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A revolutionary
vision for 5/11
pg. 24

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JCBC inferno
pg. 4

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Friday 10th November 2023
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The Independent
Student Newspaper since 1947

VARSITY

University Hospitals staffed by 'bigots and sexists', says NHS survey

Romilly Norfolk

"A loud minority of bigots and sexist staff," operate within Cambridge University Hospitals (CUH), staff have said in an internal report seen by *Varsity*.

Staff feedback collected for the report noted that other staff regularly made "un-PC comments, particularly regarding trans staff", with one gay male member of staff said he on occasion "felt slightly uncomfortable at the questions or comments my colleagues have made."

The CUH NHS Foundation Trust's Rainbow Badge Assessment, which *Varsity* obtained through a Freedom of Information (FOI) request, revealed that CUH scored 0 on two of the assessment areas and had an overall score of 41/165 across five different areas.

CUH runs Cambridge's two hospitals, Addenbrookes and Rosie Hospital, with Addenbrookes being the primary training hospital for Cambridge medical students.

The Rainbow Badge Assessment is the second phase of the NHS' Rainbow Badge scheme, which was initially launched in 2018. The initial scheme was focused on providing basic education to staff on LGBT+ inclusion if they signed up for the project. The second phase, launched in 2021, moved the scheme to an assessment and accreditation model.

The assessment gives trusts who take part, a graded award which reflects their current LGBT inclusion work, and grades hospitals with bronze, silver or gold awards.

Staff criticised the handling of discrimination by the trust, with one respondent saying they "have seen homophobia from staff and patients allowed to happen without consequence [...] despite it being raised as a problem."

Continued on page 3 ►

Only boys allowed

Men's **sports society** at John's votes not to merge with female counterpart

▲ CHARMAINE AU-YEUNG

Tommy Castellani

St John's College's elite men's sports society, the Eagles, has voted not to merge with the women's club.

Seven out of the ten members present at the Eagles' committee meeting in October voted against the proposed merger with the counterpart women's club, the Flamingos, *Varsity* can reveal.

Jenny Dunstan, Flamingos President, told *Varsity* that it was "disappointing that so few of the men were in favour of the proposed merger" which she supported for the sake of "equality and inclusion".

Dunstan said it was "outdated" to have separate clubs for men and women as "logistically all of the societies' events are held together".

John's second year and sportswoman, Buzz Watts, told *Varsity*: "it does not reflect well on the reputation of John's to be a boys' club."

"At a College that is so proud of its sporting history, men's and women's sport should have the same prestige," she said.

The Eagles President, Ben Foster, who proposed the motion to merge the two clubs, told *Varsity* he was "disappointed that the motion did not pass".

Following statements in the Flamingo's WhatsApp group that the men's reluctance to let their female counterparts join was motivated by a "lack of respect for women's sport", Foster said that he believes "the Eagles do respect women's sport".

"Lack of this [respect] was not the reason why the merger did not pass," he said.

According to Foster, "no mention of women's sport came up during the committee meeting".

Foster cited the clubs' different criteria for membership as one of the reasons why some members of the Eagles opposed the merger.

Five members of the Flamingos are captains of half-blue sports, which would make them ineligible for membership of the Eagles unless the club changed its rules. Co-captains of college sports may also not qualify and would have to be considered on an individual basis.

Foster said that Eagles members "were particularly keen for there [to] be more of a club spirit and togetherness" and that "combining with the Flamingos at this given time would lead to further problems with club cohesion".

However, Dunstan believes merging

the clubs would "help with cohesion".

Dunstan also suggested that having two separate clubs might pose problems for "non-gender conforming athletes".

One member of the Flamingos, who asked to remain anonymous, told *Varsity* that the reason why a separate club for women exists is "exclusively because women weren't allowed to join the Eagles when they were first admitted to the college".

"It would go a long way to be valued as sportswomen to be allowed to join," she said.

Some elite sports societies at other Colleges are mixed-gender, such as Downing's Griffin Club.

At Selwyn, the men's and women's

clubs unanimously agreed to merge in 2020, forming the Hermes and Siren's club.

A spokesperson for St John's College said: "The Eagles and Flamingos Clubs are run by students to celebrate excellence in student sport. The clubs already organise social events together throughout the year."

"The proposal to formally combine the clubs was agreed in principle by both Presidents, it was unanimously supported at a Committee meeting of the Flamingos, however at a subsequent meeting of the Eagles it was felt that the constitutional differences between the two clubs needed to be addressed before a merger took place," they continued.

Cambridge smokers

The *Varsity* archives
reveal Cambridge's
smoky past

Features Page 10 ►

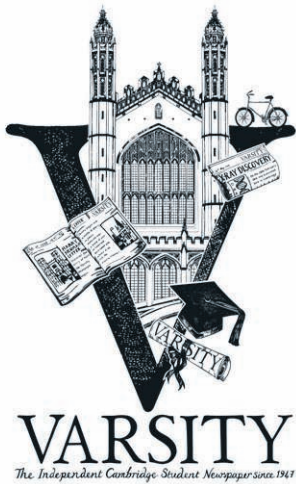
Calls for Israel divestment

Activists storm
Manufacturing
Institute

News Page 4 ►

Week 6

"Cambridge is full of scientists, printing presses, theatre groups and all I need is the guts to write about them...perhaps I'll try out for Varsity next term"- Sylvia Plath (1956)



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Editorial

Week 5 and their associated blues may now finally be over, but term continues on. At a place as hectic at Cambridge, where you always find yourself rushing somewhere inevitably five minutes late (p. 13), it's easy to get caught up in the rush to complete the next task, finish that week's assignment, or get to the front of the queue outside Wednesday Revs. The vast range of events covered in this week's print edition - from the Cambridge Film Festival (p. 22) to a celebratory boat-burning at the Jesus College Boat Club (p. 4) - offer a small glimpse into the wonderful and whacky opportunities

that Cambridge has to offer.

Across the rest of the paper, a Nobel prize-winning economist Michael Spence talks to Varsity about how AI automation and the limits of technology (p. 15), while Nick James explores the redevelopment plans for the Grafton Centre (p. 9). In Features, Joshua Shortman dives into the Varsity archives to explore Cambridge's smoking culture, past and present (p. 10). Whether you see smoking as a means to consolidate your position in Cambridge's grand legacy of creatives, or simply a way to catch a break from the sweaty pits of Revs, we can't help but wonder how Cambridge students in five years time will cope with the dread of Week Five

deadlines without the nicotine rush of a smoke break in the pub.

Whilst we're in no position ourselves to pass judgement on one's coping mechanisms, please ensure you're taking time to properly take care of yourself (p. 12) amongst the madness, too. And if you need real help don't be afraid to take the steps to get it (p. 12). If silverfish can exist for 400 million years - and still manage to find their way into college accommodation (p. 7) - we're sure you can make your way through a few years at Cambridge. Take a mo-

Isabel & Taneesha

ment to find some real calmness and reflect on all the little joys around you: be it the kindness of your friends (p.20) or the beauty of the buttons on your favourite coat (p. 27).



Week in Pictures



Bonfire night on Midsummer Common (04/11) [Susie Kirsten]



Unite protest (07/11) [Alice Mainwood]



Autumn punters (8/11) [Daniel Hilton]



Footlights pantomime rehearsals (5/11) [Charlotte Conybeare]



The cast of *I was in the house and I was waiting for the rain to come* [Charlotte Conybeare]

Staff reveal ‘homophobia’ in Cambridge University Hospitals

Continued from front page

CUH failed to qualify for an award, only receiving silver in one assessment area and bronze in two.

The Trust was instead labelled as “initial stage”, rather than qualifying for a bronze rating.

Another member of staff said: “Examples of sexism and homophobia raised with management [have been] met with ‘but he’s a good surgeon.’”

One member of staff claimed the Trust “treat everyone badly” so it [discrimination] would be difficult to prove it was specifically ‘homophobia’, despite there being a “widespread knowledge of generalised sexism, homophobia from the [Trust] group with multiple examples readily available,” the staff member continued.

The assessment revealed that the Trust doesn’t systematically monitor LGBT+ related complaints made by patients. In addition, it does not identify and act on any LGBT+ inclusion issues raised at exit interviews or on

exit surveys.

The staff survey revealed controversy about the assessment among staff with one calling the Rainbow Badges “performative”, another calling the scheme “mindless virtue signalling” and others expressing their concern about the influence of the Rainbow Badge scheme on the Trust.

One staff respondent to the assessment said: “I am gravely concerned about the influence on the NHS of organisations like Mermaids and Stonewall.” Another staff member said that they are “concerned this has now come to Addenbrooke’s”.

Staff expressed their opinions on the scheme and the encouragement of inclusive language within the Trust. One commented: “Isn’t it dangerous for the NHS to start eroding normal language.”

Some staff used the survey to complain about the scheme, one saying: “Stop imposing it on me” and another saying that “LGB staff [should] not [be] subsumed by [the] T.”

Others used the survey to express

their own views on LGBT+ inclusive policy. One member of staff said they “can’t even state a simple and undeniable biological fact that there are only two genders”.

They continue by saying that the “LGBT community is riddled with phobias and it is the most discriminatory and intolerant community that I’ve encountered.”

The CUH scored 0 on the Patients Survey and the Services Survey, which make up 93 marks of the total 165.

The report instructed the Trust to increase the number of LGBT+ inclusive posters visible to patients. The surveys found that 5% of patient respondents were asked their pronouns when receiving care. Less than 50% of patient respondents (which is needed to gain a mark) were asked to confirm their gender, sexual orientation and any trans history they may have when they received care.

Services also scored 0 with the Gynaecology, Maternity/Perinatal, Laboratory/Pathology, Oncology and Fertility services being judged. However, only one

of these services actually responded to the survey, with it being non-patient facing, so services were given an overall score of 0.

The report included responses from 331 CUH staff and 74 patients.

A CUH spokesperson said that the results of the report “are being used with the LGBT+ staff network to support our refreshed LGBT+ action plan and overall EDI plans”.

“Since 2017 we have commissioned the Kite Trust to provide regular LGBT+ awareness training half-day workshops for all staff. We have 12,500 staff but this survey, open during four weeks May/June, had a low response rate as it was a time of industrial action and operational pressures,” they said.

“All forms of discrimination, harassment and victimisation will not be tolerated and we will continue to educate our staff and leaders on how to tackle incidents, raise concerns and the signpost to the relevant processes and sources of support,” they concluded.

Additional reporting by Seb Topan.



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Petition against SU sabb over Hamas attack reaction

Eric Williams

One hundred and sixty students have signed a petition calling for a referendum over whether to have a no-confidence motion against Harvey Brown, the Students’ Union’s welfare officer, over his liking of online content supportive of Hamas last month.

Brown liked a now-deleted tweet that suggested the October 7th attacks by Hamas were “a day of celebration”.

Brown has since issued a public apology, but the new petition is pressurising the SU to put further disciplinary action to a referendum.

Gabrielle Apfel, a Jewish student who started the petition, told *Varsity* she started the open letter to show that “there is no room in Cambridge for antisemitism and terrorist sympathisers”.

“Every moment that he remains in his position is another moment that Jews are evidently not properly protected”, she added.

Brown was contacted for comment.

Part-time work ban may be on SU chopping block

Beth Doherty

A Student Union (SU) motion to campaign against the ban on undergraduate part-time work was proposed at Student Council earlier this week, to mixed student reception.

The plan seeks to give the SU a mandate to campaign against the current ban on undergraduates working part-time.

Caredig ap Tomos, the SU’s Access, Education & Participation Officer, proposed the motion at Monday’s Student Council, which claims that current University policy “restricts the freedom of students unnecessarily”.

Ap Tomos told *Varsity* that the policy is an “inconsistent, unfair and paternalistic approach to how student work is treated by colleges”.

The ban on part-time work is “hypocritical,” and allows the University and Colleges to “monopolise control over student labour,” the motion states.

The lax enforcement of the stance “encourages students to break the rules and not inform tutors of their work, preventing them from providing tutorial sup-

port,” the proposals say.

