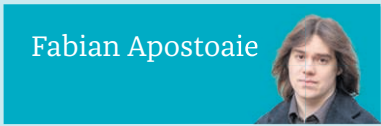
Your favourite *Varsity* writers offer their wisdom on what constitutes Cantabs’ worst brags



The worst Cambridge flex is when a humanities student tries to brag about their workload. As an English student myself, I tried this in first year. Unfortunately, I was talking to a vet at the time. I now know that unless your essay crisis involves sticking your hand up a cow’s arse, you should keep your complaints to yourself. Doing a humanities degree just isn’t that hard. If you did a 9-5, five days a week, you would be fine. You wouldn’t even have to do anything hard. Just sit in a nice cosy library, Arc Cafe coffee in hand, reading a novel. For most people that counts as a holiday. But Cambridge students can’t help making their lives more difficult. They wake up at 5AM to row, sell their souls to the ADC, and write needlessly provocative columns for *Varsity*. Don’t get me wrong, this isn’t a bad thing. Cambridge would be a very boring place if historians and Englings started taking their degrees seriously. Just don’t pretend that you genuinely didn’t have time to write an essay this week – or ask a STEM student to feel sorry for you.



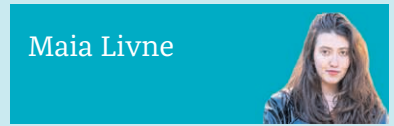
The worst Cambridge flex is telling people you go to Cambridge. This is not a flex. Yes, you’re academically probably quite smart – we get it. But going to Cambridge is not a substitute for a personality. Also, it is way more interesting to simply be yourself, get some hobbies and/or opinions and make these the things that people know about you. Or even a fun visual identifier: pierce your nose! Dye your hair! Get a tattoo of a frog! They can find out you go to Cambridge throughout a natural conversation – not as a substitute for your name. Don’t shove it down the throats of a stranger at first meeting. It’s embarrassing. Non-Cambridge people don’t care that you go here, they are ambivalent about it at best. Worst case they’ll find you to be boasting. Let your interests do the talking and stop hiding behind the name of this (often problematic) institution. If they ask, you can tell, them but “didyouknowigoto-cambridge?” is not a good conversational opening gambit.



The worst Cambridge flex is one that isn’t even *yours* to begin with. The prime offenders are people that piggyback off the achievements of their college, faculty, or peers, swimming around like bragging pilot-fish, passing off real clout as their own. We all know someone who’ll take any opportunity to launch a comparison competition: “We’ve got a signature cocktail at our bar”, “So and so off the BBC used to go to *my* college”, “My supervisor wrote this famous book”. Problem is, none of these achievements are down to the appropriators themselves. All the bragging is a fugazi, and the braggers don’t seem to realise. They are a leech on this institution and I’m fed up with it. Even the most arrogant personal boasts is excused by comparison because at least they’re one’s own. These subtle tricks of association are the infuriating final straw in a university that is already brimming with misplaced confidence. Give me a self-important tripos-topper over these charlatans any day.



The worst Cambridge flex is, inevitably, rowing. Now, before you come for me, I must confess, I too, was once a rower. Back in my heyday as an impressionable fresher, I was lured into the boat club by the offering of a free burger. After a term and a half of rowing, the only thing I gained was the unshakable feeling that I must be dyspraxic. Following several close brushes for death, I hung up my oars for the safety of the wider student population. Just like with vegans, I don’t care if you row, just don’t tell me about it. You woke up before dawn for an outing? Congratulations, I’m glad to hear that you have a working alarm clock and a disrupted sleep schedule. You’re still wearing your rowing gear from this morning to lectures? Learn some basic personal hygiene. And all for what? The thrill of ramming a boat into another in May Bumps? A rowing blazer which sets you back hundreds of pounds? Rowers, stop trying to ‘get blades’ and please, just get a life.



The worst Cambridge flex is telling everyone how little you slept last night. Oh, you only got two hours of sleep? Sucks to be you, I guess. You wrote your essay at 4am on the floor of the Lola’s toilets? Congrats on treating your body like a doormat. This is your fourth coffee of the morning? Please spare me your words and go brush your teeth. If you’re desperate for compassion for your oh-so-difficult all-nighter lifestyle, then sure, I am sorry about your (and my) poor organisational skills, but don’t try to use it as a flex. Wrecking your body over an essay is not to be glorified: it is a habit you should ditch. I’m not saying I’m immune to poor sleep, but at least I have the decency to keep quiet about it. Trust me, you don’t seem impressively aloof: you look like a run-over raccoon with those bags under your eyes. If you think you’re too busy for sleep, maybe use the time you spend flexing to take a nap: you’ll finally feel well-rested, and we’ll all be grateful for the peace and quiet.

Comment



Gwenno Robinson

This week marks a year since Russia's invasion of Ukraine. As the conflict drags on, sanctions on Russian gas continue to distort energy prices, exacerbating Britain's cost-of-living crisis. Speculation abounds from pundits and politicians alike, and yet there is, to date, no reassuring end in sight for the spiralling costs of basic expenses. It is in this light that Cambridge must re-examine its blanket ban on its students working jobs.

The University of Cambridge's website states clearly that undergraduate students "are expected not to work during term-time." While students are allowed to work during the vacation, Cambridge recommends that students should first "consult their Faculty and Department for further details regarding vacation dates when they may be able to work." Academic pressures mean this isn't always a viable option. Law students at my college, for instance, are expected to produce 15 essays over the vacation

Cambridge should change its 'no-job' policy

The policy is unsustainable in light of the cost-of-living crisis

period.

It is also worth noting that students are allowed to undertake paid work during term-time for their college or the University, but these opportunities vary drastically from college to college. Furthermore, paid work within colleges is not always a reliable source of income. Increasingly, these jobs are disappearing as college bars are put under private administration or in the hands of external workers, like at Clare Cellars.

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Paid work within colleges is not always a reliable source of income
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Until recently, I was a staunch defender of Cambridge University's "no-job" policy. I'd be the first to stand up for it when my friends at other universities or prospective students questioned the rule. Why? Because it gave Cambridge a strong incentive to provide substantial bursaries and funds for its students who are facing financial hardship.

The Cambridge Bursary Scheme for instance, provides non-repayable bursaries of up to £3,500 a year to students holding home fees status. In 2021, the scheme was extended to students with household incomes of up to £62,215. The Cambridge Bursary could also be supplemented where necessary, with financial hardship grants and support from colleges.

Other universities' financial support isn't nearly as far-reaching. Bursaries at Bath and Exeter, for example, only extend to students with a household income of below £25,000.

In essence, Cambridge's financial support had to be more far-reaching and comprehensive than other universities to be able to maintain its "no job" policy.

The cost-of-living crisis, however, has brought additional attention to this system's pitfalls. Cambridge's argument over the "no-job" policy rests on the availability of its financial grants. If the University can't supply adequate financial support in light of rising living costs and inflation, the argument that we shouldn't be allowed to work in term time does not stand.

The *Guardian's* investigation in 2018 found that Cambridge's 31 colleges have a combined wealth of £6.9 billion. Combined with the university's endowment, Cambridge's wealth stands at a total of

£11.8 billion. Despite this financial advantage, a recent *Varsity* investigation unveiled the disparities in Cambridge's cost-of-living support in comparison to its Russell group competitors. Some universities have given students one-off additional payments to assist them as they face rising living costs, such as

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Oxford, Leeds and UCL have opted to give grants or bursary uplifts of up to £500
”

Queen's University Belfast. Other universities have followed suit, such as King's College London, which gave £150 to those with a household income of under £42,875. Oxford, Leeds and UCL have opted to give grants or bursary uplifts of up to £500.

Cambridge's response has been to set aside £500k for specific requests to the University's Student Hardship Fund. In comparison to other Russell Group universities, Cambridge's response to the cost-of-living crisis is meagre. Shef-

field, for instance, have dedicated an additional £2.5 million to their own financial support funds. *Varsity's* investigation found that "only three Russell Group universities which responded to our requests for information had increased hardship funding by less than Cambridge."

The University's unwillingness to provide additional financial support is even more incoherent in light of its own policy prohibiting students from earning their own income during term time. This points to a wider problem with the University's workload — why is it that students are unable to take a job alongside their degrees, like in other universities?

The cost-of-living crisis has profound repercussions for students in higher education. Research from the Sutton Trust found that nearly a quarter of UK students were "less likely" to be able to complete their degree because of cost pressures. If Cambridge refuses to significantly expand its financial support to combat cost-of-living costs, more and more students will be left with no choice but to break the "no-job" policy — which many already do, by necessity. The University claims it wants to attract students from more diverse socio-economic backgrounds. Its financial support says otherwise.



Fabian Apostoaie

Mindlessly browsing Camfess or your college's confessions page is an innocent vice we all can't seem to shake off. You're bored, you have a couple of minutes to burn during a lecture break — might as well open up Facebook and inwardly chuckle while reading (somewhat) relatable statements along the lines of "I email my weekly suppo essays in the Lola's queue" or "who else makes roast dinners at 3am." If anonymous community pages like Camfess *only* contained posts like these, it wouldn't be so bad. Yes, it would be a little bit cringe, but there isn't anything fundamentally harmful in that.

The posts that exasperate me are from another common genre — the banal, petty, borderline-bureaucratic complaints. Whether it's utterly trivial things like "Someone took my favourite seat in the UL", or maintenance complaints like "my shower is clogged", there appears to be no filter on what people decide is worth sharing with the world. Complaints of this variety seem so niche, one wonders if there is any value in bringing them up at all, aside from a

degree of narcissistic pleasure for the poster. For every semi-good joke or post about a serious issue in the university community, there seem to pop countless random ventings about inane drivel that really should have stayed in the drafts.

But why do I even care about people complaining on the internet? In a lot of

“
There is no filter on what people decide to share with the world
”

cases, these confession pages are starting to undermine instances of valuable human interaction and even damage our ability to carry out those interactions in real life conversations.

A certain kind of bitterness and alienation towards those around you reveals itself when we share our thoughts and frustrations exclusively through an anonymous online medium. A little complaint aired in the gyp to a friend

is just that. But what is the actual constructive outcome of consistently airing your personal grievances to "the void" on Facebook?

A lot of us may be trying to optimise every facet of our lives, but our relationships with other people aren't the kind of thing that can be reduced to how ideally suited they are for our immediate comfort. Hidden in all of these little complaints about noisy neighbours or library seats being taken is the idea that the infuriating issues we deal with day-to-day are not part of living among other people, but are annoyances to be eliminated with the click of a finger. Yes, it's very hard to "realise your full potential" if it involves the person on the floor above you deciding that mid-exam season is the perfect time to learn how to play the trumpet. Yet, instead of making peace with reality or at least attempting to resolve the issue in person, we seem to want to solve our problems in the way we order an Amazon package: at the tap of a button. But is the best way to deal with anything, at the end of the day?

Believe it or not, your issues may actually be solvable without Facebook's shared space for passive aggressive grudge posting. You may just have to (shock horror) *talk* to the people around you. Don't appreciate the background

music provided by your neighbours' 6pm samba sessions? Maybe mention it to them next time you see them, instead of turning to the submission box. There's a greater sense of amity in college than could perhaps be found in a larger institution, helped along by the tight-knit living environment and

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You're not exactly Wikileaks for calling people out in a college with fewer than 100 people per year
”

shared college culture. The proximity and shared spaces we have with the people around us in Cambridge is what makes this place pretty unique. It is also exactly why posting about your beef on a confession page is a fool's errand.

It's not a big city, you're not exactly Wikileaks for calling people out in a col-

lege with fewer than 100 people per year. Think about how many people you know you seem to run into in Mainsburys — are these the same people that you're "anonymously" venting about on your college-fess page? Most of the time it's pretty easy to track down the source of the complaints or drama to you, since there's not a lot of people here to begin with. A callout post about someone on a certain staircase or at a certain event is never going to be a "call to the void" in the way it would be somewhere else online. Merely initialising a person's name to protect their identity, especially when everyone proudly displays them on their puffers, doesn't make it too difficult to track the thread of gossip down to the original source. It comes across less as cathartic for the poster, and more spiteful and vindictive than anything else.

Let's resolve to remember the ways of communicating and airing our grievances already at hand. These Facebook pages are, at the end of the day, a frustrating excess that we should do our best to shrug off, after which, hopefully, we'll learn to live with each other a little more harmoniously than we do currently. A Facebook submission box may look like the easy way out, but we wouldn't be at Cambridge if we wanted things to come easy, wouldn't we?

Could Newnham be the first team with no men to win University Challenge?



▲ BBC Archive

Aoife O'Driscoll
Interviews Editor

Bethan Holloway-Strong greets me with the same beaming smile that TV audiences know well from the current season of University Challenge. Bethan and her teammates, captain Roma Ellis, Hannah Bowen and Zhiyu Chen are representing Newnham. They are proving formidable competitors. Having become one of the highest-scoring losers after their 160-175 loss to the Courtauld Institute of Art, and then beating the Universities of Sheffield and Cardiff, Newnham are now into the quarter-finals.

How did Bethan get into quizzing? "I had a fair bit of experience, but not as much as some people [on University Challenge] do." Her experience started in school, first as part of the House Quiz team, and then in her school's Quizbowl in Year 11. When Bethan started univer-

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The face of
University
Challenge is
changing
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sity, she diligently attended Quiz Society practices and The Mitre's weekly pub quiz. She "had the most formal quizzing experience" out of her teammates, but once Newnham started practising as a team, they realised they "worked really, really well together."

University Challenge is a dream for many students, and appearing on the beloved show has always been in Bethan's mind — she laughs as she tells us "my mum always used to joke with me when I was doing quizzing at school that I should go on University Challenge." In fact, Bethan has been competing for Newnham twice; in her second year she also made the team, but they didn't make it onto TV. It was only in her final year that Newnham were successful — the first time the College's team has made it onto University Challenge since the

2010-11 series.

The Newnham team worked hard to prepare for the show, through weekly practices, watching old episodes and going through quiz books. Newnham also quizzed with Caius, Christ's and Jesus, the other Cambridge teams from this season. As Newnham practised more together, they picked up on each other's specialties: "Zhiyu was our scientist [and] knew so much about China [...]" and Hannah was so great on culture, films, languages, international relations." Captain Roma was adept at the buzzer: "not only were they quick, they were accurate." Bethan jokes that her vocal power was her strength — "I just like to shout" — but she also worked on memorising lists, from Booker Prize winners to the shipping forecast areas. "My mum says I've always had quite a good memory."

Bethan admits that the show was "genuinely the highlight of my degree." She mentions how accommodating the team behind the scenes were, "because I've never been in a TV studio, and it's kind of overwhelming." Another bonus of filming was getting to meet people from other universities. Bethan acknowledges, however, that it was "quite a high pressure environment," which was probably the hardest part of the process, "but the more you do it, the easier it gets." The support of her teammates, as well as reserve Eve Canning, and getting to play so many rounds, was what made the show so enjoyable for her.

The Newnham team's love of the show and rapport with each other has been undeniable to viewers, with an outpouring of support on social media after each round. Bethan reckons the positive reception comes from the fact that "we are all genuinely friends, and we went into it with the knowledge that Newnham hadn't been on it for [11] years... we were just so pleased to get on TV." She remembers a pep talk that Roma gave before the first match, reminding them that they had done so well already, and deserved to be proud.

Any show that lasts for 52 series sees its fair share of changes, and University Challenge is no exception. Though the days of consistently all-white, all-male teams are no more, every recent winning team has had either three or four men on it. The last time a winning team had more than one woman on it was in 2002.

Despite this, Bethan remains optimis-

tic about the show. "There are still issues that need to be addressed. But the face of University Challenge is changing," she says, "it's something that the production studio's very aware of, both in terms of disabilities but also different identities." Newnham have also made efforts to open up the show. "Roma and Eve ran sessions for people who didn't have experience [...] Eve ran a session specifically for people from minority ethnicities."

Bethan and her teammates' efforts show that university quizzing is a welcoming and accessible environment — anyone can get involved. So where can they start? Bethan's first port of call would be the Cambridge University Quiz Society, which runs "informal and approachable" quiz sessions multiple times a week, and The Mitre's pub quiz. Wherever you start, Bethan's fundamental advice is to just go for it: "If you want to get involved with quizzing, get involved with quizzing!"

UniVarsity Challenge

If you want to get involved with quizzing, why not start right now? Here are some of the questions Bethan's got right during the series so far. Can you get them right too?

Moldova, Kazakhstan, Egypt and Mexico all feature on their national flags variations of what animal?

Which artist depicted the daughter of the Spanish king with her ladies-in-waiting in his 1656 work, *Las Meninas* or the Royal Maids?

For the Latin for a kind of social insect, what is the common name for methanoic acid?

In addition to *The Tempest*, in which play by Shakespeare does a character named Sebastian survive a shipwreck?

Go to page 16 to find the answers!



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Interviews



▼ SARAH JEYNES FOR THE BBC

Jeremy Vine on privacy, student journalism, and punk rock

Riannon Chaplin

Upturned collars, unkempt hair and some questionable colour combinations – not what you might expect of Jeremy Vine, business-like host of BBC Radio 2's lunchtime show. But in the mid-1980s, Vine and his brother, comedian Tim Vine, founded the punk band The Flared Generation, who *Smash Hits* Magazine dubbed “the most unfashionable punk band in the country.”

He laughs when I mention the band. “Oh, God,” he says, putting his head in his hands. “We misunderstood punk to such an extent that we wore flared trousers. We only got anywhere because we were a joke!”

Vine's demeanour is relaxed as he tells me about his younger days. His journalism career spans decades and continents, but it all started in Cheam, trying to make it as a band with his brother and two friends. “Tim was the only one of the two of us with any talent. I think he saw the comedic value we had and decided to pursue that.”

Vine, however, chose a different path. After an internship with the *Coventry Evening Standard* in 1986, he moved to the BBC, working on Radio 4's *Today Programme* before becoming a political

reporter. His work has taken him across Europe and Africa, where he reported on the Angolan Civil War, the war between Eritrea and Ethiopia, and interviewed Robert Mugabe. His *Newsnight* investigation into police brutality in South Africa won the Silver Nymph Award at the Monte Carlo Television Festival, and resulted in the suspension of 22 police officers.

“
Look a little bit beyond where you are right now...you might find that the world is going to change
”

This all sprouted from Vine's days at Durham University, where he was Editor-in-Chief of student newspaper *Palatinate*. “The people I did student journalism with [...] they're still my friends, I saw two of them a couple of days ago,” Vine tells me, leaning back in his chair. “But we were sitting there with old manual typewrit-

ers, dreaming of working for newspapers, and when we went out into the real world, the newspapers had collapsed.” He pauses, considering. “What we should have done, really, is look at computers. My advice would be to look a little bit beyond where you are right now, because you might find that the world is going to change.”

The multi-media nature of journalism is something Vine has embraced during his career. Alongside his radio show, he presented *Panorama*, the BBC's investigative documentary series, from 2007-2010; he currently hosts quiz show *Eggheads* and presents *Jeremy Vine*, Channel 5's current affairs show. Vine is also active on Twitter and TikTok, with 135,000 TikTok followers, though he sheepishly admits that he has someone younger managing it.

And yet, Vine knows all too well the harm the online world can cause. In September 2022, former BBC Radio Leeds presenter Alex Belfield was jailed for five and a half years for stalking Vine and three others. Over several years, Belfield made YouTube videos about his victims, sent them messages on social media, emailed them, and encouraged his followers to target them. The judge noted that one victim, Bernard Spedding, was left a ‘shell’ after being harassed for nine years.

In a *Newsnight* interview last year, Vine told Victoria Derbyshire that he believes someone would have died if the courts hadn't stopped Belfield. He spoke of his fear for his teenage daughters after their home address was leaked by Belfield. “I felt broken over it,” he said then.

“It really was a facer for me,” he reflects now. “I hadn't seen such an avalanche of hatred coming from one person before. But they really need to do something about it – the idea that this guy still has half his videos up on YouTube is nuts.”

“
Tim saw the comedic value we had and decided to pursue that
”

When I ask if he suspects a gender bias in the sentencing – Belfield was found not guilty of stalking all the female employees who came forward – he thinks for a second. “Unfortunately, I think they'd been terrorised by him for so long that juries can think that if it's been

going on so long without being reported, you can't have been that bothered.” He condemns the “bad advice” given to the women by the BBC, who advised them to block and ignore Belfield – Vine argues that they should have been urged to log and report the incidents. The women – Liz Green, Rozina Breen, Helen Thomas, and Stephanie Hirst – have called for an independent investigation into how the BBC handled the situation.

“But we're at the start of all this,” Vine goes on. “We're learning.”

There is much we haven't had time to discuss: Vine's love of cycling, his time on *Strictly Come Dancing*, and his patronage of hospital radio. All of this is a far cry from the rockstar career he might have imagined for himself back in his Flared Generation days – but it's not bad for a former member of Britain's least fashionable punk band.

Answers from p. 15

- a) Eagle
- b) Velázquez
- c) Formic
- d) Twelfth Night

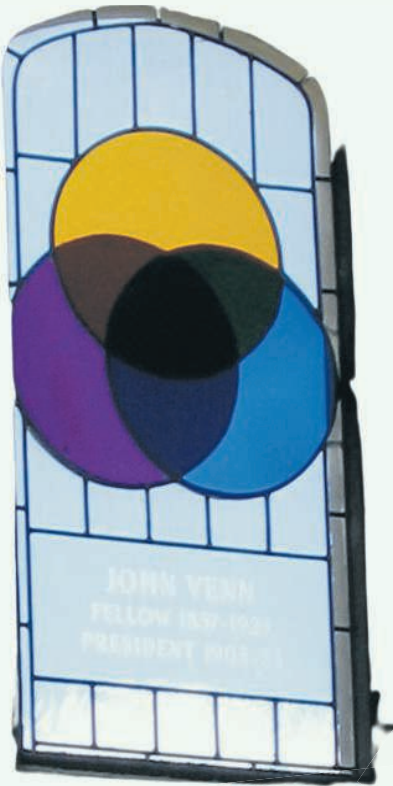
Charting the scientific landmarks of Cambridge

Suchir Salhan and Esmé Kenney bring you a tour of Cambridge's most famous scientific spots

Stephen Hawking, Francis Crick, and John Venn (Gonville & Caius)

Caius Old Courts have a number of commemorative scientific artefacts. In Caius Court, a memorial is laid outside the office of the late scientist Stephen Hawking in Caius Court. Engraved in the flagstone by the Gate of Honour are the words "Remember to look up at the stars and not down at your feet", alongside Hawking's famous equation of the entropy of a black hole.

In Hall are a series of commemorative stained glass windows of eminent Caius scientists – although "there is no shortage of candidates, for the college has more Nobel Laureates than spare windows". This includes a Venn diagram commemorating the mathematician John Venn. Physicist James Chadwick's window shows an alpha particle bombarding a beryllium atom – commemorating his discovery of the neutron. Nobel Prize-winning physiologist Sir Charles Sherrington and a depiction of Green's Theo-



rem in vector calculus (named after Caius mathematician George Green).

Francis Crick "gave his blessing" to his window showing the Watson-Crick DNA double helix on condition that Watson agreed. The window is not visible from outside at night when the DNA would be coiling the wrong way.

Mathematical Bridge (Queens' College)

The Mathematical Bridge, connecting the older "dark side" to the newer "light side" of the college across the River Cam, is believed by popular fable to have been designed and built by Newton without the nuts or bolts. Varsity can put this rumour to bed: the bridge was, in fact, built-in 1749 after Newton had died.



The Eagle

The historic pub is where Crick first announced they had discovered the structure of DNA. In February 1953, a jubilant Francis Crick walked into The Eagle in Cambridge to interrupt a patron's lunchtime to proclaim that he and James Watson had "found the secret of life". This is commemorated by a blue plaque next to the entrance, and also by two plaques in the middle room by the table Crick and Watson used to eat at regularly and worked to draw up a list of 20 canonical amino acids.



Photo credits: Wikimedia Commons (Eagle plaque, Christ's bench), Flickr (stained glass), Unsplash (apple)

The Darwin Garden (Christ's)

Among the many posthumous commemorations of Darwin is a portrayal of him in stained glass in his alma mater, Christ's College. It is in the oriel window of the Hall at his alma mater, Christ's College Cambridge – in a bay looking onto the First Court of the College. From Cambridge, Darwin embarked on a groundbreaking journey of discovery on HMS Beagle and fifty years after his birth, his seminal work, On the Origin of Species, was published. In New Court, the Darwin Garden was created to com-

memorate his legacy, planted with a selection of plants that Darwin would have encountered on his botanical voyages on the ship HMS Beagle. It features a statue of Darwin as a young man, sculpted by Anthony Smith.



The discovery of Pulsars (Murray Edwards and the UL)

On 28 November 1967, Dame Jocelyn Bell Burnell, then a postgraduate student at Murray Edwards College, was looking for quasars at the Mullard Radio Astronomy Observatory just outside Cambridge. While analysing data recorded from the radio telescope three months earlier, she discovered the first pulsar. These are mag-



netised rotating neutron stars that emit "pulses" of radiation at highly regular intervals (between seconds and milliseconds), formed when supergiant stars explode into a supernova. Although the discovery of pulsars won a Nobel Prize in 1974, the award was given to two male scientists, not Bell Burnell. The chart where Bell Burnell first found evidence of a pulsar is kept in the UL.

The Apple Tree and Early Naturalist (Trinity)

The clone of Newton's apple tree on the green outside Trinity College Cambridge is believed to have grown from a graft from the original tree which inspired Sir Isaac Newton to formulate his theory of gravity in the 17th century. The Wren Library, in Nevile's Court, has a number of valuable manuscripts, including Newton's first edition copy of Philosophiae Naturalis Principia Mathematica and mathematician Ramujan's "lost notebook". It features busts of Newton, philosopher Francis Bacon who led the advancement of both natural philosophy and the scientific revolution, ornithologist and early student of linguistics Francis Willughby, naturalist John Ray, mathematician Isaac Barrow (known for proving the fundamental theorem of calculus). The library also features a painted glass window depicting Newton, in blue robes, being presented to King George III by Fame or the muse of the college,

in yellow robes. The figure of Britannia stands behind the King with Francis Bacon, in black, seated with paper and pen as if to record the occasion at the bottom right. At the top two cherubs and a bare-breasted woman herald this event with a trumpet.



Science

The blurred lines between science and humanities: Luminomelia

Izzy Matear and Suchir Salhan

Within the University, there is sometimes the assumption that the sciences and humanities exist in separate spheres. One of experiments and numbers, and another of literature and art. Yet, the boundaries between the two disciplines are becoming increasingly blurred – with ethical questions becoming increasingly important in scientific discourse.

Enter Luminomelia: a philosophy society that frequently has science as a focal point for discussion. Tackling subjects from ‘public distrust in science’ to ‘is ADHD real?’, Luminomelia does not shy away from intricate scientific topics. *Varsity* spoke to the current co-presidents Edward Young and Sam Phoenix Clarke to discuss how this society merges science and philosophy and why it is important.

With science students in Cambridge increasingly able to take up humanities options (e.g History and Philosophy of Science or medics intercalating in humanities subjects), Luminomelia provides a forum for discussion and debate.

Founded in 2014, Luminomelia is Cambridge’s largest philosophy society and aims to allow people to “discuss things and argue with one another and have some sort of back and forth.” The weekly session consists of a short, roughly 15-minute talk, followed by a round-table discussion where everyone

is free to pitch in their ideas and views on the topic. This is a somewhat unique approach, flipping the standard practice of a long talk followed by a swift Q&A session, designed to prioritise dialogue.