At the Council meeting, some members expressed support for the increased student freedom that the lifting of the ban would deliver. They also highlighted that the goal was framed alongside campaigns to track bursaries against inflation.

Others, however, felt that lifting the ban could do more harm than good. One student noted that the possibility of work might “create family expectation” for students to get jobs, which would in turn cause them to “struggle with workload,” according to SU minutes.

This was echoed by the Fitzwilliam JCR Class Act Officer, Milosz Kowalski, who told *Varsity* that lifting the ban would “establish a division between wealthier students who don’t need to work, and a group of students who would almost inevitably be disadvantaged academically as a result of being forced into work.”

During the discussion, ap Tomos asked the student audience if anyone would be interested in part-time work if it was available, but the minutes state

that no one responded.

One anonymous student spoke to *Varsity* about the impact the ban has had on them: “As a final year student, I’ve had to rely on two hardship funds due to the inability to work part-time”

“I’m a ‘squeezed middle’ student whose parents cannot afford to support me financially, but working over [the] summer has never allowed me to save sufficient funds,” they said.

Discussing the proposed policy, Sam Hutton, Chair of the SU Ethical Affairs campaign told *Varsity*: “I think we have to consider that the reasoning behind the rule is so that the University is forced to provide adequately for all students.”

The motion will be debated again and voted on at the next Student Council meeting, on the 20th of November.

A University spokesperson said: “The University is aware of the Student Union motion on this issue and has been engaging with the sabbatical officers about these concerns, which will need to be discussed more widely across the collegiate University.”

University watch



Amelia Platt

Leeds investigates after football match postponed

Leeds University is investigating allegations that a football match between its Jewish and Arab societies was postponed after some players in the Arab team felt uncomfortable playing during the conflict between Israel and Palestine. According to *The Guardian*, Leeds University’s student union is communicating with the societies involved and is investigating in line with its complaints procedure. The president of Leeds University Jewish Society, Joel Herman said: “We all feel totally disrespected and let down.”

London academics unite to ‘fight cancel culture’

Academics at London universities have formed a council to “fight cancel culture,” *The Telegraph* has reported. More than 100 academics have formed the London Universities’ Council for Academic Freedom which spans all of the capital’s campuses, including University College London, King’s College London, Imperial College London and the London School of Economics. In a launch statement, the council declared: “Universities should not adopt institutional positions on contested issues.”

Oxford Islamic Society raises thousands for Gaza

Oxford University Islamic Society (OUIS) held a charity auction for relief efforts in the Gaza Strip last week, raising around £26,00 for humanitarian efforts amid the continuing Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The society auctioned off artwork, heirlooms, calligraphy and other items donated by Muslim businesses in Oxford to an audience of 100 donors, *Cherwell* has reported. The auction was the final event in a week of fundraising events organised by the society, which included sponsored kickboxing events, FIFA tournaments and a Quiz night.

Refugee recognition for Sheffield

The University of Sheffield has been named a ‘University of Sanctuary’ in recognition of its support for refugee students and scholars. The award sees Sheffield join a network of UK universities that have all been given the status due to their support of refugees and people seeking asylum. Sheffield University currently offers 10 fully funded ‘Sanctuary Scholarships’ for students who have sought refuge in the UK.

News

Burn boaty burn: JCBC inferno

Jesus College rowers set ship ablaze after women triumph

Romilly Norfolk

Jesus College Boat Club burnt a boat last Friday (3/11) in celebration of the Women's First Boat (W1) achieving headship in May Bumps last academic year.

The tradition of burning a boat dates back to the beginning of Bumps races in the 19th Century, but the headship has not been held by Jesus since 2017. St Johns and Gonville & Caius Colleges have also been known to partake in this tradition when winning headship.

The boat itself was an old pair boat (which holds two rowers with two oars) which had been unused for several years and had been in storage for more than seven years. The boat club assured *Varsity* that it was irreparable and had no financial value, with last year's W1 captain describing it as "destined for scrap".

Normally the crew who wins headship has the opportunity to jump over the boat whilst it is ablaze, but this was not allowed this year due to health and safety concerns. The audience of the boat burning were kept at least a few metres away with a rope cordon this year, to ensure their safety.

JCBC President Rachel Gould said:

"Continuing the tradition of boat burning was a perfect way to commemorate such a brilliant year for JCBC, and we are so excited for the coming year of success."

The Captain of W1 during last year's headship told *Varsity*: "It was a really nice event to finish off the best year in history for women's rowing at Jesus."

"I was so lucky to captain a side of such strong and inspiring women and am frankly amazed by how much we improved over the year," she said.

She revealed that this year's event "might be one of the last boat burnings to happen ever though because there's not many more scrap wooden boats left to find. So we're very lucky to have had the opportunity to experience it"

She continued: "The boat burning is one of those objectively really weird Cambridge traditions."

Some students described the event as "a bit cultish". One boat club member said: "It was the most boat club [that] the boat club have ever boat clubbed".

Jesus College and JCBC said that they look forward to finding more environmentally-friendly ways to celebrate similar successes in the future.



▲ ROMILLY NORFOLK

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Students attack ‘limiting’ new climate Pro-VC role

Felix Armstrong

Students have strongly criticised the newly-proposed Pro-Vice-Chancellor for sustainability role at a University forum, saying that the plans “come in place” of “meaningful” action on climate change.

Sam Hutton, Chair of the SU’s Ethical Affairs Campaign, said that the new role “does not meaningfully hasten” the University’s climate action, and that the proposal “comes in place of meaningful reports on the policy”.

The University held a discussion on the University Council’s proposals for a sustainability PVC this Tuesday (07/11), which was attended by student climate activists, from groups such as Cambridge Climate Justice (CCJ) and the SU’s Ethical Affairs campaign.

The University holds discussions on a fortnightly basis in which students and staff can submit pre-written remarks on proposals made by the institution. The discussions feature no live debate, and students can only attend if they are pre-registered.

The proposals for a new PVC role require approval from the University, and the position’s focus on sustainability would have to be further confirmed by the decision-makers.

Students have demanded that the

University publish a “roadmap” which would “entrench” the University’s commitment to climate action.

Speaking at the discussion, Sam Hutton criticised the University’s “delays” on climate action, saying: “Every time students have been given a deadline on this issue, it has been broken.”

The proposals come following the release of the Topping Report, which found that the University’s acceptance of research funding from the fossil fuel industry poses “high reputational risk”.

Hutton also suggested that the University’s plans to implement “consultation” on the report’s recommendations have not been adequately communicated to students: “We hope this consultation will be concluded and communicated promptly and that recommendations will be implemented quickly.”

A representative of Cambridge Climate Justice (CCJ), a group of student climate activists, told the discussion that, through its ties to the fossil fuel industry, the University “implicitly endorses climate destruction, knowingly contradicts its own academic standards [...] and goes against the plan set out in the report it itself commissioned.”

CCJ shared Hutton’s concerns regarding the University’s timeline for action, which the group said is “stagnating”. The

student member went on to say that “the lack of any such timetable in the public sphere is worrying”.

“Continued delay in implementing the report’s recommendations would be nothing more than a distraction,” CCJ said.

A University spokesperson said: “The Pro-Vice-Chancellor with responsibility for sustainability will play a key part in driving progress on the University’s sustainability ambitions on all fronts. Having this responsibility in the hands of one Pro-Vice-Chancellor will make sure it receives the attention it needs without the distraction of competing priorities.”



▲ HANNAH MAWARDI

Lucy Cav fails to repair John's-owned building

Wilf Vall and Amelia Platt

A Lucy Cavendish student is living with cracked walls and damaged plumbing, after receiving no response to maintenance requests on the St John’s-owned accommodation.

The student’s accommodation block, The Gables, is owned by St John’s College, Lucy Cavendish’s largest landlord. On average St John’s charges its students only two-thirds of the rent of Lucy Cav students.

The student has also been told that the accommodation block is due to be demolished in September, and believes this is one of the reasons for the lack of response to their maintenance requests.

According to the student, progress has been slowed by confusion over who is responsible for the building, given John’s controversial ownership.

“I had an issue with my sink and I was told that it wasn’t toxic and ordinarily they would need to replace my taps, but because St John’s wouldn’t put any money into it they wouldn’t, [and] it would probably be very unlikely that someone would come and fix it,” they said.

The student’s walls and ceiling are

lined with large cracks. These cracks stretch the length and width of one of the walls, and go deep into the plaster, per photos seen by *Varsity*.

The cracks are especially prominent outside the bathroom, the student said.

“Our plumbing is quite dodgy like the other day all of the pipes fell off the toilet and had to refix it and put it back together and then it’s just generally quite draughty and rackety,” they added.

Porters have also told the student that the accommodation block is due to be demolished next September, the student claimed.

“I think the problem is more that they’ve known they’re going to knock it down so they haven’t been doing regular repairs to it,” the student explained.

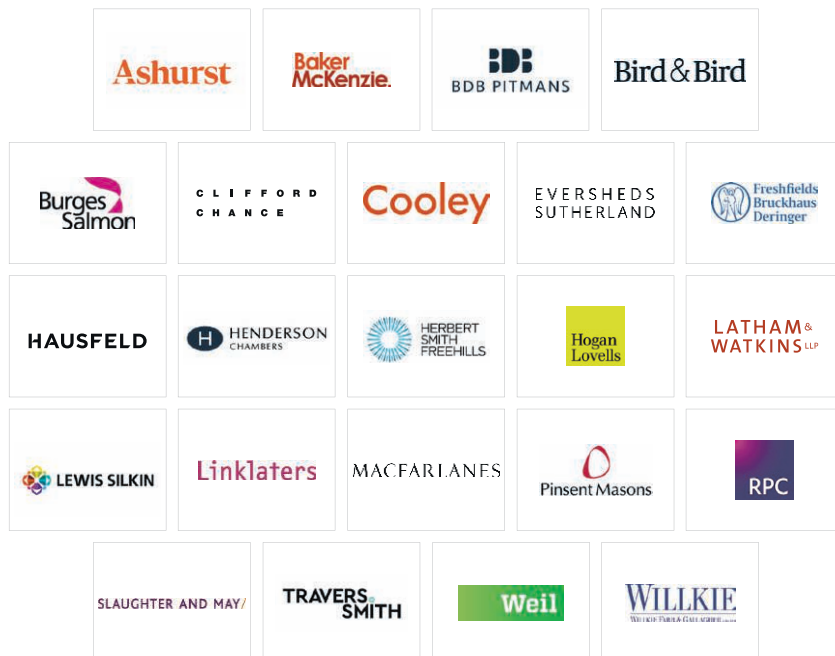
“I still had to put a £500 deposit on a room they’re demolishing next year,” they said.

The student also mentioned a clause in their lease which forbade the use of blu-tac. They queried: “Is blu-tac really the big problem?”

A St John’s College spokeswoman said: “St John’s is not aware of any outstanding maintenance issues that are the responsibility of the College to remedy.”

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You will lead a team producing online content from your handover in early January and also produce regular editions throughout Lent term including the first print issue of Easter Term. No previous experience at *Varsity* is required for the role. All students who are passionate about journalism and news reporting, have a clear editorial vision for the newspaper, a high level of expertise with Adobe InDesign and an eye for layout and design are encouraged to apply.

Please direct questions to the VarSoc President at president@varsity.co.uk or the Editors at editor@varsity.co.uk

Applications close midday on Tuesday 21st November 2023. Interviews for shortlisted candidates will be conducted on the morning of Monday 27th November 2023.

News

Around town



Romilly Norfolk

Labour councillors break party line with Gaza demonstration

Cambridge Labour city councillors attended the most recent demonstration on King's Parade calling for a ceasefire in the Israel-Gaza conflict, reports the *Cambridge Independent*. This goes against the official Labour position which calls for a temporary "humanitarian pause", with the councillors commended for breaking rank with the party. This comes after Cambridge City Councillor, Mairéad Healy, resigned from the party due to Labour's inaction over the current conflict.

Residents blast fireworks

Cambridge's Bonfire Night firework display has been branded a "disappointment" by residents online, as reported by *Cambridgeshire Live*. This comes after the traditional bonfire was cancelled this year after a complaint was made about last year's bonfire, calling it a danger to public health. Many residents complained about the poor quality of the firework show online, saying it was "clearly inferior to previous years".

Christmas light switch on

Cambridge's annual Christmas light switch on is set to take place next week, with events taking place on two separate days. The first will be on Thursday (16/11) with the turn on of the lights at Cambridge Train Station. The big event will then be on Sunday (19/11) with the turn on of the city centre lights which will happen at Market Square. The event will begin at midday with a planned lineup of several dance and music performances lined up until 5pm when the turn on is set to commence.

Cam cat found in capital after 8 months missing

A cat from Bar Hill, a village just outside Cambridge, was found in London, eight months after he went missing, as reported by *Cambridgeshire Live*. "Starky" the cat went missing in March, and had given up until they had gotten an email in October from a London animal charity saying Starky's chip had been scanned. It turns out workers in a London office had been feeding the cat since May, but decided to try and find his owners as the weather got colder. Starky has since returned home and settled back in nicely.

Institute for Manufacturing hit by pro-Palestinian activists calling for divestment

Eric Williams

Pro-Palestinian student activists disrupted Cambridge's Institute for Manufacturing yesterday (09/11), as part of ongoing pressure on the University to "sever financial ties" to Israel.

Several masked students entered the building, covering its floors with pro-divestment material, and shouting through megaphones that they "cannot stand idle" as the Institute "basks in blood money" from partnerships with "companies complicit in Israel's bombing of Gaza".

The activists, corresponding with Varsity under the pseudonym "FromRiver-ToSea", said they wanted the Institute for Manufacturing and the Cambridge Service Alliance to cut all "financial

and research ties" with corporations "supporting apartheid and the ongoing genocide of Palestinians".

The phrase "From the River to the Sea" has been the subject of controversy in the UK. Home Secretary Suella Braverman has instructed the police and crime commissioners that it could amount to a racially aggravated section 5 public order offence.

The targeting of the Department of Engineering is the latest example of pro-Palestinian advocates extending divestment demands from financial investments to research partnerships.

The Department of Engineering's Institute for Manufacturing (IfM) integrates University "research and education" with "practical application in industry", while its Cambridge Service

Alliance (CSA) offers a "unique partnership" to some of the world's largest companies.

Both have been coming under scrutiny since over 1600 students and staff demanded that Cambridge "assess and sever financial ties with Israel" in a letter delivered to the vice-chancellor last month.

Pro-Palestinian student societies have named Israeli armoured vehicle manufacturer Plasan and more well known corporations like Boeing, BAE Systems, and Caterpillar as organisations that should be included in any potential university evaluation.

According to the masked protestors, companies to be targeted should include those involved in "manufacturing, maintaining, or trading any system compo-

nents used to kill people in Gaza".

Industrial partners in the Cambridge Service Alliance have included Caterpillar and BAE systems, the latter of which was a founding member, and both corporations feature in the CSA's current promotional material.

However, the University told Varsity that the CSA has not worked with either company for several years, while declining to comment on claims made about the Institute for Manufacturing.

Activist pressure this morning is the latest example of mounting pro-Palestinian pressure on campus, after the Palestine Solidarity Society (PalSoc) called the university's refusal to "seriously engage" with divestment demands evidence of "institutional complicity in genocide".

Palestine Society denounces University 'complicity in genocide' after VC meetings

Eric Williams

Cambridge's largest pro-Palestinian society has said the University is "institutionally complicit in genocide", after "failing" to "seriously engage" with student and staff demands.

The Palestine Solidarity Society (PalSoc) said meetings with Vice-Chancellor Deborah Prentice have ended in the University "refusing to publicly condemn Israel's crimes against humanity", "call for a ceasefire", or "seriously engage with demands for divestment".

Vice-Chancellor Prentice met with PalSoc representatives after over 1,600 students and staff signed a letter demanding the university "assess and sever financial ties with Israel" last month.

Israel has been conducting a retaliatory airstrike, siege, and ground invasion campaign on Gaza following the October 7th attacks.

In that time period, over 10,800 people in Gaza have been killed, including 4,400 children, and Israeli ground forces have now encircled Gaza City.

The October 7th Hamas attacks killed 1,400 people in Israel. Hamas, a Palestinian organisation of Islamist militants, is designated a terrorist group by the United Kingdom.

In the face of university opposition, pro-Palestinian divestment advocates have cited Cambridge's removal of financial ties to the Russian Federation after the invasion of Ukraine as precedent for this type of decision.

In March 2022, Cambridge publicly released and largely brought to an end its connections with Russia through university endowment fund investments, research funding, donations, and academic partnerships.

However, considerations in relation to Israel are being made in the context of the government's anti-divestment bill, which was recently debated in parliament.

The bill will prevent public bodies from campaigning against, boycotting

or sanctioning international territories, unless that is endorsed by the UK government's own foreign policy.

MPs critical of the bill have called it a "violation of freedom of speech" and "draconian" in the House of Commons.

However, PalSoc have said that they "reiterate their demands" as "the death toll in Gaza continues to mount", stating "divestment is not impossible" and that they "will not be silenced".

Divestment activism on campus has been gathering speed in recent days, with protestors reiterating demands at the third week of large demonstrations. Meanwhile, isolated incidents of student activism have seen the words "Boycott Israel" projected onto King's college chapel and a small group of masked protestors storming the Institute for Manufacturing.

The pro-Palestinian society also said meetings with Vice-Chancellor Prentice have culminated in the University "refusing to publicly condemn Israel's crimes against humanity" or "call for a ceasefire".

This comes after scandals over Cambridge's official statements on events in the Middle East has triggered disgust amongst both Israeli and Gazan students.

Last month's widely-signed pro-Palestinian letter demanded the University replace its official position of recognising the "loss of innocent lives in Israel" but only "impacts of escalating violence in Gaza" with an explicit "denunciation of inhumane measures imposed on Gaza by Israel".

These calls have been left unanswered, according to PalSoc, who said the University has "refused to amend their earlier statement's dehumanising language".

At the Vice-Chancellor meetings, Cambridge did reportedly commit to a "zero tolerance approach to all forms of ethno-religious harassment" and "affirming everyone's rights to hold and express their views within the law".

The University of Cambridge was contacted for comment.



▲ DANIEL HILTON



▲ DANIEL HILTON

'Cucumbers and cloves' cure Homerton's 400 million year-old silverfish

Wilf Vall and Amelia Platt

Homerton has advised its students to decorate their rooms with cinnamon, cloves, and cucumber after multiple students have been moved following silverfish infestations.

The College assured its students that silverfish are “primitive wingless insects” which have “been around for over 400 million years” and are “no cause for concern,” in an email from Homerton’s Tutorial Office Manager, Beverly Watts.

Homerton’s maintenance team has sprayed accommodation with cedar oil to “deter a new population” of silverfish from “re-colonising” the College.

Multiple rooms in the College’s South Court accommodation block have been treated after reports of silverfish infestations.

The College has now informed students that they will have to remain in their rooms even if they become infested with silverfish, as no more accommodation is available.

One student had to spend the night in a spare room due to an infestation, with their mattress also being replaced by the

college, they told *Varsity*.

“Silverfish are not a danger to health and there is no need to move,” Watts’ email added.

After confirming that no more room swaps are available, Watts assured students that silverfish have “shared spaces with us for thousands of years but like dust mites and other small invertebrates, mostly go unnoticed.”

Watts provided student with a list of “things that silverfish don’t like the smell of,” implying that students stock their room with these to self-medicate any infestations.

Silverfish are small, nocturnal insects. They prefer a diet filled with sugar and carbohydrates and can be found in paper, soap residues and dust. If left untreated, silverfish can cause damage to belongings.

“Small numbers of silverfish are not unusual in a home and are not a cause for concern: they do not mean that a building is unsanitary or unsuitable for people to live in,” the email continued.

Students have taken to the Homerton Confessions page on Facebook to voice their concerns about alleged silverfish

infestations.

One post declared: “Anyone else in SC got silverfish? I’ve found 2-3 per week since term started, sick of it.”

Another post stated: “At least 6 people have had to leave SC cuz of silverfish infestation.... Come on hom, sort it out!”

The College has confirmed that South Court will be treated at the start of the Christmas Vacation, once rooms have been vacated.

Other tips on how to prevent silverfish infestations given by the College included using essential oils and keeping orange peel in a dish.

A spokesperson for Homerton College said: “We have received a handful of reports of harmless silverfish insects in South Court Rooms. These rooms have been swiftly treated and the whole building will be further treated at the start of the Christmas Vacation, when all the rooms are empty.”

“Small numbers of silverfish are not uncommon, and they do not mean that a building is insanitary. Although unsightly to some, Silverfish are not harmful to people as they do not bite, sting nor carry disease,” they added.

VC holds first free speech dialogue

Olivia Newberry

Cambridge’s new Vice-Chancellor held the first of her free speech Dialogues on Wednesday, which canvassed views of academics and invitees on assisted dying.

This was the pilot run of the VC’s new scheme, which aims to create environments in which people can “actually learn” from an “honest and open” exchange of views, Dr Prentice told *Varsity*.

In her first annual address, Dr Prentice said that the dialogues will “provide a public forum for the exchange of conflicting and possibly controversial views”.

Three speakers engaged in conversation, with each offering a different perspective on legalising euthanasia in the UK.

Selwyn’s Master, Roger Mosey, chaired the discussion, posing questions to each of the speakers. The Chair of Dignity in Dying, Dr Jonathan Romain, spoke with Dr Amy Proffitt, talking on behalf of Dying Well and Dr Zoë Fritz, a Wellcome Fellow in Society and Ethics at Cambridge.

The Vice-Chancellor opened the dialogue by affirming that nothing in the law is “taboo”. Dr Prentice stressed that this new initiative is by no means associated with the Cambridge Union, nor does it seek to replicate its format of debate.

Prentice instead wished to allow speakers to talk with each other and acknowledge the sensitivity and nuance of the subject proposed.

In response to Romain’s points of having the right to autonomy in death, Dr Amy Proffitt concluded that “autonomy is relational”. She proposed that assisted dying was not a solution to suffering, rather gross improvement in palliative care should be distributed in the UK to reduce pain and see that patients have the “privilege” to live until the end naturally.

Proffitt drew upon fears that public discussion of the topic was similar to that of Brexit, in that popular opinion may have been influenced by misinformation. Currently, opinion polls have shown that there is public support for the idea.

A Government bill on assisted dying is currently passing through the House of Lords, and has entered its second reading. The bill would “enable adults who are terminally ill to be provided at their request with specified assistance to end their own life”.

Speaking at this first pilot run of Dr Prentice’s new free speech scheme, the VC said she is eager to continue to locate a “common ground” between people who may seem “far apart”.

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News

Girton accommodation squeaky clean

Students at Girton College are awaiting a response following reports of a “rat infestation” in some accommodation blocks. Students told *Varsity* they “woke up to a shock” as first-year students encountered rodents in student kitchens, corridors, and laundry rooms. Girton denies an “infestation”, telling *Varsity* that “three incidents earlier this term” were dealt with swiftly by environmental control contractors. However, students have told *Varsity* that direct correspondence from the College would be “helpful”.

New language programme for Ukraine

Teams from the University and Cambridge University Press & Assessment have designed a new English learning platform for Ukrainian learners. The platform, based on CU Press and Assessment’s Empower course, will support Ukraine’s Future Perfect programme, which seeks to “make English the official language of international communication in Ukraine” and improve Ukrainians’ English skills. The initiative was launched as part of the University’s ‘Help for Ukraine’ support package.

Newnham sells out first-ever BME formal

Newnham has held its first-ever BME formal, which sold out within 12 hours. Students submitted choices for the menu to celebrate and share their cultures. The formal featured three guest speakers, as well as a gospel music performance. Maggie Semple, OBE, FGI spoke on the language of race; Stephanie Adeyemo discussed resilience in her academic journey; and Professor Manali Desai, Newnham’s BAME Advisor, spoke of efforts towards making the College more inclusive.