For instance, speaker Natalia Zdorovtsova in a round-table discussion earlier this term outlines how the issues associated with formally classifying neurodevelopmental conditions with a set of medical labels have led some to question the legitimacy of ADHD. In her round-table discussion, she offers three arguments to demonstrate the reality of ADHD – formal medical classification; the “lack of agency” that people suffering from ADHD face in controlling their own behaviour; and a biological essentialist argument that ADHD is grounded in genetic or biological materiality.

While the society often contemplates scientific issues, with this term’s focus on ‘Science in Society’, Sam emphasises that they are “self-consciously and deliberately interdisciplinary,” and have had “English students, linguists, historians, scientists, mathematicians” attend the sessions. This varied-background aspect of the society is also evident in the co-presidents themselves. Edward started as a mathematician before transitioning into neuroscience, while Sam began in psychology before moving over to sociology and politics.

Sam and Edward emphasised that Luminomelia is a “welcoming space” for

those who don’t know much philosophy or haven’t studied science. Attendees are encouraged to participate in the discussion via a hand gesture system to signal that they would like to speak, but there is no pressure to do more than observe.

But why is there a need for conversation around science and its practice at all?

Edward asserts: “Science is sometimes a lot more complicated than people originally take it to be.” He remarks that often people may “deify” science and put it on a pedestal, and “refuse to acknowledge that it happens in a socio-political context.” He points out the influence society has on science, through the allocation of funding and which questions are seen as important.

Sam and Edward were keen to stress however, that Luminomelia is not aiming to “undermine the power and authority of science” but attempts to use philosophical debates to ‘illuminate’ certain aspects of science such as ethics.

While Luminomelia may not itself directly serve to reform the scientific institutions, it is a society that succeeds in this important task of integrating science and philosophy, which could form a foundation for interdisciplinary policy-making on the fundamental ethical and philosophical issues that underpin science and medicine.

Research Round up

Suchir Salhan and Tom Malloch



Would you prefer a four day working week?

While NatScis and mathmos continue to suffer six-day weeks, researchers from the University alongside academics from Boston College in the US and the think tank *Autonomy* have conducted the largest ever trial for a four-day working week.

Dr David Frayne, a Research Associate at the University of Cambridge, said: “We feel really encouraged by the results, which showed the many ways companies were turning the four-day week from a dream into realistic policy, with multiple benefits.”

Antisocial Fish disrupt the natural cleaning of coral reefs

Damselfish have been discovered to disrupt ‘cleaning services’ vital to the health of reefs. And climate change may mean this is only likely to get worse. New research from the University of Cambridge and Cardiff University shows that aggressive damselfish scare off the meal of choice for the Caribbean cleaner fish, the sharknose goby. The research shows that when gobies inadvertently set up shop within the territories of aggressive damselfish, damselfish scare off the gobies’ ‘choosy client customers’, which could exacerbate coral reef breakdown.

Protect against COVID-19 variants and future pandemic threats from new coronaviruses

A global strategy has launched to coordinate the complex research activities necessary for a new approach to coronavirus vaccine development to develop more effective, longer-lasting vaccines against continually emerging variants, and against new coronaviruses that may emerge in the future. “It’s vital that we continue to develop vaccine candidates to help keep us safe from the next virus threats,” said Professor Jonathan Heeney, Head of Viral Zoonotics.

Cambridge scientists develop an early warning system to tackle the problem of food security.

A team at Cambridge have used weather data to help inform food-preserving decisions up to a week earlier than otherwise about when and where to apply fungicides for instance. Fungicides are a limited resource, but effective use can stop the spread of crop disease, such as wheat rust.

Director of Research in the Department of Plant Sciences, Professor Chris Gilligan, commented: “Pests and diseases remain one of the biggest threats to food production, increasingly destabilising food security and livelihoods across climate-vulnerable regions.”

In conversation with Cambridge Carbon Literacy

Sagarika Koppera

The climate crisis is undoubtedly one of the most urgent and topical challenges of today, and although it is a difficult challenge, climate change has been recognised by global organisations, governments, institutions such as the University of Cambridge, as well as by individuals. There are plans, goals and targets, as well as investments into mitigating further effects and reducing those already present. Ultimately the strength and success of these efforts all relies on scientific education and communication – understanding the problem is necessary to solve

it.

Cambridge Carbon Literacy is one society whose aim is to increase education about the climate crisis. Since Michaelmas of 2020, they have been running a course consisting of two seminars split over Weeks 5 and 6 of term, a handful of self-study modules, and two pledges from their participants. Modules and seminars cover key climate science and policy, environmental issues, as well as Cambridge’s impact on climate and the environment. The course is accredited and was developed by the Environment

Team at Manchester Metropolitan

University, adopted in Cam-

bridge by the Carbon

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sources of climate education. *Varsity* spoke to May Zhou, one of the programme officers on the Carbon Literacy team, about the Project.

Science communication in the context of climate change is incredibly important; climate disinformation is a key contributor to polarising public attitudes about the crisis, which has consequences for environmental policy as it lowers support for mitigation efforts. May thinks it is the “inherent resistance” to learning about climate change, rather than the difficulty of scientific concepts themselves, which prevents people from understanding the issues beyond a surface level, ‘At the end of the day, they are very disheartening and very depressing topics sometimes.’ While she has been studying environmental studies for years now, she remembers taking the first step to learn about the issues can be a difficult thing to do and commends the programme participants for volunteering to dedicate time to the programme.

The participants of the programme are generally passionate and eager to learn about climate science and efforts to mitigate or reduce the effects of climate change. They are open to new information, despite potentially having different perspectives surrounding issues. Due to this varying degree of understanding, some of the more controversial topics such as nuclear energy and GMOs might invite a wider range of perspectives without necessarily having a “right answer”, but as May points out, opinions might change as people learn more about the topics. Carbon Literacy

aims to provide an unbiased education on these issues but also offers a chance for people to speak and debate them from their perspective during the discussion sessions. May says “It is part of our job to make people aware of the different perspectives and they can make their personal judgement and choose their own stance after being informed.”

Trainers are given material by the Car-

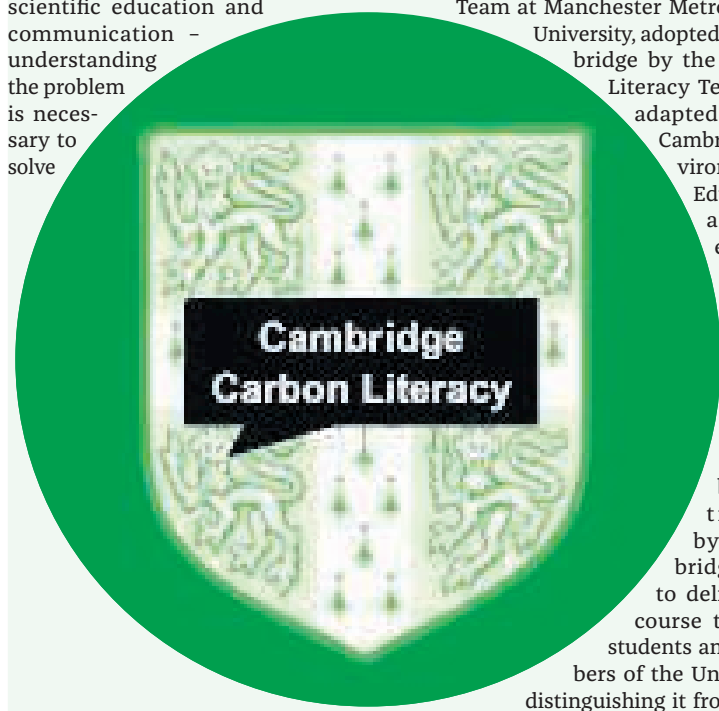
“
What really matters to me is encouraging people to take the step to reflect
”

bon Literacy team to familiarise themselves with before delivering the course. However, when they run the sessions, they engage in conversations and discussions with participants, giving them the opportunity to bring up their personal experience or offer their opinion on a topic. May, for example, attended COP27 and was able to share her experiences; “In that regard, we’re kind of contributing to the course by bringing our own professional or personal understanding of things.” The Carbon Literacy coordinators

also receive feedback from their participants and are able to adapt the course to dedicate more time to discussing issues their students are keen on learning about, allowing the programme to be tailored to the needs of participants.

At the end of the programme, participants are asked to make pledges to reduce their carbon footprint. “I feel like it’s a process of self-reflection”, May says, and acknowledges that they cannot necessarily monitor whether participants turn these reflections into concrete actions. She clarifies that nobody is perfect and ‘it’s not practical or fair in certain ways’ to expect people to be, “what really matters to me is encouraging people to take the step to reflect...When environmental impact is factored into decisions that you make, it inherently helps, regardless of whether you actually make that decision or not.” The programme encourages people to do exactly this – think about the environmental impact of their choices in an informed way, “Understanding the issue is the starting point of becoming part of the change.”

The Carbon Literacy team offers training sessions for free, and you can register to participate in the programme during term. No matter how active you already are in fighting climate change, as an activist or simply through individual action, it’s a great opportunity to extensively understand the issues we face today, both in terms of global and local challenges. Ultimately, education is the key to solving problems at this scale, and initiatives like this can form the first steps.



vulture.

Undercover Tory! How we snuck into a CUCA social

Daniel Hilton and Michael Hennessey

After not being invited to any cool parties, the only logical solution to your Saturday night social abyss is to go to Cambridge University Conservative Association's Port and Policy evening, Cambridge's premiere concentration of chronically eligible bachelors.

It's an evening that promises lively debate and unlimited port for the low, low price of £11. We did at first balk at spending a hard-earned £11 at CUCA, instead of on a half-pint at The Eagle, but we soon learnt it is apparently a mere

drop in the ocean for the average CUCA member, with one speaker later in the evening calling people who earn less than £80,000 a year low class.

We made the decision to reschedule our original Saturday evening plans as soon as we first saw the exciting debates that CUCA's esteemed committee had lined up for us. The prospect of hearing some of Cambridge's most respected future GB News pundits debating the return of capital punishment and expanding UK gun rights was an opportunity that simply could not be missed.

Walking into the event, we immediately realised we were horrendously under-dressed. We put on our red chinos and quarter-zips in an attempt to

fit in, but this conformity was swept away as soon as we saw a number of CUCA boys who were donning their finest dinner jackets, bow-ties, and dress shirts. There was a twist however, their smart top half wasn't matched with normal trousers and loafers. Instead they made the rogue decision of wearing a pair of shorts. It was then that we discovered this wasn't just any normal Port and Policy, it was Shorts and Policy - say what you want about CUCA, but at least they know how to dress.

After making awkward small talk with Cambridge's brightest and best Tories, we were thrilled to see that the association had jokes! Well, one joke as their comedy started and ended with a statement

about being asked what their pronouns are - but at least they found it funny.

The evening then began with a rigorous debate on raising MPs' pay. The more cynical among you may think such a debate is fruitless in a room full of future Tory backbenchers with significant conflicts of interest. Regardless, the debate was nevertheless an intellectually demanding experience with as diverse arguments as "who would want a government full of McKinsey consultants?" and "I would like a government full of McKinsey consultants".

Continued on page 20 ►

Continued from the cover...

After a brief break (to refill port glasses and continue networking) the debate moved on to the big one: "This House would bring back hanging". Looking like Paddington Bear's Tory cousin, the first speaker triumphantly rose ready to bless the world with his groundbreaking thesis that the only way to stop criminals coming into your homes and killing you in your sleep was to hang them. He even cited that the government balances the budget by simply buying a £10 rope on Amazon instead of keeping criminals in prison for life sentences. I can't wait until this guy is Chancellor of the Exchequer.

Throughout the evening we were continually reminded that arguments are made at CUCA with tongues firmly in cheeks. Student speakers do not want to be associated with comments they make in such an environment fuelled by alcohol and loathing, for fear they may U-turn in their future and decide that, in fact, hanging should not be brought back to be used on Scottish nationalists, republican protesters and Union hacks.

Following the lively debate on whether or not the state should kill people, we were gifted with yet another break and meandered around the room trying to find a refill of what was described as the cheapest port they could get their hands on. Among the tweed blazers and bow ties, there were a number of illustrious CULC and CULA members. Who would have guessed that Cambridge's favourite socialists would happily spend £11 to be in a room emblematic of everything they hate while minimally challenging the speakers. Perhaps they too were on Tory safari.

Glad to see that we weren't the only ones who came to Port and Policy as a night out, we returned to our seats and got ready to enjoy the final debate on gun rights in the UK. By this point, the novelty of seeing bespeckled bachelors stand up and speak to a room of people whose political opinions started and ended with calling something 'based' or 'cringe' started to wane and so we turned to drinking as a coping mechanism.

Unfortunately, as I reached for my port glass I realised that it, like my dreams, was shattered by a very apologetic CompSci. To his credit, he was absolutely lovely about it and didn't hesitate to jog over to the bar to get me another drink. At that moment I think I became the first person in history to have his heart warmed by a CompSci.

The debate itself was frankly quite dull with relatively uninspiring speeches and awful chat, but its saving grace was seeing the effect that industrial amounts of port had on the room with words becoming increasingly slurred and gaits becoming less civilised than their public schools had taught them.

Overall then the night was disappointing, with the novelty of seeing CUCA boys as caricatures of themselves waning exponentially as the evening progressed. My perception of CUCA was then shattered - these people aren't Jacob Rees-Mogg and future political heavy-weights, they're simply people who want to express outdated views while wearing black tie. Maybe we should have just gone to Northern Soc instead.

When approached for comment, CUCA's Chairman said: "As a society we will never shy away from difficult topics, we aim to make Port and Policy an enjoyable event for all with both serious and satirical debate. At every event many students from across the political spectrum join us and enjoy themselves, but don't just take my word for it we'd love to welcome even more people to our next Port and Policy on the 7th of March at St Paul's Church."

Undercover with Hilton and Hennessey will return ...