University Hospitals Arts team gets silverware

Cambridge University Hospitals’ Arts programme has won an award for its arts support. CUH was awarded ‘Best Collaborative Arts Project (Performance)’ at the Building Better Healthcare Awards. Patients and staff participated in art workshops at University Museums and trips to cancer care centres around the UK to learn about art in cancer care, *Cambridge News* has reported. These insights will inform the design of the Cambridge Cancer Research Hospital, which is currently being planned.

Student abused online after Shapiro scuffle

A student has faced online backlash after he challenged Ben Shapiro, a right-wing commentator, on his views on the conflict in Israel and Gaza. During Shapiro’s talk at the Union last Tuesday (31/10) Jewish student Louis Wilson-Goldberg questioned Shapiro’s view that Israel currently “has its doors open to peace”. Shapiro had condemned the support for Palestine as support for the terrorist group Hamas. Wilson-Goldberg’s argument in response was branded “woke apologist nonsense” by participants of Taglit Birthright, a heritage trip to Israel, in texts seen by *Varsity*. One member of the public called the student a “self-hating Jew” on Instagram. Wilson-Goldberg told *Varsity*: “It’s extremely hard to speak on Israel as a Jew,” citing the pressures to show absolute support for Israel, and how speaking out risks isolating friends and family.



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Oxbridge female VCs make history

The first concurrent female Vice-Chancellors of Cambridge and Oxford have shared a platform for the first time since taking on their roles earlier this year. Professor Deborah Prentice (Cambridge) and Professor Irene Tracey (Oxford) addressed Murray Edwards College’s Women in STEM conference, sharing their plan to develop more collaboration between the two Universities. The event marks the first collaboration between the two VCs and the first time both institutions have been led by women at the same time. The conference also featured the Shadow Science Minister, Chi Onwurah, who spoke about how Labour plans to diversify STEM in the UK.

Letters lost at sea

A trove of French love letters has been found and translated by a Pembroke Professor, after remaining unread for 265 years. “I cannot wait to possess you,” and “I think more about you than you about me,” are lines among the letters sent to French sailors by their lovers, families, and friends in the years 1757-8, during the Seven Years’ War. The letters were seized, unread, by the British Navy, taken to London, and never opened. Professor Renaud Morieux, a History fellow, said that the experience of opening and translating these letters was deeply moving: “These letters are about universal human experiences [...] They reveal how we all cope with major life challenges.”

Peonies to Penguins

A gardener at Newnham College has set out on an expedition in Antarctica. Jerome Viard is embarking on a six-month mission to Antarctica, acting as a wildlife monitor for the UK Antarctic Heritage Trust. Viard will be responsible for monitoring 1000 gentoo penguins, as well as whales and seals, reporting the data to the British Antarctic Survey. During the selection process, Viard was tested on his ability to run around with a wheelbarrow filled with sand and Jerry cans of water. This didn’t faze Viard, who told *Newnham News*: “Well, that’s what I do all day as a gardener at Newnham!” Viard continued: “Where I’m going now, it’s mostly ice and snow. It’s going to be a big change [from] Newnham,”

Goodbye to the Grafton Centre?

As the Beehive and the Grafton Centre face major redevelopment, **Nick James** takes the pulse of opinion on Cambridge's changing urban landscape

During lunch breaks at the Cambridge Scientific Instrument Company, Peter Kruger and his colleagues would get on their motorbikes and race around Cambridge. They would fly through every part of the city at 60 miles per hour (except when passing the police station, of course). That was the 1970s, Peter tells me, and those “hedonistic times” have passed. The city has changed and the route they used to race was replaced by big shopping centres. But soon, the very developments that disrupted Peter’s route could vanish as well.

Railpen estimates the Beehive redevelopment will add £650 million to Cambridge’s economy

While Peter and his colleagues sped around Cambridge, the city was in the midst of a bitter battle that had been brewing for decades. Cambridge Council proposed the construction of a new shopping centre to revitalise the Kite area, but the existing community ties initially proved too strong to break. The Kite Community Action Group — supported by the likes of Clive James and Michael Palin — were unrelenting in their dissent and held off the development for decades.

Nevertheless, the community could only hold out for so long, and in 1983 the Grafton Shopping Centre was open for business. In the process of the development, a number of terraced houses, shops, and an entire community

was destroyed.

Despite the intense struggle to open the centre, a planning application was submitted three months ago to close the doors of the Grafton. In its place will be a life sciences hub that’s four storeys tall. The area will be completely redesigned with new public spaces, public artworks, restaurants, a hotel, and a refurbished cinema surrounding the labs. There will still be some shops remaining, but they will take up less than a fifth of the renovated space.

The Grafton is not the only shopping centre set to go: Railpen, the owners of the Beehive Centre (currently home to Asda and B&M), also submitted a planning application this summer to redevelop the space into offices, and 11 new buildings for life science. The big stores will be replaced by 22 small shops and cafes on the ground floor, as well as a community pavilion for local groups. The car park will be completely replaced by a wetland area in the hopes of encouraging people to use more sustainable modes of transport to access the area.

The fact Cambridge’s retail centres are disappearing may not be surprising given the national trends post-COVID. The Grafton’s planning application notes that the reason for the redevelopment is that the shopping centre has failed to fully recover since the pandemic; footfall is 12% lower than it was in 2019, and 13 retail units have been vacant for more than two years.

John O’Shea, the manager of the Grafton Centre said, “The centre was opened in 1983 – which was a very different world, not just for retailers. The Grafton has lost anchor stores to national closure programmes, and more people are shopping online.” However, he insists “local people still use and like the Grafton’s convenient and affordable shops, and those are the kinds of stores that the centre will focus on, rather than competing with the Grand Arcade.”

The issue of vacant retail units and decreased footfall is also true for the Beehive. Nick Vose, the

communications director working on the project, told me they were redeveloping because there is now “too much big-box retail in one location.”

“But you don’t want super-clean, super-modern, super-expensive everywhere, do you?”

He added: “while the Beehive may look full, the situation is that a number of those tenants are on short-term leases, or are on less-than-market rent. I think really shopping habits are only going one way, so something needs to be done to readdress the balance.”

When I asked Nick why they were pivoting to life sciences, he said, “That is the growth area for Cambridge.”

He continued: “We feel that these uses and science in general, should be brought to the city as opposed to the outskirts. It’s just far more sustainable and also far more attractive to life science occupiers.”

What will these changes mean for the city? The most immediate impact will be the loss of big stores. Many of these stores have become staples for affordable student shopping, and attract vast numbers of shoppers from neighbouring villages into the city. There is also concern for the future of the charity shops on Burleigh Street, favourite haunts of Cambridge students; despite not being part of the Grafton, the redevelopment could push up nearby rents and force the charity shops out.

However, the development of life science centres within the town centre may also bring some benefits, particularly for students. I spoke to one natural science undergraduate who told me the new bioscience centre will be a very convenient place for science stu-

dents to undertake internships when compared to the other centres on the outskirts of town.

The redevelopments are also likely to have a huge economic impact: Railpen estimates the Beehive redevelopment will add £650 million to Cambridge’s economy and provide over 6,000 jobs.

Despite these potential benefits, some locals remain sceptical about Cambridge’s continual pivot to life science and the growing influence of Silicon Fen on the city. Peter, who has given up his motorbike riding days and is now in retirement, is not optimistic.

Peter went on to run a technology start-up in Cambridge as well as write for a computer magazine during the dot-com boom and bust of the 1990s. Peter knows the industry well, and he’s fearful Cambridge may be experiencing its own dot-com bubble with life sciences. “For now, the labs may be filled, but for how long will that last?”

John O’Shea, however, says: “the lab space will also bring thousands of people to the area every day [...] A community science classroom will bring families and school groups here too. That will bring footfall.”

Steve O’Connor, who co-runs Cam-Creatives, a networking group that puts on talks about art and science developments in Cambridge, is particularly concerned about the Grafton redevelopment plans, telling me they are “dull and not innovative at all.”

One of the most worrying trends Steve has seen is the lack of funding for the arts in Cambridge. “Although people might think Cambridge has a good art scene, it’s a really high-level one. So unless you are on the books of something like Cambridge Contemporary Art, there aren’t many exhibition opportunities.”

Steve says he knows many artists who have had to leave the city because they couldn’t find anywhere to work or exhibit. He’s concerned about Cambridge focusing too much on scientific industries and leaving the creatives behind: “Grafton was a missed opportunity to create something”.

There is concern with the Grafton

development that local residents will be left behind. For people who regularly shop there and have close communal ties, it will all disappear. Steve agreed and said, “I can see some people would say good riddance to some of those places, but you don’t want super-clean, super-modern, super-expensive everywhere, do you? It doesn’t feel very homely.”

John O’Shea insists, “the plans will make the Grafton a nicer place to visit, with greener streets, better cycling routes, and new public squares. The gym and cinema are staying. That’s what will bring more people to the shops – to get the community experience, cafes, and leisure offer you can’t get online.”

“I really believe that this proposal will strengthen the retail offer at the Grafton for the long term so we can continue to serve the local community,” he continued.

These concerns about homeliness are something the Beehive redevelopment team is keen to address: their planning application talks extensively about community, and they intend on implementing a variety of community initiatives including a youth centre, skate parks, communal areas, and outreach programs. Railpen is also partnering with Indie Cambridge to make sure that many of the new stores are run by local businesses.

Like in the 1970s, it is undeniable that Cambridge is moving on. Local objections may slow things down, but the tide will continue to turn away from retail centres and toward life science and office development. The big stores that have become the hallmark of affordable student shopping are going, but lots of new opportunities to revitalise communal areas and improve investment will come with the changes. The question is, will the retail replacements stand the test of time, or fall victim to the urban landscape’s next upheaval?



CGI rendering of the proposed plans for the Beehive Centre
▲ RAILPEN WITH PERMISSION FOR VARSITY

Features

Smoking not yet stubbed out in Cambridge

Recalling his fresh-eyed conception of literary smokers, *Varsity* archivist **Joshua Shortman** makes his way through Cambridge's smoky past and present



▲ WIKIMEDIA COMMONS / GARY TODDS

I first felt I was really at Cambridge about a week into term. Walking around college still felt as though I'd escaped from a guided tour; matriculation photos were yet to be hidden behind bookshelves in faint embarrassment, and in the meantime, my newly found friends and I had gone to a pub. Cigarettes were passed around, and the boy I was sat next to asked me if I smoked. "Me neither," he replied, lighting up a cigarette. "Well, only in a Parisian way."

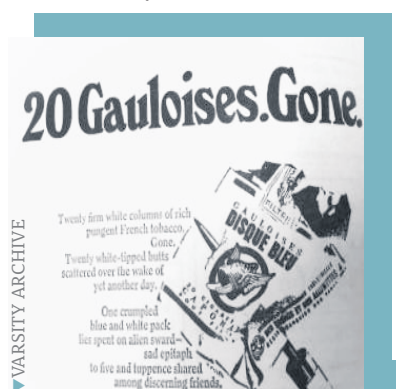
This, essentially, was what the literature had promised. It seemed likely he'd read his fair share of Oscar Wilde. Was maybe even the next Oscar Wilde. And the cigarette, hanging from his hand like an afterthought, only seemed

aren't referenced explicitly, because they're just part of the scenery. Smoking is a descriptive shortcut; every pub is 'smoke filled' beforehand, the atmosphere one of 'smoky intimacy'. The brief and deeply unpopular provost of King's, who repainted the college bar (worried that the previous red was "intimidating to right wing students") even described the bar in its pre-reactionary era as a 'den of drinking and smoking'. Initially frustrated that my searches for 'smoke' in the digital archives were overwhelmingly overturning Footlights Smokers, it took me an embarrassingly long time to realise that this was for the same reason as the pubs – that the questionable improv and RP punchlines of Footlights history were all delivered through clouds of smoke.