No places like home

Alice Mainwood reflects on the beauty of having two homes at once

There's something unsettling about having to pack up a whole uni room at the end of each term - and having to squeeze everything I need to live here for a term into my parents' car. Frustrating, of course - I couldn't live further away from my accommodation's car park, or up any more stairs, even if I'd been purposefully trying to distance myself from it. To add to that, I'm yet to master the art of packing with any sense of coordination. I found my kitchen knives in my bathroom bin when I arrived at the start of this term. But there's something other than the frustration: there is a feeling of unsettlement.

The three terms we spend in Cambridge amount to little more than half the year. So, for half the year, my cheese grater has a perfect spot in my student kitchen, and the other half of the year? The guiltless utensil is banished to an oversized storage box, awaiting my return to Cambridge, awaiting my return to an alternate home.

Having homes in two places at once feels con-



tradictory, and the heaviness of it is only increased by that incredibly distinct boundary between the two: the unsettlement of packing everything up and moving each time.

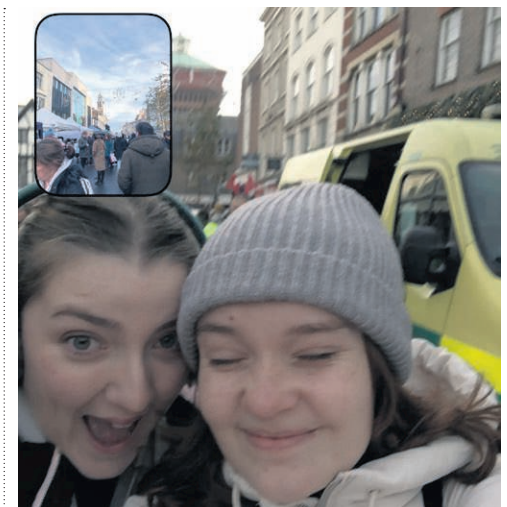
Having spent a summer on trains around Europe, moving between shared hostel rooms every other night, maybe this moving only once every nine weeks should feel quite stable - permanent, perhaps. After a month of constant hostel jumping, I found myself in Hamburg, sharing a room with six people I barely had time to speak to, having arrived late and with plans to leave early. One of them conducted his business meetings at 3am (perhaps made understandable when recognised that his business involved trying to move quite a lot of class A drugs out of Germany). My stay was temporary. I was never going to spend more than one night there (which is probably for the best.) Those people weren't my closest friends. I probably couldn't pick them out of a line-up now.

There was actually an appeal in knowing I was around people I'd never meet again, being somewhere for such a short amount of time, and that place being little more to me than a stopover between Berlin and Cologne. And the belongings I had with me were specifically chosen to be packed up frequently and carried on my back. There was no intention to fully unpack. I didn't want to feel permanently settled; that unsettled feeling was the intention, I suppose. There was a contradictory feel-

ing of being settled while I was constantly moving - the change was expected. None of my fleeting stops were meant to feel like home.

Leaving my hometown at the start of summer was a conscious move away from being permanently settled, and in returning, the feeling of coming home was unparalleled. Sure, being away from home and each stop feeling so purposely ephemeral was beautiful, but returning came with a confusingly late feeling of homesickness. The possibility of a home-cooked meal and a cuddle with my dog, and sleeping in one place for weeks on end was suddenly really appealing. Suddenly I wanted to be at home more than anything else. But my return home was immediately marked by my intention to move out again - the impending A-level results day ensured as much.

Leaving that time, at the end of September, felt more confusing. Unlike during my summer's travels, I wanted to sculpt another home. I wanted this new city to feel permanent, homely, familiar. I wanted to feel settled. That feeling of unsettle-



ment, I think, is because I do feel at home here, and my childhood home and home here in Cambridge can't seem to co-exist. My hometown isn't far from Cambridge - I could be back there for dinner if I really wanted to be. But the geographical proximity doesn't allow for the two places to co-exist in my mind. I don't travel home during term time. I exist, as so many of us seem to, in the Cambridge bubble, and the comfort of the other home, the childhood home, which is a luxury for after term ends.

There is one liminal space between the two - the packing. The packing is the sole marker of the change, the transition.

I could quite easily feel bogged down, but I love my life in Cambridge, despite that bubble of supervisions, the library, and Sainsbury's. And then I love my life in my hometown. I think they are both beautiful, and if the unsettled feeling of packing each term is the sacrifice for getting two homes, two places I adore and, two places where I can be surrounded by people I love, then I'm OK with that.

That feeling of unsettlement is just a symptom of my movement between the two. That's more of a privilege than a plight.



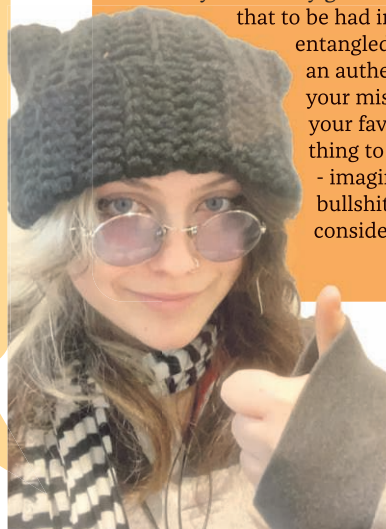
Ask Auntie Maddy...

My friends from home, who go to big-city universities like Manchester and Nottingham, are down for the weekend. How can I prove to them that Cambridge isn't tragically tame?

You can't. Just don't even try. How the hell are you going to compete with giants like PRZYM and the Warehouse Project? It's simple: you can't. One Cantab's ego death in the Junction smoking area is a city slicker's walk in the park. If you wanted to put the fear of God into them, I suppose gate-crashing a drinking soc initiation ritual could be on the cards, but unless your companions are particularly inclined to being set alight by men in suits that speak and dress as though they're fresh out of the 18th century, I'd probably steer clear. There is, of course, the shining beacon of hope that is The Regal, but where do you go once its golden gates are shut, and you are thrust out into the cold wasteland that is Regent Street on a Friday night? Castle Bar? Novi? *Piss off.* Unlike us neeks, these cool kids have actually managed to spend much of their loan on big, bad benders uncurtailed by the threat of dreaded essay deadlines, and they're not going to squander the remains of what little student loan is left on establishments swarming with questionable middle-aged men. Saying that, judging from the drinks prices, they'd be great places to pick up a sugar daddy. An investment, if you will. There's no denying that, for some, university is a means of climbing the social ladder (or not - one can only hope and pray I go straight back to working full-time at Subway once the degree is over).

Huge dilemma: I meant to submit an essay to my supervisor, but confused the files on my computer and accidentally sent a copy of a lengthy (and in places NSFW) fanfiction I've been working on for some time. What the hell do I do now?

This reminds me of that brief epidemic of Cambridge college fanfiction. (Anyone remember that one particularly steamy Churchill x Fitz fic still floating around AO3? *Meow.*) However, I doubt this is what you're referring to. I think the severity of your situation heavily relies upon just what *kind* of fanfiction you emailed to your supervisor. A tame bit of Hamlet x Horatio fluff is not infinitely separate in its content from the average first year English student's essays, but a historical mock-epic venerating the hardcore NSFW adventures of Byron and his shag of the week might be another story. Still, credit where credit's due, it's quite impressive that you're capable of churning out volumes of this kind of literature - and *boy*, is it literature - alongside your degree. Writing one or two essays a week is enough to render me borderline comatose by Tuesday or Wednesday lunchtime; that on top of the unrelenting, insatiable demand placed upon regular fanfiction authors is a workload I fail to comprehend. And that's without bringing your supervisor into the equation. The only consolation may be that, if, as you allege, you have genuinely been working at this masterpiece for quite a while, its technical skill may be so admirable and its plot so enthralling (because that's what we're all in it for - the *plot*) that all your transgressions are forgiven, leaving your supervisor with no option but to praise the fruits of your literary genius. But you're not here for gratifying fake scenarios - there's enough of that to be had in that one weird Week 5 situationship we've all unfortunately been entangled in at some point. You're here for answers. If you fail to pass it off as an authentic piece of academic scholarship, all that's in your power is to own your mistake. Yeah, you've written semi-pornographic smut about two of your favourite fictional characters, *so what?* At least you've now got something to submit to the Mays. There are worse ways to spend your weeknights - imagine being the sad, sad creature having to come up with increasingly bullshit answers to problems that any other rational human being would consider beyond solving, all whilst Thursday Lola's is sounding its siren call.



Got a problem for **Auntie Maddy** to solve? Email lifestyle@varsity.co.uk and see it covered next print!

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Arts

Poems to step from winter into spring

Deputy Arts Editor **Leo Kang** shares his favourite poems to read as the seasons turn, and daffodils begin to bloom

▼ ILLUSTRATIONS BY ANNA WEBB



The cold still stubbornly hangs on while crocuses bud in college gardens – in other words, March is here. I’ve put together a platter of poems – four winter, four spring – to offer a taste of snowy nostalgia but also of longer days and greener trees. I hope you enjoy them as much as I do!

“Rune Poems from Bergen, Norway, 13th and 14th Century” – *Unknown*, translated by Eirill Falck

As Falck explains, in 1955, there was a fire in the harbour district of Bergen, Norway. In the wreckage, hundreds of runic inscriptions were uncovered. The find revealed that runes were not only used for formal occasions but for casual, often erotic, notes – essentially, 800-year-old DMs. In these three notes, the poet calls out for his forbidden love, his “wisewoman”, amid bitterly cold ranges of snow-capped mountains.

“Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening” – *Robert Frost*

One story goes that, riding home on winter solstice, Frost stopped and “bawled like a baby”, knowing he hadn’t sold enough at the market to give his family a good Christmas. Another story goes that Frost went out at sunrise after a long night and wrote this poem in “just a few minutes without strain”. True to the stories, *Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening* is made beautiful by mystery, from its “lovely, dark” woods to its famously hypnotic final lines.

“Between Autumn Equinox and Winter Solstice, Today” – *Emily Jungmin Yoon*

With spring equinox only a few weeks away, it’s nice to look back on what made winter wintry – for me, it was huddling in my room with a steaming mug of tea. Yoon’s poem takes the bare, cold bones of that moment and, with “heat” and “lightning”, transforms them into something luminous.

“Chrysalis” – *Arthur Sze*

Sze is a poet of shifting surfaces, of breaking waves and whales’ backs, of the tiny noises of passing people and the hugeness of planets in the sky. In *Chrysalis*, he moves through all that and more in breathtaking, hypersensitive detail. It’s the perfect

poem for tuning yourself to the turning seasons, and it makes my skull tingle every time I read it.

“Spring” – *Gerard Manley Hopkins*

Ah, Gerard – a favourite of Englings everywhere. In the rather stuffy Victorian era, Hopkins was revolutionary for his use of sprung rhythm, where the spondee (DUM-DUM) replaces the iamb (dee-DUM) as the dominant measure. This forceful, fervent style can be seen here in his sonnet on spring, where rhyme and rhythm (“weeds, in wheels, shoot long and lovely and lush”) burst like flowers and fill his lines with life.

“Spring” – *Edna St. Vincent Millay*

Like Robert Frost, Millay was a great melder of modernist and traditional poetry. *Spring* was her first poem in free verse, and it captures sensory pleasures in plain language: “The spikes of the crocus. / The smell of the earth is good.” At the same time, Millay introduces a modernist doom and gloom. She muses on “maggots” and “brains of men” and her opening line (“To what purpose, April, do you return again?”) parallels T. S. Eliot’s “The Waste Land” (“April is the cruellest month”). So, if you fancy a sharply cynical take on spring, one that undercuts new life with old death, then this is your poem.

“Vita Nova” – *Louise Glück*

In 2020, Glück was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature for the “austere beauty” of her poems that “makes individual existence universal”. *Vita Nova* is a perfect example of this – a memory of a spring day where every detail, from the “little cakes” to the “laughter for no reason”, seems translucent and touchable.

“Spring Reign” – *Dean Young*

“There are no ordinary feelings,” Dean Young once wrote, “just as there are no ordinary spring days or kicked over cans of paint.” This is a good summary of Young’s approach to poetry – taking ordinary, everyday feelings and refracting them until they turn rainbow-coloured. This poem is a surrealist “thank you” to spring, featuring a “tetrahedron”, “philosophy ants”, the “River Styx” and, of course, “rain”. Amid all the strangeness, though, the poem is saying something genuine: that we have no idea what the world is doing, but we can be thankful for it anyway.



Repost or ghost? **Jamie** and **Emily** go head to head on Insta poetry



Vs.

Emily: Anyone that knows me knows that I cannot stand bad poetry. However, despite all of this, I am here defending what may be the apex of crap verse: Insta poetry. Yet hear me out on this before you burn your copy of ‘Milk and Honey; that you bought in Year 10 to seem edgy and sophisticated. In many ways, while it is largely naff, Instapoetry has introduced an entire generation to poetry who may have otherwise passed it by – it is the very antithesis to the elitism often associated with high art. Gone are the days of stuffy rich starched-collar-wearing, pianoforte-playing poetry appreciators: now thanks to Rupi Kaur and Gabbie Hanna, poetry is easy to access, easy to read, and easy to copy into your instagram bio, striking a fine line between looking artsy and cool, and looking desperately pretentious. Also, isn’t it nice that people now feel like they have a creative outlet in being able to write slightly naff free verse poetry about their feelings instead of bottling it up and then smashing up buildings or something like that? At the very least, if I still haven’t convinced you, Insta poetry provides us with something to laugh at. Embrace the naff, it makes life less boring. Or something like that.

Jamie: Najwa Zebian opines “It is not love that / you fall / into. / It is love / that falls / into you.” In fairness to her, I do feel I am falling, tripping over each clumsy line break that seems to be carelessly inserted. As I pore over these squares of condensed words, I am reminded of Wordsworth’s assertion that “poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings”. Indeed, Instapoetry is filled with strong, emotive content. It is often defiant, and usually empowering. However, it lacks what Wordsworth follows up with: “emotion recollected in tranquillity”. Instapoets seem to take “spontaneous” and run with it, discarding the enhanced craft that comes with “tranquillity”. Then again, perhaps I’m just not avant-garde enough to see what Zebian’s 1.3 million followers see on Instagram, or perhaps “art is / relative / just as time is / relative / And my family are / relatives (credit: Gabbie Hanna).