Articles explicitly about smoking arrive in the 2000s. We can speculate that this is partly self-romanticism of the student press – a fresher's guide from 2004 for example, writes: "if you don't drink coffee or smoke cigarettes, it's probably best to start sooner rather than later, otherwise you will look out of place with your clean teeth and calm demeanour ... both make you impossibly cool and alert, and are a good substitute for food". Generally however, there is a more evidential explanation: this is the result of the smoking ban. Statistics finally prove what leafing through the yellowed pages of pre-millennium *Varsity* could not; in June 2004 (when the ban was proposed), Cambridge is hailed "smoking capital of Britain", accompanied by research showing that "people living in the CB2 1 area, which includes colleges such as Trinity, King's, [Caius] and Downing, spend more on cigarettes each year than anybody else in the country."

The ban therefore, when it is first suggested, is deeply controversial. *Varsity* quotes a 70-year-old smoker in an edition from 2006, as he protests: "I think they've

got a cheek; it's taking away a freedom." He's speaking in response to the banning of smoking within Addenbrooke's Hospital. Some of the most vicious and splenetic student press I have ever read is in this line. The objections of 'Proud Smoker William Gietzmann' ("first they banned hunting with dogs...and now this"), tame in comparison to those made by Mary Bowers (a former editor of *Varsity*, later to work for *the Times* and be run over by a bus), who writes that



"Britons are growing up, like good little children, under the sheltered wing of Daddy Blair in our New Labour nursery", and ends the article with a threat to "a peachy-skinned, clear voiced and inwardly trembling member of the JCR" that she will "put a pack of Camels in their pigeonhole".

Looking past the nicotine-stained sputum of the student press, there appears to be a genuine concern from wider Cambridge about the impact that the ban will have on the local economy.

Pub landlords are interviewed in 2005: Paul Wells, (a local brewer) anticipated a "25-30 per cent reduction in trade if the ban goes ahead"; Dan Lacy (manager of the Fort St George on Midsummer Common) is similarly pessimistic. Mary Bowers summarises the future with a sketch of her friend Richard: 'the last bastion of ill-health-for-pleasure, [standing] outside in the rain, waving through the smeary window, soggy Sovereign in hand. It is a sorry sight indeed.'

Much as some inner literary part of me thought Cambridge would be draped in chain-smoking dilettantes, realistically, this is the image I expected too. Nobody smoked at my school – least of all the nerds who wanted to go to Oxbridge (my mate Noah and I). Me and Cambridgeshire GP Paul Sackin had been reading from the same NHS waiting-room posters; he writes in 2005 (in response to the pub landlords) that 'a lot of smokers welcome a total ban because most of them want to stop and they find it very, very difficult'. And yet (discarding the papers, and returning to the pub I began with), practically everyone I know in Cambridge smokes. Admittedly, I mainly know humanities students: there is something to be said for the reason that

“
Could there be a drug better designed to dope the Cambridge undergraduate than the cigarette?

so few medics smoke. A medical answer exists too, to the question of why so many students in Cambridge smoke. However – not only would it make for a boring article – but I don't think nicotine addiction explains what both Paul Sackin and Dan Lacy got wrong in 2005.

I know very few genuine 'pack-a-day' smokers in Cambridge. The principal reason for this is probably price: while there are almost certainly students here who could afford it, my suspicion is that students with that sort of money are fueling

rather more expensive addictions. The reality is that for most of us, paradoxically, affording a nicotine addiction requires giving up cigarettes – or at least smoking considerably fewer of them. This is the

test of a nicotine addiction that most Cambridge students fail: because they prioritise the aesthetic over the addiction. To actually sustain an addiction requires the use of alternatives, and while outside of London and Cambridge this is

the norm, few Cambridge students are willing to walk around in a cloud of artificial vapour. Universally, the students I've talked to about this article despise vapes: for their environmental consequences, for their unresearched effects, but always principally, for their image.

Image is a problem for Cambridge students. As Cambridge students, we are by definition either desperate try-hards, or embarrassingly rich. Many of us are probably both. And it is this image – not the ache of a nicotine addiction – which we hope to escape from when we smoke. As a close friend put it: "the middle classes in Cambridge are divided by a) those who love their parents (don't smoke), and b) those who loathe their parents (do)". We might add a third category, which probably includes most of Cambridge – c) those who love their parents, but would prefer it if nobody realised (do). Talking to another friend about their smoking habit, they mentioned that most of their friends at home "took up smoking ... almost in an act of rebellion against their parents", excepting "all my friends who are working-class, [who] took up smoking almost in solidarity with their parents, because their parents were smoking and that's how they got into it".

Could there be a drug better designed to dope the Cambridge undergraduate than the cigarette? Simultaneously, one gets to rebel from one's parents, and appear to be working-class. Forget the fact that most working-class students are smoking through plastic tubes rather than paper ones; as the authors of a pamphlet in the 60's titled *On the 'Poverty' of student life* write, "the student Bohemian (and every student likes to pretend that they are a Bohemian at heart) clings desperately to their false and degraded version of individual revolt". Smoking is just such an act of revolt. It is an aestheticization of poverty; it displays a disregard for authority that no authority would ever care about, and it is irrational. This is perhaps the most important part. It is the opposite of 'trying hard': it is a rejection of the sort of worrying about one's future that consumes the aspirational school child. As Richard Klien (author of *Cigarettes are Sublime*) suggests, 'few people would smoke if cigarettes were actually good for you'.

It is this, that the morose pub owners and hopeful GPs of 2005 failed to anticipate. The paradox of the cigarette ban is that it has only served to increase the aesthetic potential of the cigarette. And, far from eliminating social smoking, it has given smoking a more defined social role than it previously possessed. Cambridge is a tricky place to fit into, and not only does imbibing a cigarette make you feel for a second as though you might be part of a great chain of smoking thinkers and students, but it makes you part of a group. It has the potential to turn 'nothing' into 'something' – as I discovered over the holidays, when I found myself smoking just to avoid staring blankly out of my window. Nobody in Cambridge has ever asked me if I'd like to go and stand outside with them for a bit. It is far easier – it turns out – to ask, "shall we go for a smoke?".

“
Every pub is 'smoke filled' beforehand, and the atmosphere one of 'smoky intimacy'

to complete the image. Since becoming *Varsity* Archivist, this image is one I've tried to find in our old print – and it has proved more difficult than I expected. It's not that *Varsity* doesn't live up to the literature – the front page of our second edition (a report of a student in a silk dressing gown being thrown into King's fountain) might actually be directly ripped from *Brideshead Revisited* – but smoking itself is rarely referenced explicitly. Eventually, I began to realise that the absence of articles about smoking wasn't an indication of a smokeless past, but rather the opposite: cigarettes



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Comment

The Cambridge cocktail: ethanol and elitism

From free wine at formals to boozy supervisions, it's difficult to escape drinking at the University, argues **Ezra Izer**

Every single Cambridge student, no matter how loudly they proclaim that they are in fact “the natural predator of the Union hack,” will flirt with some internalised feelings of Cambridge exceptionalism eventually. A young adult



simply cannot have their dinners served to them at the tables of a medieval dining hall multiple times a week and maintain that they have not found themselves even a little bit romanced by the stained glass. The fact of the matter is that the unique style of a Cambridge education does, indeed, manifest in its social peculiarities – those anecdotes that genuinely do differ somewhat from those of your friends over at Nottingham or Cardiff or Bristol. It is therefore not particularly surprising that the drinking culture of its students, like so many other things about the University of Cambridge, is in some way anomalous.

The very want to reject the institution's reputation of atypicality pushes its students to such extreme lengths in order to offset it; desires to prove that a Cambridge degree is not earned at the expense of the ‘archetypal’ university experience is ironically the very thing leading its students to set themselves aside as unique. The result is, overwhelmingly, a paradoxically uniform approach to even the most spontaneous of nights out and a relationship with alcohol that is characterised very much by extremes.

The key perpetrator in this is no doubt the unique pacemaker of the white-hot, eight week Cambridge term. Due to the breakneck momentum of term time, it may be argued that there falls a background pressure to make the most of every opportunity imaginable during term time prior to each term's conclusion. Alcoholic events are no exception, providing your average ‘work hard, play hard’ man-tra zombie

with a timetableable affirmation of ‘normalcy’. By sequencing drinking in this way, a week's worth of drinking is shoehorned into a single nominated night or two; a night's worth into a couple of hours. As a result, many students end up getting exceptionally drunk within concentrated periods in order to still end up in bed with sufficient time to make the next morning's lecture or supervision. This predictable yet concentrated rhythm, signposted by its slew

of ritualised club nights (your ‘Wevses’ and ‘Lola-coasters’), perhaps voids these nights of their impulse and diversity. This only enhances the patterns mentioned previously, with many students compensating for the fact that ‘Cambridge night-life’ is an oxymoron by drinking excessively whilst partak-



are able to metabolise it more gradually. Clubbing, particularly for those at major urban universities, routinely slips into the smaller hours of five or even six am – an unthinkable prospect for the Cambridge student that typically sees lights-out at three and, owing to the admittedly mediocre and repetitive nature of nightlife in this city, is usually grateful for it. In short, there is a want to party like students do elsewhere; a contradictory need to uphold the tokens of Cambridge responsibility that make doing so impossible.

It is worth noting, nevertheless, that a sizeable portion of the University population does not drink. Although pressure to actively do so truly depends on individual experience, we must consider the runoff from the presence of alcohol occasionally being used as a step-in for sociability. The equating of drinking regularly to ‘reclaiming’ the ‘typicality’ of a non-Cambridge university lifestyle can be damaging.

Furthermore, it means that anticipation surrounding several of the cal-

dar's most substantial events have grown synonymous with alcoholic liberty. One would not be surprised if non-alcoholic groups feel themselves slightly dislodged at times from aspects of the wider Cambridge social ecosystem. While there are no doubt tight-knit communities to combat this, not drinking in this city may certainly present its unique challenges for those who still desire to occupy spaces where drinking is commonplace. Sometimes an especially bad Woo Wednesday is simply unsalvageable while sober, a formal a little too boozy to feel entirely integrated into conversation, or an Oshu C-Sunday interview a little too lucid.

A reconsideration of this university's alcohol consumption, therefore, is due.

It is irrelevant whether one has never once had the displeasure of visiting the box that is MASH's dancefloor, or finds themselves on a first-name basis with the Revs bouncers – we must all work to ensure drinking takes place responsibly and look out for our friends while we do so. To put it plainly: Cambridge is, for better or worse, a distinct experience; sacrificing your health and relationships in order to only suggest otherwise is just not worth doing.

ing in it. Hence, in attempting to make a club's atmosphere as instantly effective as possible, Cambridge students start measuring out the night's capacity for excitement in cans and bottles.

At other universities, where the nights often stretch out longer, students tend to stagger the rate at which they drink. This ensures that, although they likely consume an equal or even greater number of units on evenings out, they



EMILY LAWSON-TODD

Head to head:

Love them or hate them, they're one click away on one of Cambridge's most stressful traditions

Hugh Jones

If you want to know whether the University ought to tell students how they ranked in their exams, there is only one question you need to ask: “Is that piece of information useful?” For my money, the answer is yes. Marks and degree classification on their own are vague metrics. Knowing whether you were above average in your year is clearly

stressful. I understand this. I was very unhappy at how I did in first year; if you had just told me that I'd got a 2.i then I probably would have spent a lot less time moping in the toilets of the PR firm I was interning at when I got the news.

The important point though, is that I wasn't sad because I had been told my rank. I was sad because I had done badly, and because I had a serious case of overconfidence. Both of these things – my incompetence and my pride – were my problem, whether I knew it or not. Having my confidence knocked was painful – but it needed knocking.

Not telling students their ranking in case it upsets them is no different from not telling them their marks or their classification. Your ranking is part of your result. If you find it disappointing then you either need to work harder next year, or get a grip and realise that you are never going to top Tripos. Both of these pieces of information are hard to swallow – but that doesn't mean they aren't worth knowing.

“It's hard to swallow - but that doesn't mean it's not worth knowing”

helpful, and students who do really well deserve to know how close they came to topping Tripos. Those who barely scraped a 2.i might be spurred to invest more time in their degrees by seeing how close they came to the bottom.

Of course, the objection isn't really that rankings don't matter. The objection is that being told your rank is



EMILY LAWSON-TODD

Sertraline, side-effects

We shouldn't let the stigmas and fear of se-

Heidi Atkins

A lot of my life was spent thinking of depression as a big, gross, muddy swamp. It was a disgusting pool that I knew I could get out of but it was so warm, so grotesquely familiar, and would take so much energy to wade through that I resolved to stay entirely still and hope I wouldn't sink any further. Occasionally someone would float the idea of an antidepressant rope to help pull me out. This suggestion was always met with terror. Antidepressants meant calling the GP to talk about my feelings, actually asking for help and being met by a long list of side effects as soon as I started. No, much better to stay in the swamp and hope I didn't sink any further.

To no one's surprise, I did sink. Alone for the first time in my life, having to navigate the quasi-adulthood of being at university, and managing a workload I had never before seen, it is not shocking that by Lent term I was at an all time low. I was unable to function and, crucially, complete essays. Like any good Cambridge student, this tipped me over the edge. Sure, depression had stopped me from showering, socialising, leaving my room, getting changed, but it had never come inbetween me and studying before. Amid a terror of

losing precious academic validation, I tearfully called the GP: “Uh sorry, I think I'm having a bit of a breakdown, can I see someone...uhhhh... like now please? I'm not very well.” Within an hour and a half I had my first prescription of sertraline.

After I took my first pill, I sat on the edge of my bed waiting for my brain to start shutting down. Almost any piece of media I've watched that featured antidepressants contained a laundry list of negatives. Right wing pundits like Tammy Bruce, Tucker Carlson and Republican Representative Marjorie Taylor Greene have urged governments to “study SSRI's and other factors that cause mass shootings”, their rhetoric stoking fears that antidepressants are capable of changing a person to the point that they commit mass violence. After Lisa Simpson gets prescribed them in a season 20 episode of the show, she begins to hallucinate and loses her intelligence and passions. Even my friends refer to antidepressants as an ‘extreme’ step, citing a terror that they will be changed entirely. I believed this was the end for me; gone was the Heidi of old and all that would remain was an antidepressant fuelled husk.

My first week on medication cor-

Tripes rankings

way on Camsis. Our writers go-head-to-head
ons

Maddy Browne

We have our fair share of traditions here at Cambridge. A lot of these are relatively harmless. I can cope with gowns and matriculation and even Latin when it comes with a three course meal. They're almost cute compared to the rankings system. This goes beyond the archaic when a whole year's worth of struggle is boiled down to one number.

Admittedly, grades are also one number. However, using grade boundaries creates an assessment of work that is defined against a recognised standard and against mark schemes. These boundaries are something that we and employers will recognise that doesn't reek of the Oxbridge superiority complex.

Are classmarks not enough? Apparently not if you're applying for post-graduate funding here. The fact that applications use rankings instead of grades delegitimizes student effort by judging someone on an arbitrary, frankly unnecessary value, instead of a nationally acknowledged grading system. This seems vastly at odds with the multifaceted and holistic undergraduate criteria, which doesn't assume that there is a level academic playing field.

The university tells us that we don't have to look at it. It then puts the ranking a single click away from the result that should

matter more. Of course I was going to check it! It taps into the part of my brain which is constantly comparing myself with others, fighting to do well as if that one mark between me and the person above me will make all the difference. If I'm trying to readjust how I measure achievement, then

“We should no longer tolerate destructive traditions like this

a reductive number is only going to set me back. The university needs to recognise that its cohort of perpetual overachievers are not going to benefit from excessive competition. I'm tired of falling back into bad habits of comparison, habits that this tradition seems intent on exacerbating.

If they are not useful for us, or good for our mental health, then we should no longer tolerate destructive traditions. No amount of candlelit formal dinners can get the university out of this one.

ts, and The Simpsons

eking help deny us a better future, says

roborated some of my fears. I was entirely checked out of what was happening around me and spent supervisions staring out of windows, trailing off mid sentence, and forgetting all normal social rules as supervisors' names were replaced by “man”, “dude”, and in one especially awful case, “bruv”. Most awfully, though, I still struggled to get work done. Terror set in: I thought I'd have to drop out. If I couldn't think straight, there was no way Cambridge was the place for me.

I sent a nervous email to my DOS asking to come and talk to her about my fears. She had taken antidepressants throughout her time at Cambridge and, for the first time, I found myself having a conversation about antidepressants that didn't scare the shit out of me. “You'll be fine,” she said, “you're just going to have to find something else to motivate you rather than anxiety.” She was right, the last 18 years of my life I'd been relying on that screaming anxious voice in the back of my head to get things done. Sertraline, like most SSRIs, functions also as an anti-anxiety medication, and all I needed to do was stop allowing fear to write my essays.

Gradually, I began to adapt to my dose and my spaced out mind came back

down to earth. My brain fog receded and, for the first time in a while, getting up in the morning didn't make me cry. Depression eats away at all your interests and I'd lost my passion for my subject, but sertraline brought that back. I didn't need fear anymore, I actually enjoyed being a nerd. Nothing was a slog anymore; I could get up, head to the library and see my friends without the weight of depression trying to drag me back to rot in bed.

In the first few weeks of being fully acclimated to the medication I was increasingly annoyed at my neurotypical friends: this is how they were feeling the whole time? Quickly, though, my annoyance switched to the rhetoric I'd been surrounded by and believed for years. I am not here to deny the very real side effects some people experience when on antidepressants; there is no ‘one size fits all’ decision for people suffering from mental illness, but the culture of fear that surrounds antidepressants prevents people from seeking help. For years of my life I have avoided antidepressants because I had been bombarded with the idea they would destroy me. I am very proud to say, though, I've never been better.



▲ PIERRE SELIM WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

Cambridge puts the 'late' into 'fashionably late'

Cambridge already has a weird relationship with time, **Patrick Dolan** asks if it's so bad that students are perpetually late

Back home, I was never particularly revered for my punctuality – so my parents found it unbelievable when I claimed to be ‘one of the more on time ones’ here. I vividly recall my first-year experience during Michaelmas as I rushed to a 9am at Sidge, only to find the lecturer absent on my arrival. It was at that moment that I realised Cambridge, with its unique sense of time, was a perfect fit for me.

An epidemic of pervasive tardiness continues to infect the Cambridge bubble every day. The irony of the procrastination of this article, in part delayed due to a wilful ignorance of our collective struggle with time management, mirrors the broader issue. Peers saunter into lectures late, lecturers send last-minute emails to apologise for their time keeping, and occasionally faculty supervisors keep students for a few extra minutes after the bell. Consequently, students find themselves perpetually running late, trapped in a cycle where leaving class early is socially awkward, and a late arrival to the next one becomes the norm. The so-called ‘Cambridge hour’ generously allots an additional five minutes for transitioning between contact hours. Yet, it seems more like an acknowledgement of its habitually late target audience, albeit a subtle acceptance that most individuals will not arrive on time regardless. Supervisors also tend to exhibit considerable flexibility, often accepting work after the deadline if given advance notice. While this leniency promotes the idea that it is okay to take your time, which should be an upheld belief in Cambridge's hustle and bustle, it's crucial for the other party not to be burdened in the process of doing so.

Being fashionably late extends beyond academic realms too. Lateness is so rampant here that people, including me, are late to things they actually enjoy attending. If pres start at a certain time, expect to see everyone at least 30 minutes after the specified hour. Catering staff have refused entry to some of my fellow college peers to formal dinner because they've shown up too close to the

start of the meal. And of course, lateness to a Cambridge club will either mean refused entry or a fast track through the queue – though, with that one, one will never know.

Yet punctuality does hold a significant weight, especially in a place like Cambridge. While minor delays are usually tolerated, consistent tardiness and prolonged waiting times are often viewed unfavourably. In this chaotic environment, where everyone is engrossed in their own busy schedules, there remains little patience for delays

“How can the uni expect its members to be prompt if it fails to lead by example?”

caused by last-minute indulgences, like a hurried visit to Nero before a supervision. Its prevalence might continue to be shrugged off as a quirky characteristic of the quintessential Cambridge experience, but it's key to remember that the habits formed at Cambridge, if unchecked, could pose significant challenges when transitioning into careers in the City where every second counts.

However, the problem isn't limited to daily, individual time management. It runs institutionally as well. Colleges, the pillars of the esteemed institution, are notorious for paying their student helpers late for events, which sets a precedent that punctuality isn't a top priority. How can a prestigious establishment expect its members to be prompt if it fails to lead by example?

So why do we have such a problem with lateness? In a place where academic demands meet personal ones,

a few extra minutes can mean a world of difference. The hectic atmosphere of Cambridge sometimes necessitates procrastination breaks for a makeup touch-up or a brief TikTok scroll. In this shared experience of a perpetual rush, slight lateness is embraced rather than perceived as rude most of the time.

The Cambridge bubble fostering lateness makes being late easier and somewhat more acceptable. Students here do tend to appreciate that it is not only a natural part of the human experience, but a predicate of the Cambridge existence. There remains an unspoken understanding amongst Cambridge students, especially if the excuse is valid. It's safe to say I wasn't struck down by my friends when I showed up to dinner in town twenty minutes late because a car had squirted ketchup out the window onto my outfit at the Sidge traffic lights. Cambridge is busy enough and expecting someone to be perfectly on time all the time is optimistic. If someone being three minutes late to our coffee catch up is going to save them from a mental breakdown, I think I'll survive standing alone for a couple more minutes. But let's just say it's quite the culture shock when moving back home however, especially if you're a Londoner running for the tube.

It appears that we literally do not have any hope of beating the lateness allegations at Cambridge. The iconic Corpus clock reflects the erratic irregularity of the Cambridge scene by the mere fact that it is only entirely accurate once every five minutes. The rest of the time, the pendulum appears to catch or stop and the lights can be caught lagging and racing ahead.

We may never escape the vicious cycle and will continue to always pass the late baton down to our college kids, but perhaps in the grand scheme of things we shouldn't be too hard on ourselves. After all, this shared struggle with time might just lead us to experiences we never planned for, turning the hurried steps and delayed arrivals into moments of connection and discovery, all of it worthwhile in the end.

Comment

Cambridge colleges have a clique problem

In her final year at a university full of grown adults, **Isabel Dempsey** questions why it still feels like she's trapped in Year Nine

“You can't sit with us.” Obviously nobody actually says it in real life. After all, Cambridge is an esteemed University, not a Disney Channel original movie. And drinking society girls are not a trio of queen bees arrayed in bows, frills and bitchy slogan T-shirts – though you may see them sporting the occasional pink cowboy hat. And yet, despite our entrance into adulthood, and freedom from the high school canteen, there is still a feeling that if I were to venture to speak to certain people in my college I would be met with a Regina George-worthy stare of disdain. Think the look you might give the gum you found on the bottom of your shoe.

Coming to Cambridge, we are not granted the same freedom from secondary school cliques as most other uni students. Sure it feels like it for the first few weeks of freshers. But after your first term comes to a close (that magical wonderful first term where all social barriers fly out the window and all seats are free to be sat in), groups begin to form and potential tables become closed off. Living in college, where my year group is the exact same size as in my rather small sixth form, creates a horrifying replica of the high school experience. Everybody vaguely knows everybody (everybody, that is, who regularly attends the bops, bar or buttery) and so social dynamics come under microscopic scrutiny. Under this close observance, it is not enough to

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My propensity to be picked last for PE seems to have cemented my social status

simply have friends. Your friends cannot just be a vague and sporadic collection of people that you personally like, as they could be elsewhere. But rather you must carefully curate a contingency of similarly minded people all of whom get along with each other too. For who else will you go to Saturday morning brunch with? Or organise pres? God forbid you were to attend the bar in a mere pair.