Think you've seen everything? Think again with 'Hidden Cambridge'

Grace Cobb goes on a self-guided art of Cambridge's hidden gems, proving that in a city renowned for its 'in your face' cultural artefacts, you can find fascinating things in the most unlikely of places

When you think of the Cambridge's art scene, your mind probably wanders to the prestigious paintings and sculptures hanging from the walls of college formal halls and encrusting their imposing towers, the masterpieces lining the winding corridors of the Fitzwilliam, the frames dotting the white rooms of

It's worth becoming a tourist in your own city for an hour

edgy independent galleries on King's Parade and the colourful images flowing from student zines, societies and exhibitions.

But how much art goes unnoticed on the city streets, tucked in between libraries and novelty shops, trodden under our feet and inscribing the bricks above our head as we rush between lectures, classes and cafes, not stopping to take a second look at the hidden statues, miniature figurines, colourful illustrations or intricate engravings which beckon from out of the corner of our eyes? Created in pursuit of making this creative underworld come alive to busy students and locals as well as tourists, I tried and tested a new self-guided tour of Cambridge's hidden art scene, which goes well beyond the Dinky Doors we all know and love.

Linking

together everything from underground statues and political vandalism to flowers sprouting from the pavement, the tour brings you into encounters with art intertwined with stories of Charles Darwin, Quentin Blake, Stephen Hawking, Soviet physicists and May Ball fossils to shed light on the complex lives and histories of the masterpieces which fill the dark backstreets of the city.

Upon discovering the tour and recruiting two of my most obliging friends – unsure of what exactly they had got themselves into – we assembled outside Fitzbillies on a sub-zero-degree afternoon, ready to be led to eight mysterious locations via clues texted to us by a man we'd never met. What could possibly go wrong?

Luckily, this review is not about to take a dark turn, as we quickly found ourselves looking down at a dinky doorway rather than being dragged down a dark alleyway. We were in fact safe in the experienced hands of Murray Jacobs, Cambridge Green Badge Guide and founder of tour company Hidden Cambridge. Mainly taking the conventional route of leading guided tours around Cambridge himself, he has nevertheless dabbled in some eccentric themes – including Britain's only tour for dog lovers and their dogs – but combining a self-guided treasure hunt with the (virtual) presence of a knowledgeable tour guide is experimental even for him.

Despite being advertised as "self-guided", this isn't entirely true – OK, there's no-one standing in front of you rephrasing Wikipedia pages and reciting the same poorly-landing jokes, but having to decipher clues before hunting down each artwork ourselves (and getting slightly lost somewhere in the midst of Downing

Site

along the way) made it far more interactive than any traditional tour. The anticipation of the next challenge pinging through on my phone and sending us trekking to another obscure corner of town was far more thrilling than being another sheep shuffling behind a high-vis-jacket-clad shepherd. We were never quite alone though – luckily our trusty guide was willing to throw in a few clues, which (despite damaging our egos slightly when we accepted the help) saved us from pacing over the same three metres of pavement for half an hour.

Considering how the majority of the spectacular art we discovered would have otherwise remained completely obscure to us, taking the time to rediscover the concealed masterpieces within

the city's walls provoked a real sense of how blind students and locals can be to the displays of talent and skill, historic significance, and moving personal stories embedded

into Cambridge's architectural soul when we assume we are familiar with the fabric of the place we live. It's impossible to walk away from this tour without seeing your usual route, a dingy old backstreet or even the busiest spot in town in a whole new light.

Even sights we

thought we were familiar with surprised us with how little we actually knew (I'm looking at you Corpus clock of doom), and rather than churning out generic trivia, the tour shares detailed, unique insights which will might just answer some of those fleeting questions about strange sights

on the streets that cross your mind on your post-2am-Gardies trek home. Through detailed biographies, article links and moving stories of how the art has interacted with the city's past, the tour ensures you can't help but realise how Cambridge's constant

creative production is far from being confined to institutions, organisations or the walls of the Fitzwilliam, but that artists are making their mark everywhere you look.

If you can face receiving very bemused looks from students shuffling into their faculty building as you squint at its bricks and scribble down a clue, and being toppled over by pedestrians as you crouch to inspect a pavestone, then it's worth becoming a tourist in your own city for an hour – you might be surprised with what you find.

You might be surprised with what you find

Even sights we thought we were familiar with surprised us with how little we actually knew

Fashion

The fashion survey results are in

Ever wanted to decide once and for all which is the best dressed college or course? Styled with your hot-takes and pie chart contributions, **Isabel Dempsey** investigates the ultimate consensus on Cambridge fashion

You've had the sex survey... now prepare to buckle your belts and tighten your skinny scarves because the results of the *Varsity* fashion survey are in. "Yes," I hear you eagerly cry, "that's definitely just as exciting!" I'm so glad you share my enthusiasm. Without further ado, let's take a look at the highs and lows of Cambridge's best and worst dressed.

Best and worst dressed courses

This first load of results is admittedly rather underwhelming in its predictability, best and worst dressed divided almost perfectly between humanities and STEM. I would like to take a moment to apologise to the biologists by making it clear that the majority of NatSci slander was largely targeted at the male physicists, not you. In the words of one response, however, is it really fair to judge at all when humanities students have so much more free styling time than their STEM counterparts? English unsurprisingly came out on top much to the dismay of MMLers everywhere (sorry guys, it's now an empirical fact that us Englings do it better). One response suggested that only post-year-abroad MMLers deserve the best-dressed crown so maybe you all just need some time to 'find yourselves' first. Although History was awarded 5% of the best dressed points, it was also suggested that cis male historians didn't count in this equation, the men specifically finding their way onto the worst dressed list. With their addiction to pretentiously offensive blazers,

it's time for this "corporate drip" to receive the "slander" it deserves.

Fashion hot spots

Despite coming out on top, many a hot-take argued: "Sidg is where individuality goes to die". Where some bemoaned the potential falsity of the Sidgwick stereotype, others critiqued its "edgy" sameness. Vomiting emojis and cutting remarks followed many a negative response to Afghan coats and skinny scarves. As one person brutally surmised: "Finding random accessories and clothes that don't match in vintage shops and throwing them all together doesn't automatically equate to a cool, indie, Sidg ready fit". Burn.

Most fashionable college

Despite one response specifically replying "not King's" this attempt to suffocate the inflated egos of these gothic chapel dwellers failed miserably. Somehow Robinson (and not Medwards?) managed to squeeze itself onto the top 5 list. There's a chance that as my own college it could have something to do with a potentially biased sample pool... what? This isn't my A-level geography coursework. I never said it was going to be accurate.

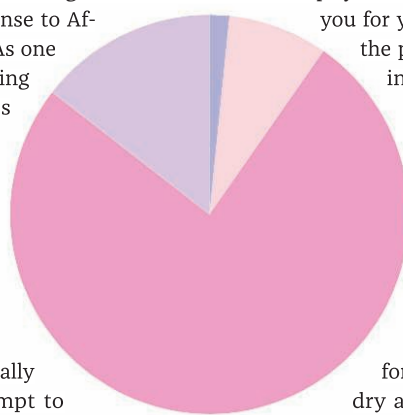
Queer Get Down most stylish night out

Yes the gays came out on top but that does not excuse the fact that in a frankly horrific feat Sunday Lola's has clambered its way up this high. In contrast to the pitifully low hype of Wednesday Revs style (including one response just insisting "not Wednesday Revs") apparently Lola's has something more interesting in the way of fashion to offer. As someone who has rather embarrassingly yet to set foot inside Lola Lo on a Sunday evening having been very quickly traumatised by

the establishment early on in Freshers', maybe its stylish reputation could convince me to give it a go.

Best dressed society... is Varsity?

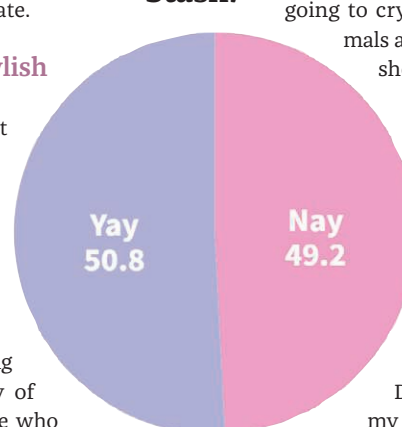
Okay, yes, the sample bias might have gotten a bit out of control here... Maybe it is theatre that really deserves the top spot. I'm still not sure who managed to weasel the Union so high up the poll but I hope your failed political career will repay you for your sins one day. And as for the people who suggested it was impossible to have any style in the unindividual cults of Cambridge societies - please find some interests. Yes *Varsity* is my only personality trait but at least I have one.

**How formal do we formal?**

Like all formal desserts, the formal hall pie (chart) is rather dry and uninspired, though I do fear the small segment of casual clothes wearers. One hot-take was left fuming at the 14.5% who wear black tie to formals insisting "people need to stop overdressing to formals. If I see one more person wearing a whole f*****g dinner suit to formal I'm actually going to cry". As they point out, formals are not black tie and people should "stick to the f*****g dress code". And as for anyone wearing a dickie bow, apparently it's time to "grow up".

Is stash a yay or a nay?

Although I was hoping to discover Cambridge's BDOC (Best Dressed on Campus) with my super thorough investigative research, alas there was not a

Stash?

Head to head: The college puffer

"Put down the stash! you bright minds of the future" — Kathryn Austen

I must be transparent with the avid readers of *Varsity*, that despite the self-loathing I feel, I myself possess a Murray Edwards college puffer jacket. So if you're the sort of person who finds this an acceptable defence of an eye-sore, knock yourself out. Warm and inoffensively black and... puffed (puffy?), it goes with everything. Arguably because it also goes with nothing. These days I look upon it with a mixture of despair and fondness. I will unabashedly continue to judge anyone who pushes the narrative that they are in any way stylish.

"It's the Ringo Starr of student fashion" — Leo Kang

The omnipresent puffer is not only a NatSci quirk, a Freshers' Week souvenir, and a bland convenience, but a true staple of any student's winter wardrobe. It's warm, it's comfy, it's got pockets for days, and it allows us a small slice of school uniform nostalgia. I use my puffer as the fashion equivalent of an industrial freezer, preserving items that should have long gone out of season. Plain they may be, but ugly they are not - a puffer acts as a blank canvas for precisely measured splashes of personality.

high enough frequency of any repeated name to make the award valid. But that's okay, the real big guns are still in store. Just as divisive as Brexit: is college stash a yay or a nay? Unlike the outcome of the Brexit referendum, however, I can happily announce that the (very small) majority opted to leave college stash once and for all. And my faith in humanity is restored - just about. As for the 49.2% of you who voted in favour of college stash: here's your friendly reminder that other puffer coats are available.

Varsity's Top 5s

Top 5 Best Dressed Courses

1. English (43.3%)
2. MML (20%)
3. HSPS (6.7%)
4. Architecture (5%)
5. History of Art (5%)

Top 5 Worst Dressed Courses

1. Maths (36.7%)
2. NatSci (26.7%)
3. CompSci (20%)
4. Engineering (8.3%)
5. Economics (3.3%)

Top 5 Fashion Hot Spots

1. Sidgwick Site (48.2%)
2. King's Parade (15.4%)
3. Seeley Library (3.4%)
4. Downing Site (3.4%)
5. Mill Road (3.4%)

Top 5 Most Fashionable Colleges

1. King's (17.9%)
2. Clare (12.5%)
3. Newnham (12.5%)
4. Sidney Sussex (8.9%)
5. Robinson (7.1%)

Top 5 Most Stylish Club Nights

1. Queer Get Down (26.4%)
2. Sunday Lola's (15.1%)
3. ARCSOC (13.2%)
4. Grandma Groove (9.4%)
5. Junction / Glitterbomb (7.5%)

Top 5 Best Dressed Societies

1. Varsity (36.5%)
2. Cambridge Theatre (17.3%)
3. ARCSOC (5.8%)
4. None (5.8%)
5. Union (4.8%)

'Tickets to Earth' is out of this world

Oliver Bevan sits down with student filmmakers Aurelia Eulenberg and Fin Scott to talk about their filmmaking process and their exciting new short that will be premiered at 8pm on 5th March at St John's Picturehouse

There are a lot of films that look at the after-life. I wanted to flip that and look at what happens before you're born," says writer-director Aurelia about the conception of her short film *Tickets to Earth*. "I had this image of a woman who goes through life a bit depressed and doesn't see the point in living. So I thought, how would this change if she knew that she'd chosen this life herself?"

Tickets to Earth has been in the works for over a year, and is finally due to be screened on 5th March at St John's Picturehouse. The role divisions, Aurelia as writer/director and Fin as Director of Photography, have been fluid since the beginning. Aurelia came up with the initial idea in her final year, and contacted the Preston Filmmaking Society, which Fin had established with the goal of funding student films. The pair then worked on the script and storyboard together. Fin spent hundreds of hours editing the film. Aurelia recalls the process, "considering we had eight days, twelve locations and nineteen people in the final two weeks of a Cambridge term,

“

If life is just peace, love and happiness, then is there really any growth?

”

it's a miracle that this film even exists!"

Fin describes the short as a surreal meditation on the "joy, pain, and sublimity of being alive." We spend the forty minute runtime moving seamlessly between the quotidian life of Jule, a struggling university student, and a surreal "cosmic" space where Jule's soul is being primed for earth before she is born. It centres around the idea that each and every one of us has chosen to be here and that we are lucky enough to find a body. As the film's title suggests, "there is a limited number of tickets," in other words a limited number of bodies through which we can experience the wonders of earth. Aurelia explains her thinking behind the concept: "If I knew I had chosen to be here and wanted to experience life, and that it was a privilege to do so, then I would enjoy life more. I think we'd all be a lot more consoled."

When I ask whether the film's existentialist stance has any personal resonance with them, Fin clarifies that it is "more of a prism through which to consider these issues. [...] It's not our statement

▲ PHOTO BY EMMA GRIFFITHS



▲ PHOTO BY FIN SCOTT

on how we believe the world to be." From early on, they "did not want to tell anyone the cosmic truth of how to live their life." Aurelia is equally enthusiastic to hear about my own interpretation of the film. It's "constructed so that everyone will interpret it differently. Some might see it as depressing, others as uplifting. Some as cheesy, others as serious. I'm really curious about the breadth of the film's reception."

At first, I found Jule's life on earth to be char-

“

You don't need a lot of equipment. It's all about the story you want to tell

”

acterised by a persistent emptiness, whether it's her rushing to her lecture late or looking lost in a crowded nightclub. Fin agrees, "there's an excitement, a momentum, a profundity in the cosmic space that Jule cannot find on earth." However, "it's not supposed to be disappointing. We want the audience to find value in Jule's life that she cannot see for herself."

Aurelia adds, "if life is just peace, love and happiness, then is there really any growth?" She later points out that even the objective of "growing" already indicates the pressure to do something. It's enough just to observe our experiences instead of judging them. "These are the basics of mindfulness."

The emotional and sensory experience of life hence appears at the centre of the project. Aurelia

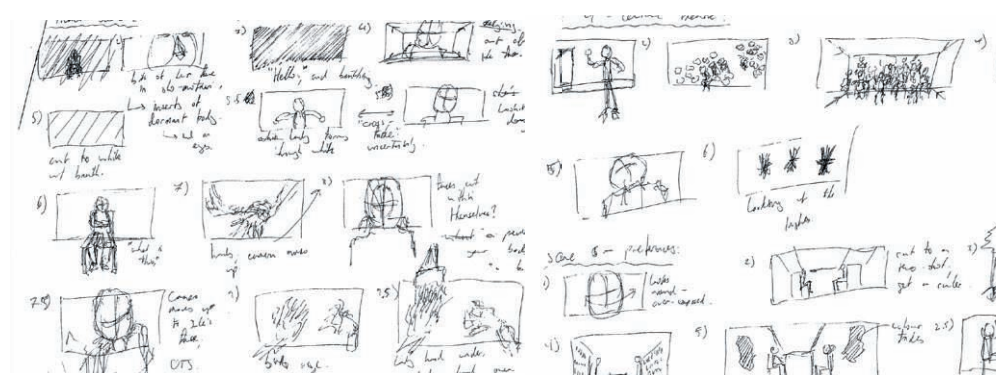
gesture's in particular to the soundscape: "The use of sound and foley was important in adding texture to earth scenes, a texture that you don't get in the cosmic space." The earth scenes also display a roughness and inconsistency, especially when compared to the pristine treatment of light and composition in the "cosmic" white room. This roughness is deliberate. It is part of everyday life. Further drawing the audience into Jule's consciousness, Fin emphasises his reluctance to use long lenses. "I like being close. There's something about the micro effects of the face and the emotion that individual objects hold. When you're close to something, it suddenly takes on a kind of life."

For a Cambridge student, the specifics of Jule's life are instantly recognisable, with scenes shot around the Botanical Gardens, Sidgwick site, and even MASH. Though Aurelia emphasises their avoidance of distinctly Cambridge college exteriors to instead represent a more universal student experience. After spending weeks cycling around the

hill colleges trying to find a location for the white room, the team were eventually allowed to film at the Heong Gallery. All the cosmic scenes were filmed there in one day. And, if you'd had an eye out, you could've caught a glimpse of Fin aboard a Voi weighed down by camera, sound, and lighting equipment.

Asking what their takeaway from the project was, they start to meditate on the Cambridge film scene more generally. Fin sees the film world at Cambridge opening up. "There's growing interest and there really should be. I'd like it if the film world at Cambridge could be, in any way, as expansive as the theatre world." With a total of fifty Cambridge students working on the film and no professional help, *Tickets to Earth* was an ambitious project. Fin and Aurelia hope that their success will encourage more people into the Cambridge film scene. In Aurelia's words, "you don't need a lot of equipment. In the end, it's all about the story you want to tell."

Fin's storyboards for Scene 2 and the Lecture Scene



Music**Beans and basslines at The Portland Arms****Emmy Warr** sees whether Beans on Toast can cause a stir in Cambridge

As he climbs on stage at his sold-out show at The Portland Arms, folk-punk singer Jay McAllister (aka Beans on Toast) declares “I’ve got a lot of songs to sing and a lot of things I want to say” equipped with an acoustic guitar, a set list written on a table in permanent marker, and his trademark yellow flower tucked behind his ear.

The room is packed to the brim with a crowd that, for fans of an artist who so loudly and proudly discusses his adventures with drugs and alcohol, seems to be remarkably sober.

Earlier, on a Zoom call from his sunny kitchen

“

He won't be getting a Netflix comedy anytime soon, but it's entertaining and engaging

”

in Whitstable, the singer told me that Cambridge is the first stop on this tour to sell out. It's not far from home for McAllister, who hails from Essex; and on stage he shares a story from his teenage years about taking ecstasy and being refused entry to Junction. This sets the tone for the rest of the performance: laid-back and familiar. He occasion-

ally forgets lyrics, but laughs it off and the show goes on. It might even be called intimate, were the audience more involved.

There is some reticent singing along to his older hits, particularly his festival staple “M.D.M. Amazing”, and the occasional shouted request, but otherwise, the crowd watches on: captivated, but silent and unmoving, necks rigid to prevent heads accidentally nodding along. Earlier, he told me he'd like to think that the crowds at his shows look like “any other pub in England”, and this would be true in this case, if the pub were showing a football match where the local team was losing.

It's a shame really, because it's not McAllister's fault, and if there's one thing he brings, it's energy. Between songs he tells stories about trespassing to save a pregnant sheep and his grandma taking him to Toys “R” Us. He criticises the government, and he jokes about Liz Truss and the Pope. He won't be getting a Netflix comedy special anytime soon, but it's entertaining and engaging.

His raw and unschooled vocals translate unexpectedly well to the live stage, and when they are coupled with his gentle acoustic guitar, McAllister's sound

fills the room easily. He has told me that “singing songs on the guitar is about as timeless as you can be”, and it's true — you could imagine him playing to a circle sitting around a campfire; it's comforting and draws the audience in. Unfortunately, there isn't much to be drawn into.

His music is political (when it's not about drugs), but there's no deep insight.

He condemns the war in Ukraine (“we've been led down the fucking garden path”), before playing his latest single, “Against the War”, which he describes as “a protest song about all the horrors that are

going on [there]”. The song states proudly that he is “against killing and against invading” — it's not exactly going to put Bob Dylan out of a job, but it receives a few shouts of approval from the crowd nonetheless.

Elsewhere the political statements are more light-hearted and optimistic: he plays “The Chicken Song”, a fun ditty about the factory farming industry. Earlier he told me about “Swimming In

It”, a condemnation of companies dumping waste off the Kentish coast, featuring 37 local musicians playing “everything from tuba to guitar”. McAllister says: “It's a very uniting subject. No one thinks you should pour raw sewage into the sea. No matter where you are on the political spectrum you can agree that's a bad idea.”

By the end of the set it's clear that Beans on Toast is a man of his word: he has sung a lot of songs and said a lot of things; but that's about it. He does it well, working the stage with the kind of relaxed confidence that only comes with natural charm and plenty of experience, and the audience (in its own static way) seems to thoroughly enjoy the show. It's not the revolution he might be aiming for, but it's certainly a fun way to spend a Thursday evening.



▲ ILLUSTRATION BY HANNAH GILLOTT



▲ PHOTO BY EMMY WARR

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Live and direct from the *Varsity* Office

Dylan Sudworth tests his emotional stability and reviews the *Varsity*'s editors playlist



▲ DANIEL HILTON

Listening to the *Varsity* Office Playlist is a test of my emotional stability. I am first serenaded by Nick Drake, lulled into a false sense of security by “Things Behind The Sun” before being smacked over the head by Skepta’s “Greaze Mode”. The rest of the listening experience follows this sort of trend, with my ears ricocheting between Hip-Hop bangers, 80s Indie classics, wistful guitar ballads and the occasional Rock anthem.

I am somewhat worried about whether my headphones can cope with the breadth of mate-

rial they’re being subjected to, or whether they will simply tear apart in despair as shuffle subjects me to yet another Taylor Swift track. I look with apprehension as Herbie Hancock follows the Arctic Monkeys in the queue.

I’m slowly getting to understand the musical niches and personalities of each Editor, with one contributor responsible for seven Kate Bush tracks, five Taylor Swift songs, and three Paramore tracks. I feel like they’d enjoy going to Lolas.

Putting the playlist on shuffle does reveal some fantastic songs in this list. I’m impressed with the

love for Marvin Gaye, Erykah Badu, some fantastic Little Simz tracks, HAIM and The Cure. I can imagine myself contently playing around with some Word documents to Gaye’s “What’s Going On”. I don’t really know what *does* go on in the Varsity office. I imagine a lot of changing font sizes.

I am also exposed to some fantastic new songs. “Virtual Insanity” by Jamiroquai was added instantly to a playlist of mine. I also enjoyed the jangling guitars and Big Thief-esque vocals of The Sundays — with a sound like that of The Smiths if Morrissey decided to graciously abdicate as vocalist to be replaced by Adrienne Lenker.

It’s also nice to be reintroduced to some songs I’d largely forgotten about. A year 8 favourite of mine,

I don’t really know what does go on in the *Varsity* office. I imagine a lot of changing font sizes

Alex Turner’s, “Stuck On The Puzzle” is still surprisingly good. Moby’s “Porcelain” is also still furiously joyous, a brief respite from heartbreak ballad after heartbreak ballad everywhere else on the playlist. There is an overwhelming presence of depressing music in this list. I want to know who broke the Editor responsible for the multiple Radiohead tracks, “Hurt” by Arlo Parks, along with “Ain’t No Sunshine When She’s Gone” and “The Isle Of Arran” by Loyle Carner. Are you OK? I imagine it was a rough Val-

entine’s Day in *Varsity* HQ. I’m not massively surprised.

There are definitely some odd additions here. As much as I love Kendrick Lamar’s “Sing About Me, I’m Dying of Thirst”, I’m not sure whether a twelve-minute track depicting Kendrick’s spiritual rebirth

as he laments the premature deaths of friends is the right vibe for an office environment. Similarly, whoever allowed the *Friends* theme song to feature here, what is wrong with you?

Listening to this playlist is like diving headfirst into the middle aisle in Aldi. I’m slightly bruised, fairly emotionally distressed, and found the equivalent of a value supermarket toaster in the form of several songs I’ll probably listen to for a week and then get bored of. I am possibly being harsh. I may have had this playlist on repeat since it got sent to me. Please don’t tell my editor.



▲ SCAN ME TO LISTEN TO THE PLAYLIST

Top Tracks

Greaze Mode – Skepta
Isn’t She Lovely – Stevie Wonder
Pump Up The Jam – Tecnotronic
Out of Touch – Hall & Oates
I’m Too Sexy – Right Said Fred
Let’s Get It On – Marvin Gaye

ILLUSTRATION BY FLO BROCKMAN ▲



When it comes to edgy music socs, there's no alternative

Alex Brian talks Artic Monkeys, club nights, and fishnets with Amelia Quince

A Saturday in half-term was perhaps not the best time to interview head of Alternative Music Society, Amelia Quince. Squashed into a corner of Café Nero after a good fifteen minutes of wandering from café to café, I ask Amelia what probably sounded like a stupid question: what actually counts as Alternative music? Amelia informs me that there is no easy definition. Indeed, the society encompasses everything from jazz and classical to indie rock — essentially anything that you wouldn’t hear at your average Rumbaogie.

Nevertheless, Amelia is keen to demonstrate that there are no rules when it comes to Alternative music: “people might like a bit of Ed Sheeran on the side and that’s fine.” While “it’s very much the culture to be like, ‘I listen to this really niche band and I’m so cool’”, that’s not what Alternative Music Society is about. “Music is supposed to be about uniting people and letting them listen to what they love,” Amelia explains, “It shouldn’t be so divisive.”

One album that has certainly proved divisive among the alternative community is Arctic Monkeys’ *Tranquillity Base Hotel and Casino*. For Amelia, one of the chief problems facing major artists is the expectations of their fans. “They’re no longer a bunch of 18-year-olds from Sheffield,” Amelia says of the Arctic Monkeys, “they’ve grown up and their style has changed.” Despite arguing that smaller artists are freer to experiment with their style, she concedes that “when you’re big, it doesn’t matter what you do, you’ll always sell out your gigs.”

For Amelia, pop owes much of its popularity to

the platform that it is given: “if Radio One decided to play metal all the time, maybe that would become popular music.” It’s also, she adds, about what you’re seeking from music. Whilst some are prepared to listen to whatever is on the radio, others care more deeply about lyrics and emotions. Not that popular artists are necessarily worse. As Amelia notes, that would mean none of your favourite bands could ever make it.

Pop and alternative, she concedes, “are not as separate as people like to think.” For one, there is a crossover in songwriters. Jack White, for instance,

People are having their emo phases again

contributed to Beyoncé’s *Lemonade*. Similarly, Amelia claims that The Weeknd’s heavy basslines and rock-song structures prove that Alternative music influences Pop.

“I never want us to be a judgemental society,” she explains, noting times that students have approached her seeking approval for their playlists, “somebody can love Taylor Swift and My Chemical Romance.” Nevertheless, she admits that a particular

style surrounds alternative music. “Leather jackets, Docs, fishnets...” she laughs, “but sometimes I walk out the door looking like Legally Blonde. That doesn’t mean I’m not indie anymore.”

Meeting alternative music fans proved an amazing experience for Amelia after attending a school where no-one shared her tastes. “You’ll always get people within a community that like telling others they don’t belong,” she argues, “but when you actually get to know the community, it’s not like that at all.”