Of course I don't blame people for developing friend groups – like-minded people will gravitate towards each other for a reason. The difference is, in larger universities without a college system, it is impossible to position every disparate friend group onto a social hierarchy. But, operating on a college level, a group is not just a group. It becomes defined and develops a known identity that sits somewhere on an arbitrary scale

of coolness. Thou that is not part of the clique shall not enter. It would be worryingly easy for me to walk an Erasmus student around the brunch buttery and identify each clique like I'm the quirky best friend in every highschool movie ever made. Over there you have your politics hacks – stay clear they might ask you to vote for them in the next election. On that table are your theatre freaks. Don't let them invite you to their next smoker! And finally here are the netball girlies. You do not want to mess with them, I'd say with a warning gaze, unaware that my protagonist will betray me at the film's halfway mark by wearing fairy wings on a punt while she chugs a bottle of Echo Falls. I imagine Push It by Salt-N-Pepa would probably play in the background.

I'm not insisting that we all have to be friends, or even that we all get along, hold hands and sing in a circle. At the end of the day, we are only people that happen to be living together after all. But refusing to smile at people you know in college as you pass them on their way to the laundry room, or failing to say hi in the cafe queue, twists these friend groups into something more cliquey and frankly rather bitchy. Babes, we've known each other for more than two years – the very least you could do is acknowledge my existence. I know I can be a bit socially awkward sometimes but I promise on the whole I'm a pretty normal gal.

When these insecurities about my own 'popularity' occur to me, I try to remind myself that we're all adults now

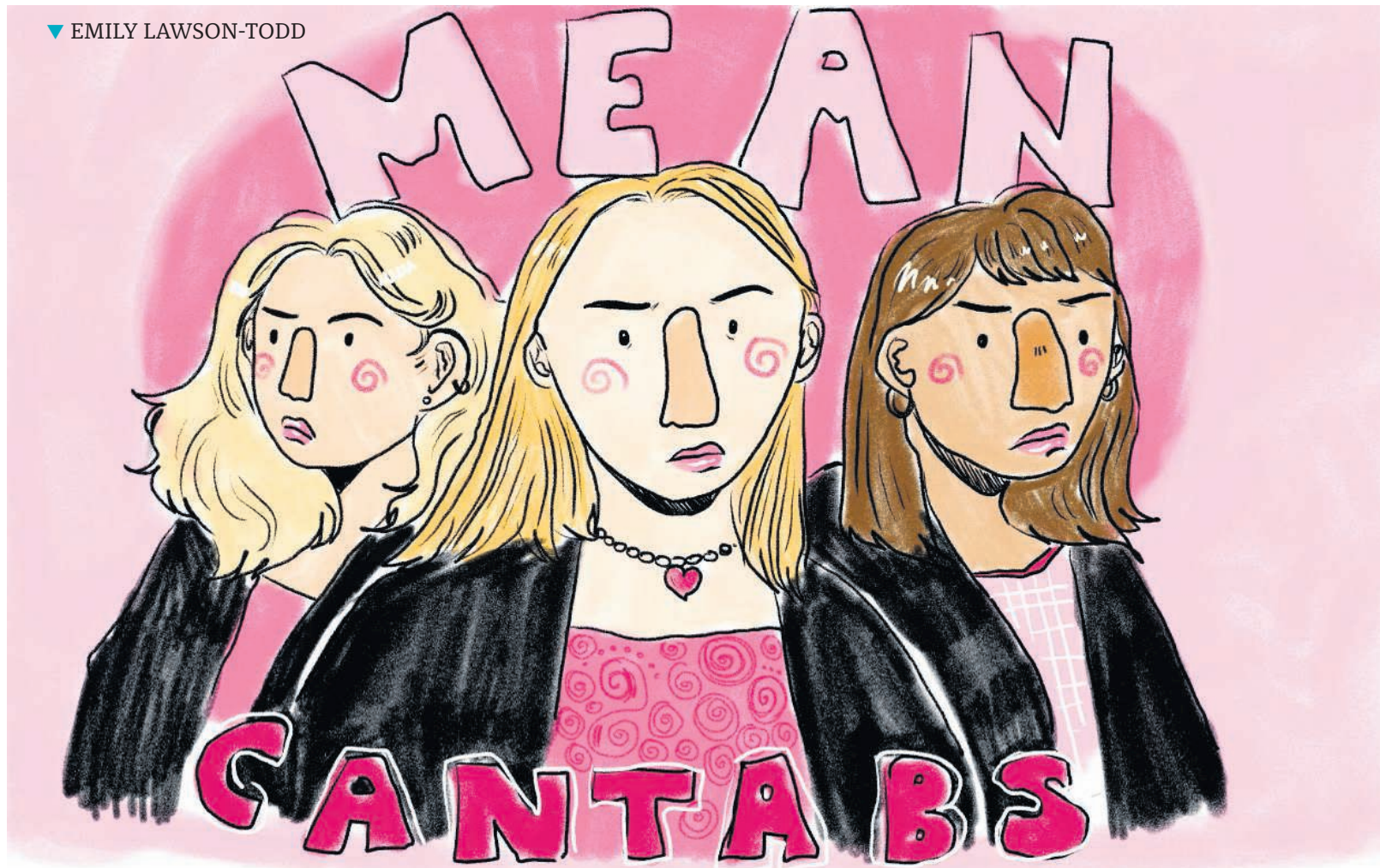
and (thank fuck) the teenage years are behind us. But it's hard to feel that we've all matured beyond secondary school conceptions of popularity when Cambridge is so defined by them. We are a university obsessed with exclusive societies – drinking socs do not even attempt to hide their cliquey-ness: rather, they are defined by it. It's ridiculous that because of these groups I still correlate teenage assumptions of popularity (as taught by 2000s movies) with the parameters of relevancy. These groups are preserved solely for people skilled in ball catching and liquor holding – two abilities I decisively lack – and so my propensity to be picked last for PE seems to have cemented my social status for life. And you know what, I'm fine with that fact. So why do I feel like I'm still trapped in Year Nine? Maybe because these groups are similarly so insistent on their own relevancy, rather embarrassingly self-defining themselves as such on college confession pages whilst I struggle to decipher half their initials. I like to think that between my JCR stints, my slay college fits, and my status as Varsity Editor, I possess a true BNOC quality that many a copy and paste rugby lad would fail to procure. I hate to break it to you mate but being obnoxiously loud doesn't make you more important than me.

Look, maybe I'm bitter and sad and maybe it's all in my head. Maybe the shyness and social awkwardness of my early years hasn't entirely gone away and this is all my own doing. Joining university after lockdown, and pos-

sessed by a rather concerning bout of anxiety, I wasn't the best at making friends. I never have been. Usually, I can sustain about a week of confident and cheery introductions before the facade starts to falter and I become closed in, always seemingly missing my line cue in group conversations. Another unfortunate habit I possess is allowing myself to become trapped in the mould of other people's perceptions of me. If I have been assigned the character of the shy awkward girl, I cannot now escape my role to talk to that person I think is really cool. She belongs to another group now anyway. Although I have massively grown in confidence since my fresher-self, now the cliques have been defined I cannot break free of where I've been placed.

Luckily, in discovering more friends in the wider university, I have managed to crack this mould in different ways. As I meet more people I find myself wondering whether maybe this cliquey-ness is simply reserved for my college and my year, eternally haunted by who I would be and the friends I would have if I was elsewhere. It's not that I think the people who fail to acknowledge my existence are actually bad people (I know if I don't wave and smile at someone it usually comes from a place of awkwardness) but I do think more people at this university need to be careful about containing themselves in these cliques. Or assuming that their group possesses any inherent power and relevancy over others. Maybe you are simply not my people and maybe we wouldn't get along. But that shouldn't make me invisible to you.

▼ EMILY LAWSON-TODD



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Nobel prize-winning economist Michael Spence and the 'Plan to Fix a Fractured World'

Mario Ventura talks to Michael Spence about the climate crisis, artificial intelligence, and his path to becoming an economist

Michael Spence's name is one that every second and third year economist has heard. His work on asymmetric information and signalling – developed during his PhD in Harvard under the supervision of Richard Zeckhauser and two late Nobel laureates, Kenneth Arrow and Tom Schelling – won him the 2001 Nobel Prize and never fails to come up in every game theory exam. Yet his career extends far beyond this contribution and over the years he has become deeply involved in development and public policy work. Today he is in the Queens' College Presi-

dent's Lodge preparing for a talk on his new book, *Permacrisis: A Plan to Fix a Fractured World* – co-authored by Gordon Brown, Reid Lidow and Queens' President Mohamed El-Erian. He is worried about whether he should wear a tie to the event. Mohamed's response: "they're academics. We would be the only ones wearing ties."

Michael's impressive career began with an unconventional path in university. As a Princeton undergraduate, Michael initially majored in philosophy, before shifting to maths at Oxford and finally economics at Harvard. He tells me, "by the time I left Princeton I knew I probably wanted to try to be an academic [...]" and I had pretty much settled on economics." In preparation, he completed his master's in maths at Oxford.

Why did he choose economics? "I didn't want to sit in an office the whole time and I knew enough about economics to know its enormous breadth." However, he confesses: "I still regarded it as an experiment, and I almost quit." Near the start of his third PhD year, he even met

with his advisor to announce that he was quitting to work for McKinsey (needless to say, he was eventually convinced otherwise).

I ask how he came to meet Mohamed El-Erian and Gordon Brown, the co-authors of his new book. "Mohamed and I met probably now 15 years ago. I was the Chairman of a Commission on Growth and Development and he had come from the IMF. I knew he knew a great deal about development issues – all the more than I did." It was Mohamed who eventually introduced Michael to Gordon Brown, and organised the pandemic Zoom calls that led to the creation of the book.

Much of the book is dedicated to detailing a plan to tackle the climate crisis by reducing emissions and fostering global cooperation. Michael warns that "we're not yet, even in terms of stated ambitions, going fast enough – especially in the short run [...] between now and the early 2030s." Having worked in development for much of his career, he is especially concerned over the effects of climate change on developing countries. "It's hard enough to get started [with economic development] in a normal world

with a relatively open global economy." Once you add "shocks like the pandemic, which were not just a health hit but a fiscal shock" and "then climate shocks," the difficulty becomes magnified.

He is also concerned about the pres-

and require big initial investments.

Finally, we discuss AI automation, a topic that Michael has shown interest in recently. His answers strike a careful balance between optimism and caution. He talks of "people at Stanford who decided to use the image recognition software to do skin cancer detection," creating a tool that could potentially be accessed with just a smartphone and thus increasing "on a global basis, the potential for extending primary care to a huge number of people."

Yet he also stresses the technology's limits. "These AIs are not at the point where you're going to say, 'Oh you're going to get it right every time.'" He thinks that, for the most part, AI will not automate "whole jobs," but rather "tasks or sub-parts of jobs" – for instance by helping write reports faster. Yet "this doesn't mean that we shouldn't take people's fears seriously [...]" AI could go wrong in lots of different ways.

There is plenty more we could discuss, but Michael's talk is about to begin and we must make our way out. Michael finally leaves our interview – tie-less, but tireless in his determination to "Fix a Fractured World."

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AI could go wrong in lots of different ways

sure that climate mitigation will place on developing countries. Greening the world economy will require them to "green out their economy way before anybody else has done it in the growth [cycle]" – which "may be just too far to ask countries and their leaders to go." A source of hope is the rapidly declining cost of clean energy, but Michael insists that this is not enough: developing countries must also have good access to financing, as many clean technologies – like solar – are highly capital-intensive

Former Green Party leader Baroness Natalie Bennett pronounces centrist politics 'dead'

Cambridge Young Greens Chair **Josh Morris-Blake** questions Green grandee on NIMBYism, first-past-the-post and how she stays optimistic

Since Natalie stepped down as leader of the Green Party seven years ago, she hasn't exactly retired from politics. "I only returned from Paris this morning," she tells me as we cram into Fitzbillies on a Monday afternoon. She has made this short window available between back-to-back Zoom calls and speaking at the Pembroke Politics Society across the road – and then heading back to London for another manic day tomorrow.

According to *The Sunday Times*, Natalie is the peer who has contributed the most since the start of 2020, with more than 1,089 contributions in the Lords. This seems to be a trend within the Green Party. Her fellow Green Peer, Jenny Jones, was one of only two peers with 100% attendance in the last Parliamentary session. Data from Wirral Council shows that Green councillors report far more issues on behalf of residents than any other party.