A grave problem currently facing independent artists is the impact of streaming on revenue. Whilst conceding that “streaming has been brilliant for exposure”, Amelia stresses that Spotify pays musicians as little as \$00.3 - \$00.5 per stream. “When I was younger,” she explains, “I’d buy a CD around once a month and it would cost maybe a tenner.” Although this amounted to less music, the artists received a fairer share of the profits. Therefore, Amelia argues that companies must do more to support musicians. Until then, Amelia rec-

ommends purchasing physical records and merch, attending live shows and spreading the word about emerging artists.

But what does she foresee for the future of alternative music? According to Amelia, the era of summery indie pop epitomised by Blossoms and Two Door Cinema Club is coming to an end. “People are having their emo phases again,” she claims, citing the recent return of Paramore, Blink182 and MCR. Why does she think this is? “There’s something quite therapeutic about having

someone scream in your ear,” she laughs.

Alternative Music Society might be one of the smaller music societies at Cambridge but its community spirit certainly outweighs its size. By prioritising chill socials over impersonal club nights, the society offers a space to meet like-minded people. Its loose definition of the genre makes the society more inclusive and helps open-minded fans discover new styles. Whether you look like Legally Blonde or Heather Baron-Gracie, you need not be deterred from attending Alternative Music Society.

◀ PHOTO BY AMELIA QUINCE



Theatre

Behind the Curtain: Theatre stewarding is more than just a T-shirt

From ice cream selling to breaking up fights, **Alexandra Picken** reveals that there's nothing stewarding can't teach you

Stewarding is a great option for avid theatre-goers unwilling to shoulder the burden of the ever-increasing price of ADC tickets. Don't fancy paying £12 for a play to support a friend's single-line performance? No problem! Sign yourself up for a stewarding slot and be there at the theatre door to watch your acquaintances plunge through the depths of their Outlook inboxes for the tickets they foolishly purchased at full price.

Yet when I mention stewarding to those not in the Cambridge Theatre Facebook group, I'm usually met with vacant stares. Few among the broader student population are aware of what could be a great way to experience student theatre on the cheap.

It's not as if stewarding opportunities are massively publicised - my introduction to it came entirely by mistake. Having keenly shown up to a play half an hour early, I was caught in a tense exchange between the producer and the duty manager: the steward hadn't shown up. Volunteering to do it seemed like a polite thing, my only other option being to sit quietly in the box office until the house opened. I was handed a shrunken blue t-shirt bearing the ADC logo, told where to sit and what to do in the unlikely event there was a fire, and directed to stand by the door and check tickets. The play itself was distinctly unmemorable - but stewarding had me in its grips.

Sure, the limited available slots per performance make stewarding a slightly unreliable way of getting to shows - but signing up a week in advance usually guarantees a place. In a lot of ways stewarding is rewarding. I had never had a job before my first stewarding shift and it was a low pressure introduction to customer service in the minor sense of asking people if they'd like to buy a programme.

The duty-managers are friendly in the way that you only become when you spend much of your work day wrangling young adults. Once, they let me man the box office, selling tickets on the door. Choosing where to seat 'proper' adult theatre-goers made me feel powerful in quite a minor and ridiculous way.

Stewarding for a show moulds your whole experience down to the seat you sit in. Approaching shows as a steward made me more critical of them than I would have been otherwise. You are acutely aware that you are trading your labour for the experience, which can be a gamble. There are a lot of brilliant shows in Cambridge, ones which are profound, beautiful, thought provoking, which make stewarding feel truly rewarding. You feel incredibly invested in your theatrical experience, I think in part because it represents such an effort and time commitment to seeing the show.

On the other hand, stewarding doesn't always feel like a great trade-off for a night at the theatre.

No one likes to watch a play not to their tastes, let alone when you've sacrificed an additional hour of your time to be there - and you can't exactly leave in the intermission, either. Stewarding is a time commitment, and you're not only working but sacrificing crucial last-minute-essay writing time.

Student theatre represents a lot of work from those involved, and without meaning to diminish this, stewarding a show you didn't love doesn't feel like a worthwhile exchange. My realisation that I would rather pay £12 for the privilege of showing up ten minutes before the curtains rose spelt the end of my stewarding career.

The action doesn't end when the show starts, either. Last year, one performance of *Much Ado About Nothing* was interrupted by a heckler who then got into a spat with another au-

dience member. The chaos was distracting for the average viewer - everyone craned their necks and contorted themselves in their seats to see what all the commotion was about, the action on stage usurped by the action off it.

But it was the steward's responsibility to calm the situation, at least until the duty manager appeared. This is more than most stewards sign up for and resulted in a very different experience than that of the average viewer.

But I would hate for this to put any potential stewards off or for this part of it to change. Stewarding is potentially frustrating, but so is any kind of work. It provides valuable experiences for its student volunteers, and even the unexpected are great stories to tell. Stewarding is a gamble, but often a worthwhile one, with the potential to introduce theatre to the broader community who might be put off by the cost. It provides a unique approach to the theatrical experience and my time stewarding left me with a newfound appreciation for amateur dramatics. Stewarding is a valuable part of the Cambridge theatre ecosystem which everyone should try once.

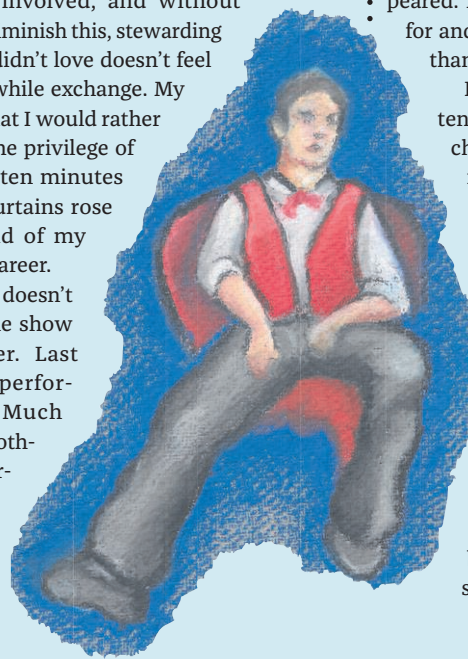


ILLUSTRATION BY ALEX PARNHAM COPE

Theatrical madness and mutiny with 'Nothing More to Say'

Theo Chen sits down with the exciting theatre-makers to discover what makes them tick

Laurie Ward and Charli Cowgill's theatrical reputation precedes them like a glittery, glamorous monster. The first I hear of them is from a friend, who reverently recalls the first iteration of *52 Monologues for Young Transsexuals* at the Corpus Playroom as the "most intense and beautiful show" they'd ever seen, necessitating hours of processing afterwards. Indeed, speaking to Cowgill and Ward about their

impetus for creating theatre makes evident their many layers, which in turn inform the theatre they create together. Under their newly formed collective *Nothing More to Say*, they recently brought *52 Monologues...* to the Vault Festival in London for a successful fringe rerun. We sat down before their London run and after the premiere of *Scratch Me* (a night of new writing) to dissect and discover why they make theatre. They first met

working on a student theatre production. They'd been forewarned by mutual friends that they were cut from the same cloth; this is evident in the way they finish each other's sentences and in their cohesive vision for the devised theatre they create. What is that theatre? It's in-your-face, vulnerable, exhilarating, exhausting, rambunctious, and debauched. In turns, and at once.

It's a theatre of flowers inserted up the ass, of a cup of communal saliva collected from the audience at the door which is then flung in the performer's faces, of audience participation in the "Allyship Games" to test the limits of their liberalism - if answers are unsatisfactory, you might just get left on stage alone whilst Ward runs to the bar demanding a shot of tequila before she continues performing. In many ways, their use of shock as a performance vocabulary is illustrative of the tension that Ward and Cowgill relish exploring.

That tension manifests as the destabilising sensation of laughter caught in the throat: a tenderness interrupted by extravagance which mirrors the dichotomy of life as trans women. Cowgill mentions that the most 'insidious response' she has had to her existence as a trans woman has been from 'politically liberal' folks: who'll smile at her, use she/her pronouns, but say something completely different behind her back. Their work reflects their experience of confidence in and control over one's presentation coexisting with the debilitating anxiety of not knowing what people really think. Performing is then, in a sense, restorative for the duo. Ward says

they "create work about being disempowered as trans women. But, present in our dramaturgy is this real sense of absolutely dominating the audience... we get real pleasure from never letting the audience know where they're going next."

They want to apply some heat to the culturally tolerant culture that theatre is often made in. The theatre they make isn't then capital-P Political. It shuns didacticism: they are not interested in bluntly instructing their audience on what is and is not permissible or correct. They want to create a space for the audience to weigh, consider, and be confronted with their assumptions, but what an audience makes of that is entirely up to them. What they are really fascinated by is the thin line between debasement and revelation. What lenses have the audience viewed trans-women through before - Ward and Cowgill share that for most people it's through the eroticized frame of pornography. What happens when the way you've always looked at someone is called into question?

Both Cowgill and Ward acknowledge that their work is not guaranteed to meet their goals. As much as they consider themselves to be 'dramaturgical dominatrixes', they know the audience might leave their shows completely misinterpreting them. And they've experienced the vitriol their work has inspired. In a world where trans people are treated more like topics to debate in bad faith, why continue to engage at all? Cowgill says it's only natural: when the world is constantly engaging with their identities, the options are to reply or stay silent,

and when has change arisen from silence? They point to theatre's unique qualities as reasons to keep making their work despite the intensity involved in reliving some of their trauma onstage and the potential futility of it all. When audience and performer are both present and, therefore, in a form of agreement, their bodies are not as Cowgill says 'mediated through text, or other people's voices' but are fleshy, unedited, and unapologetic - not nebulous concepts for people to fight over, but real people staking the space to exist as they are.

To watch a show by *Nothing More To Say* is to bare witness to theatre at its most alive. Having been in the audience and behind the scenes on hundreds of shows over the years, I know how rare it is to come across theatre-makers as alive to the possibilities of their art as Ward and Cowgill. I admire their commitment to cut through the noise of the world we live in with their incisively chaotic theatre. That they can hold all these different factors, ideas, and aspirations at the same time is a testament to their burgeoning brilliance. One gets the sense that they are really on track to discovering something singular - a novel feeling when sat in a theatre. They say they named their company after the feeling they wish their audiences to have after watching them perform; it's one more delicious twist that their work is a conduit to comprehending the world we live in. There is so much to discover. You'd do well to keep an eye on them - these girls have big plans, and you're missing out if you don't come along for the ride.



PHOTO BY LEAH MCCLAIN

BE INSPIRED

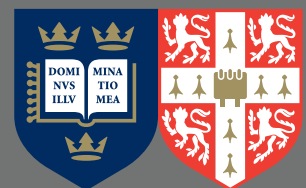
by your surroundings



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.

For details on membership or a tour of the Club house, please visit
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OXFORD AND
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Theatre

Cambridge Theatre: Hot or not?

Rant and rave with the Varsity writers delivering their searing hot takes on the student theatre scene

Bring the “amateur” back into amateur dramatics

Coming to Cambridge I was confounded by the standard of theatrical professionalism and the relentless output of productions, seemingly run with more discipline than a Navy missile carrier. I worry the thesp experience is strangled by the self-inflicted imperative to be a Tony-touting professional, at the expense of throwing yourself in a variety of roles with no intention of accolade. Cambridge's itch for competition leaks out from academics and permeates our artistic endeavours. So here's to the true amateurs. The freshers slipping up on opening night but concluding the run with unpolished flair and new-found confidence. The techies tripping around backstage, accidentally turning a disco ball on mid-soliloquy, stumbling and fumbling commendably towards a new skill. The original writers and stand-up comedians, bravely extending their offerings to a crowd of their peers. To quote the humble genius of Rata-touille: “The time when a critic truly risks something... is in the discovery

and defence of the new”. This novelty and daring, even if it doesn't quite come together, should be at the heart of our theatre community.

Alex Parnham-Cope

It's past time to get rid of star ratings for theatre reviews

They're effectively a useless gauge of a show – each reviewer has their own individual metric by which they decide, and the variety of reviewers is so wide that there will never be a workable standardised rating system. Stars ultimately come down to personal taste, just like the review itself. They obscure the reader's perceptions: they'll see the rating

and not much else. Who cares if there are 700 words about the show, toiled over by the editor and writer? One manifestation of an opinion is not the gospel, people! If the potential audience relies on stars alone to tell them what to watch, let us all change the prevailing culture by engaging with criticism more rigorously. Producers: choose your highlight-

ed quotes strategically! Readers: use the writing to gauge whether you ought to see a show! Writers: let go of trying to squash your opinion into a meaningless metric. Out with the stars, in with attentive, careful, and insightful theatrical criticism!

Theo Chen

Thesps, stop performing plays from the tragedy paper

Sure, the tragedy paper has been a staple of the English tripos for over a century – but that doesn't mean your entire repertoire now has to be composed of Ibsen and the Ancient Greeks. I love Hedda Gabler and Medea as much as much as the next engling, but are these the kind of shows I want to watch six weeks into Lent term, where I'm only just recovering from the onslaught of Euripides and Shakespeare from Michaelmas term? Every time I see a poster for a new staging or revival of a text that was definitely on the reading list, I'm taken back to those crammed lecture halls, sheltering a flock of us from the

November drizzle. This is not to say there isn't merit in performing these plays (and props to those engling thespes who manage to compartmentalise performing tragedy), but there's so much more out there which combines excellent writing with a more original outlook.

Famke Veenstra-Ashmore

There is too much going on in Cambridge theatre

What's that piece of advice that every graduating student tries desperately to pass on? Ah yes – don't stretch yourself too thinly. I'm not one to quash the creation of art, but when there's four ADC shows, four Corpus shows, two Pembroke shows, two Downing shows, two Robinson shows and a Queens' show in the space of two weeks, I think it just might be overkill. Cambridge theatre has always struggled to fill production team roles at times, but now that some shows are struggling to even fill acting roles, we may have pushed it too far. Quality, not quantity!

Gina Stock

Why are they always SINGING?

Listen, I love theatre. I love it so much, I work at the ADC Theatre. It's important to have a space for am-dram, and for students to try things out. I love everything about it. Everything, apart from one infuriating theatre kid trait, which I'm sure to encounter every single time I step foot into work. The constant, unending, tuneless butchering of show tunes. Theatre kids love to sing. And it drives me nuts. Within the confines of a rehearsal for a musical? Sure. At the CUADC bar night? Sing away. Karaoke? Go nuts. But out of nowhere, apropos of nothing, just bursting into “You'll Be Back” from Hamilton? Kill me now. And crucially, not every theatre kid is a good singer. There, I've said it. I would love, and I cannot stress this enough, to have a shift at work where my ears weren't randomly assaulted by the entire soundtrack of Dear Evan Hansen: “You will be found”? Do me a favour, you have been found, and I've “found” that you are an awful singer. Save it for the shower, thespes, because my ears are bleeding.

Lotte Brundle

▲ILLUSTRATIONS BY ALEX PARNHAM COPE

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Double delight for Light Blues in Lacrosse Varsity

Jonny Coffey
Sports Correspondent

The women's and mixed lacrosse Blues both claimed victories over Oxford in this Saturday's varsity clashes. In two nail-biting contests, Cambridge composure crushed comeback hopes, leaving their rivals to contemplate a winless day-out on the coach journey home.

Women's Blues 15-14 Oxford

Captain Camille Barton led the way as the Women's Lacrosse blues claimed a close-cut victory over a strong Oxford opposition. Cheered on by a raucous Cambridge crowd, the Blues were electric from the off. Scoring four unanswered goals in as many minutes, they looked set for total domination, with Barton and Anna Saunter running riot in the Oxford half.

However, Oxford soon recovered from their slow start and began a scoring run of their own, reducing the lead to one. Unfazed, Cambridge finished the quarter strong, regaining some breathing space through a Saunter stunner. The frenetic opening set the tone for the second quarter. Four consecutive Oxford goals left the Blues trailing by two, but Barton broke the slump through an exceptional solo goal, restoring belief in the Cam-

bridge ranks. Following suit, Saunter lashed home the leveller before the half.

On the back of a strong third quarter, Cambridge entered the final period with an 11-10 lead. However, a resurgent Oxford dealt the first blows in a thrilling conclusion, netting twice to claim the lead. As the pressure mounted, the Blues showed their mettle. Sofia Johanson sparked the comeback with a scintillating solo effort. Feinting left and driving right, Johanson left defenders in the dust before firing home. Galvanised, Cambridge regained the lead through Barton.

Then, playing creator, the captain spotted Saunter's slashing run and picked out her midfield partner, who brought the score to 14-12. Vindicating the claims of a vociferous Cambridge support, Barton and her 'magic hat' conjured a spectacular fifteenth for the Blues.

A last-ditch fightback saw Oxford reduce the deficit to one, but the Blues held out to claim a well-earned Varsity triumph.

Varsity Player of the Match: Camille Barton

Mixed Lacrosse Blues 8-6 Oxford

Megan Wilson, Rob MacLennan, and Kit Baker starred as the mixed Lacrosse Blues claimed Varsity bragging rights for

the tenth consecutive year. Cambridge dominated the tie and would have won by considerably more, but for the heroics of the Oxford keeper.

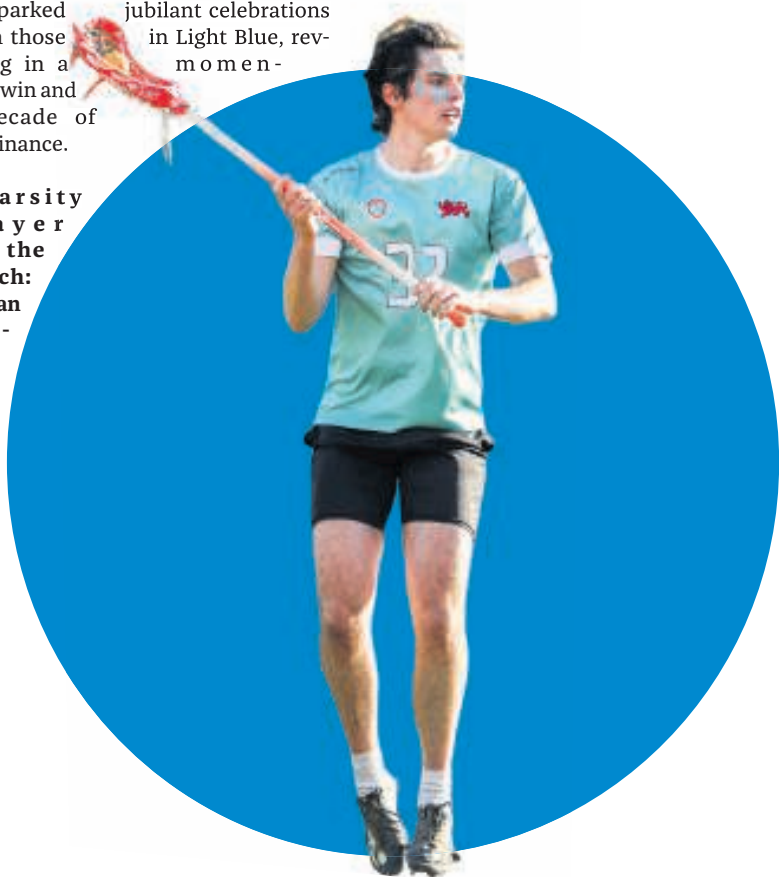
Within ten seconds of the draw, the Blues led. In a sign of things to come, the midfield trio of Baker, MacLennan, and Wilson combined to net the opener. Baker found MacLennan in the opposition half, who then picked out a surging Wilson to apply the finishing touch. Inspired, Cambridge tripled their lead within minutes, with MacLennan claiming the first of his hat-trick.

However, complacency crept in, and the Blues allowed two cheap Oxford goals before the quarter's end. The bleeding continued after the break, with Oxford evening the scores. As their opponents continued to threaten, crucial saves from Cambridge's Annabel Gray kept the Blues afloat and, rediscovering their rhythm, they cruised to a 6-3 half-time lead.

Wilson added to the Blues' tally after the break, but lax defending kept Oxford hopes alive. Two goals in quick succession took the score to 7-5 before a marauding MacLennan restored a three-goal lead, completing his hat-trick with a superb solo goal. The visitors struck back as the third-quarter ended, leaving the scores at 8-6 as the contest entered its final stages.

A goalless fourth quarter secured the win for the Blues, and the final whistle sparked jubilant celebrations from those in Light Blue, revealing in a tenuous win and a decade of dominance.

Varsity
Player
of the
Match:
Megan
Wilson



Clever Cambridge a touch too good for Oxford

The Light Blues were too strong for Oxford in the Mixed Touch Rugby Varsity Match on Saturday

Abbie Hastie
Sports Editor

Cambridge beat Oxford 10-6 in this year's mixed Touch Rugby Varsity match. On an increasingly cold afternoon on Grange Road, the Blues passed the ball quickly and moved with great agility to scythe through the Oxford defence time and time again. The match began fairly evenly, as both teams enjoyed spells of possession. Midway through the half, Cambridge took control by running over a series of tries which Oxford could not respond to. Key to this was the Light Blues' excellent ball movement, as the ball was hoiked from one side of the pitch to the other, dragging Oxford all over the place. This created gaps in the Oxford line, which proved to be fertile ground for Cambridge. If their ball movement was impressive, Cambridge try-scoring was positively mind-boggling. To those used to the flop over the line technique of Rugby Union, the sight of the Cambridge players diving for the line in the manner of a cat pouncing on a mouse was mind-boggling. Oxford couldn't respond to such prowess, playing ponderously and creating very few try-scoring chances. Inevitably though, the second half led to an Oxford comeback. The Dark Blues began to play more quickly, moving an increasingly disorganised Cambridge defence around. The Light Blues were not helped by the frequency of rolling substitutions, which disrupted their momentum at times, especially as they sought

to exploit their pace advantage over the Oxford defense. In fact, it was the visitors who used raw pace most effectively. As Cambridge began to tire, Oxford's Jamie Taylor burst clear and ran almost the entire length of the (shortened) pitch to score and bring his team back into the game. Minutes later, the number 14 did it again, avoiding a latch ditch attempt to touch him by Cambridge's Adam Moogan to increase the pressure on the Light Blues.

Cambridge kept their heads though, and expert ball handling from Moogan kept many an attack alive, before sharp finishing once again extended the Cambridge lead. Cambridge's response knocked the wind out of Oxford's sails, and as the game entered its final quarter, Oxford's paucity of subs began to show. Tired defending by the men and women from the Other Place showed in a flurry of Cambridge tries, and in Oxford's inability to create anything from their attacks. Ultimately, Cambridge were too strong for their eternal rivals, and retained their Varsity crown.

Isaac Tan



Captain's Corner: Meet MMA

Varsity sits down with Mixed Martial Arts captain Charlie Curtis to talk masochism, troll moves and the cardio benefits of grappling

Are you a masochist? No, I am a sadist. All jokes aside I care deeply for all my training partners.

Why is your sport the best? No other combat sport is as complete. Mixed Martial Arts integrates the best techniques from boxing, muay thai, wrestling, Brazilian jiu-jitsu and judo. It is as realistic and effective as it gets.

What has been your favourite moment as captain? The overwhelming interest at the Freshers' Fair and watching our complete beginners grow in confidence and ability. Some of them are even making their debut at Varsity 2023!

What is your best sporting moment? My first amateur MMA fight at Varsity last year in Oxford. It was an honour to share the cage with my opponent who was an absolute warrior.

What is your worst sporting moment? Losing my Varsity match (which I was winning) due to injury. I ended up hurting my shoulder from hitting my opponent!

Is MMA safe? Beyond protective equipment, our coaches emphasise developing rapport with training partners for the sparring intensity to be controlled. We usually "play spar" which allows us to focus more on technique while reducing the risk of injury.

No, really, is it safe? Safe in the knowledge that I have the cardio to run away if confronted on the street.

What's it like being kicked in the face? Depends. Through a shin guard and controlled? Like a slap. Shin bone on the jaw or temple? Lights out.

What kind of fighter are you? I like to think I am a composed and technical fighter who has a complete game. That said, I am guilty of the occasional troll move.

Favourite move? On the feet is the spinning back kick. Hard to pull off but when it lands it hurts. Favourite submission is probably the arm triangle as it is such a high-percentage [highly effective] move.

Who is the funniest on the team? Ayman - he does an uncanny impression of former UFC Lightweight Champion Khabib Nurmagomedov. Grapples like him too.

How can we watch you in Varsity? MMA Varsity is at the University Sports Centre at 3pm on Saturday 18th march. Tickets are available on FIXR through Facebook and Instagram



Sport

Varsity's
a lark for
Lacrosse
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Masochists
or sadists?
Meet the
MMA team
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Blues best Oxford in Varsity victory

Alex Berry
On loan from Science

Cambridge battled Oxford to a 51-45 win in the Netball Varsity match on Sunday (26/02). It was a hard-fought win, as the lead switched multiple times throughout the match before Cambridge's hunger and determination led them to victory.

Cambridge came out firing from the first whistle, smoothly converting the first centre pass and immediately challenging Oxford's defence. Shooters Lucy Dodd and Lucy Walker had a brilliant partnership, working in complete harmony in the circle to find the space around each other, helped by some excellent long passes into the circle by wing-attack Millie Quayle. However, Oxford began to grow into the game towards the end of the first quarter, and an Oxford penalty shot was converted after the whistle to leave the score 11-15 in Oxford's favour at the first break.

Oxford reshuffled their defensive lineup during the break. This failed to deter the Cambridge shooters with Lucy Dodd

scoring some phenomenal long-range shots from the edge of the circle. This, combined with a couple of important interceptions in the centre-court by Izzy Howse and Millie Ireland-Carson, helped Cambridge to fight back and retake the lead. Cambridge's Libby Bryant made way for Astrid Williams after putting on a fierce display in defence. Williams had an instant impact through a brilliant interception in the defensive third, as Oxford's frustration began to show at Cambridge's dominant display. Dodd's last-second-buzzer goal from the edge of the circle gave Cambridge a three point lead, the score being 26-23 going into half-time.

This time it was Cambridge who decided to reshuffle their team during the break, bringing on Clodagh Bottomley and Zoë Starbuck as a new shooting duo. Cambridge were again quick from the get-go, converting Oxford's first centre pass to add another point to their lead. Goalkeeper Jade Popoola was instrumental in defence throughout the match, making some phenomenal interceptions in this third quarter. Oxford responded

to Cambridge's good play by upping their intensity and, after a few goals in a row, they managed to creep back in front. Substitutes Rachel Mercer and India Foster worked hard in the centre-third to work the ball into the attack after capitalising on some of Oxford's mistakes. This led the third quarter to end 36-35 in Cambridge's favour, the closeness between the teams now becoming increasingly apparent.

Cambridge had the first centre pass of the final quarter, converting this to gain a two-point lead. Cambridge's defence worked hard to thwart Oxford's efforts in attack, forcing errors into their play that led to some messy attacking moves. Cambridge weren't without error however, as Oxford managed to regain the lead heading into the final ten minutes.

The nerves became evident in both teams as the end of the match drew closer, as a few more passes went unreceived and balls were dropped. However,

the Cambridge team's strength and determination shone through and, through the defensive pressure they put on Oxford that led to some impressive interceptions and a bad centre pass, they gained a 48-43 lead. The pressure was kept on Oxford by a reshuffle of Cambridge's defence, forcing errors from Oxford and lengthen-

ing play before end of the match. The Cambridge attack continued to play with enthusiasm and hunger right until the last second.

The crowd erupted into deafening cheers as the final whistle blew, while the players celebrated their hard-fought and well-deserved victory together on court.