I ask her why this is the case. "Greens have something different to say, in every conceivable area of policy." Outside of the established duopoly of the two-party system, Greens are forced to work harder for each vote and each second of media coverage.

Natalie's first contribution as a Baroness was a proposal to abolish the

Lords, and replace it with an elected second chamber, a key Green Party policy. So was there any unease about accepting a peerage? I receive an adamant rebuttal. "We have to work with the current system so we can get in there and change it." She elaborates: "we got more votes in the General Election in 2015 than we'd got in every previous Election added together and we still only got one MP, [so] the only way those people can be represented in Parliament is by this route under our current broken system."

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You can't have infinite growth on a finite planet. That's not politics, that's physics

The Greens have long been held back by the first-past-the-post electoral system, and Natalie references a recent survey which found that 19% of voters would back the Greens if they believed every party had an equal chance of winning. That vote would deliver over 120

MPs. At the local level, however, the Party has already started to win big. Since 2019, the Greens have more than quadrupled their number of councillors across the country, and is the largest party in nine local authorities. Natalie firmly believes that "we can beat first past the post." In Cambridge, the Greens have 4 councillors, most recently gaining student-heavy Newnham ward from Labour last May.

Despite a growing local base, Cambridge is unlikely to be a seat the Greens will take at the next General Election. So why should students still back the Greens at next year's expected poll? I get a two-pronged answer. Firstly, a dismissal of the notion that students should 'hold their nose': "people have been voting tactically in Britain for decades. And look where it's brought us. If people vote for what they believe in, that's the route towards getting what they want." Secondly, a more practical call-to-arms: total vote share "really matters" for "how you're treated by the media, how you're regarded by the pundits, what kind of access you get."

As success grows, so do new threats. "You have to prepare for the problems of success," she warns. Most notably, the transition from being ignored, to be attacked by your rivals takes some adjusting.

But the criticisms levelled at the

Greens have remained the same for decades; from accusations of NIMBY ('Not In My Back Yard') politics which stalls much needed housing development in

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Where we are now is profoundly unstable

the name of conservation, to being far too idealistic. Natalie has a presumably much repeated response: "you can't have infinite growth on a finite planet. That's not politics, that's physics." It's a blunt response and one which her Party will need to continue to articulate in the face of mounting attacks from mainstream media.

Despite these obstacles, Natalie reflects the increasingly bullish and optimistic sentiment of the Greens in recent months, confidently stating that 2024 will see "the next generation of Green MPs" elected to Parliament.

She contrasts the Greens' momentum with the direction of the Labour Party under Keir Starmer: "centrist politics is dead. [It] means leaving things much as they are. The market has failed, privatisation has been a disaster. Green political philosophy gives us a different way of looking at the world."

I finish by asking Natalie how she maintains momentum. Her answer is ominous, intriguing and stirring:

"where we are now is profoundly unstable. The one thing I know is that things are not going to stay the same."



▼ JJ WALLER

Interviews

Zena Kazeme: ‘when your existence is inherently political, you spend it pursuing justice’

Isabella Dowden speaks to the poet about her life as a refugee and humanitarian

Persian-Iraqi poet Zena Kazeme has spent her life inside the asylum system – first as a refugee herself, and then working as a paralegal on immigration cases, volunteering at refugee camps in Greece, and working at the Refugee Resettlement Programme in London. Themes of home and belonging, exile and war are central to Zena’s poetry: “I found I could just talk about the grief and loss and the things that made me angry. It was a way to connect with people to

herself a “legacy refugee”, raised by parents who became stateless overnight in the 1980s following Saddam Hussein’s exile of their minority community of Persian-Iraqis just before the beginning of the Iran-Iraq War.

“My mum refers to that time of our lives as ‘when we were in prison.’ There were armed soldiers everywhere, lots of barriers so there was no way to leave. It was a building that was previously used by the Nazi regime. We slept in a very big hall that had three-tier bunk beds, with barely any bedding. There were huge groups of men, women, and children altogether. It was unsafe, there was a lot of violence.” She describes living on peanuts. Quite literally, her mother would use what little money they had to sneak out of the camp and buy the only food they could afford that was halal. Despite everything, Zena recalls finding a community in the camp. “We befriended a lady who turned out to be Iraqi and my mom could speak to her in Arabic, she had a son about my age. We used to play together, because when you’re a kid you just learn to have fun wherever you are.”

Zena recently found out that the camp in Vienna was shut down due to human rights violations only a few years after she and her family left.

She made the journey to the UK with her youngest sister, the two of them arriving as unaccompanied minors until the rest of the family was able to

join. However, what should have been a time of relief, life as refugees in the UK soon became a new form of struggle. “My earliest memories of arriving here

“
Growing up, you couldn’t avoid poetry. Arabic is inherently poetic

are not great, to say the least. I quite vividly remember spending an entire day in the home office waiting for my parents to be interviewed. My mum came out crying. When we finished, we took a bus to a hostel and slept on a floor with two other families.”

This became Zena’s life while waiting for asylum status, which was rejected after a year and a half. Her parents began the process of appeal: “they were really scared of the Home Office and any letters or phone calls they received.” Their fear was grounded in the trauma of having lived in a violent state where people were constantly under surveillance and sometimes disappeared.

Then came the invasion of Iraq. Zena was faced with immense racism: “we had to take a week off school because we got on the bus and a group of boys tried to attack us. Nobody said anything.” But now she has found her voice and the courage to tell her own stories and encourage other refugees to do the same – through poetry.

“Growing up in the culture I did, you couldn’t avoid poetry. Arabic is inherently poetic. My parents had a huge love of literature and I used to memorise a lot of poetry when I was a kid.”

The Round Peg was her first poem.

“I found I could just talk about

the grief and loss and the things that made me angry.” Zena began adapting her poetry for spoken word, contributing to BBC Radio 2’s Pause For Thought and performing at various Literary Festivals.

Zena has a first-class Law degree and a master’s in Immigration Law. In addition to her poetry, she has worked as a paralegal in various immigration law firms, and is now a Refugee Resettlement Officer, contributing to the fight for a fairer system.

Zena tells me how her experience as a refugee has affected her current work: “when your existence is inherently political, you spend it pursuing a sense of justice.” She has witnessed the last decade of government policies first-hand: “Ever since I could vote, the Tories have been in power. Throughout the last ten years all I have seen is the hostile environment getting stricter and the rhetoric around refugees’ right to survive and have a life here deteriorate.”

A common misconception is that the difficulty ends once granted refugee status. “I have worked with people still living in hotels. You hear so many stories in the tabloids about how these hotels are costing taxpayers so much money, and how luxurious it must be. The reality is that people get given maggot-ridden food. Babies don’t receive enough milk. Families are living off £8 a week. I have met and worked with pregnant women who have walked a mile and a half in their third trimester to the hospital because they can’t afford Oyster Cards.”

As a result of what Zena sees as the UK government’s “weaponised incompetence”, she argues that asylum seekers are living in “destitution”. She recounts a particularly shocking case of a woman evicted from her hostel after being granted refugee status, who upon going to the local council as she was homeless, was told she could “sleep in McDonald’s because it is open 24/7”.

But blame does not solely lie with the Conservative government and their “hostile environment” policies. “In the year that we came to the UK in 1999, Tony Blair decided to remove the right to work from asylum seekers. You could be waiting for up to two years to be given refugee status, during which you are not allowed to claim benefits, open a bank account, work, or study. You’re stuck.”

Zena expresses her feelings of desperation and anger, stating that “I can’t look towards any European country at the moment for inspiration.” However, despite encountering “a lot of very, very challenging cases” in her work, she also tells me that the work her and her team does fills her with “a lot of hope.”

Donating not dancing – May Week alternative

Abby Reyes

Name: Jorja Korosec

College: Queens’

Position: President of the May Week Alternative

What is the MWA?

A student led charity movement, helping people to understand the significance of giving and how it can make you feel really good about yourself as well. Despite the name, we don’t hate May Balls! I just wanted to dispel that myth right off the back.

Your favourite part of being involved in the MWA?

Besides the amount we raise each year, it would have to be the people. Reps, donors, committee members or just people asking me questions about it. There’s a sense of community like no other. I’m really happy to be part of it.

What’s the most challenging aspect?

Spreading the message as far as we can. We have a lot of people donating every year, but if I had my way, every person in the University would know what MWA is. I wish we could shout from the rooftops about what we do so that everybody could hear. But you can’t have it all.

You want to normalise giving – how?

We try to make it as inclusive as possible. When it comes to donating, our main message is, as much you see as significant. Ultimately, it’s not about how much the charity receives, but how much is meaningful to you. We believe you can feel really good whilst giving to charity. One of our key phrases is “do good, feel good”. Hopefully by encouraging people to see that philosophy, we can encourage people to donate now or in the future when they’re more financially stable.

Are you making a stand against May Week?

MWA is a misleading name. Our main aim is getting people to understand the significance of their money and to think about how they’re spending it. If you spend 150 on a May Ball ticket, and that means something to you... where else could that money go?

How long have you been doing charity work?

I joined MWA when I came to university, and that was that. I fell in love with charity, and trying to spread good messages to everyone I can. This is my third year and going forward I’ll always find a way to volunteer.

Do you have a message for students?

Enjoy your time, and live in the moment.

“
My parents were really scared of the Home Office

make them listen [...] It was art, and it’s a lot harder to ignore art.”

Meeting Zena at a poetry workshop that she ran at Jesus College, she described poetry as a form of therapy, a way of processing the trauma of a childhood defined by refugee camps, deportations, and violent racism. Born into an Iranian refugee camp, Zena calls

► GREENBELT FESTIVAL



Space-based solar power prepares for takeoff

Miranda Lepri details the Cavendish Laboratory's rike in the future of space-based solar power

As crazy as it may seem, the possibility of launching solar farms in space is becoming more science than fiction. As of this June, the University of Cambridge is one of eight institutions to receive grant funding from the UK government's Space Based Solar Power Innovation Competition. The competition is part of the Net Zero Innovation Portfolio, which allocates funding to the development of low-carbon or renewable technologies and systems in order to realise the set goal of net zero emissions by the year 2050.

While solar energy has long been floated as a potential alternative to combustibles, several factors have stood in the way of its viability in eclipsing carbon-based fuel as a major energy source. For one thing, solar panels on Earth, particularly residential cells,

often operate at somewhere between 17% and 20% efficiency, with the most advanced recent developments reaching closer to 50%. This is due to a variety of factors, not least including variations in weather conditions and limited daylight hours.

None of these would be factors in space, where

a satellite in geostationary orbit about 36,000km above the Earth's surface could continuously generate energy close to 24 hours a day. While most mid-sized solar plants, which includes all solar farms in the UK, cap out annual production in megawatts, space-based solar plants would easily deal in gigawatts – for context, one gigawatt (GW) is equivalent to 1,000 megawatts, and a potential 10GW annual generation capacity would account for ¼ of the UK's

net electricity consumption. Space solar farms would also greatly reduce the sheer amount of land required to generate solar power, with the UK's largest solar farm inhabiting over 250 acres for a mere 72.2 megawatt maximum output.

When considered in these terms, space-based solar farms seem too good to be true. The

technology is not without its downsides though, chief among them the longevity of the hardware in space, an environment which presents accessibility issues, as well as potentially prohibitive costs, when considering po-

tential repairs. This is where the new research out of Cambridge comes in.

In partnership with programs at the University of Southampton and IQE PLC, a British company dealing in cutting-edge semiconductors, Cambridge's Cavendish Laboratory is developing lightweight solar panels that will not deteriorate in the face of high levels of solar radiation. Louise Hirst, Professor of Material Physics at the University, and her team are currently working on the production of concentrator photovoltaic devices – solar technology that converts light into electrical energy – that are able to resist deterioration from radiation due to their ultra-thin nature and the implementation of integrated light management tech.

The ultra-thin solar cells resist degradation better than their thicker counterparts, as the charged particles carrying solar energy travel a shorter distance across the cell, of-

fering fewer opportunities for the particles to strike, and thus degrade, the solar panel's crystal structure. While thinner cells do have higher transmission losses, the addition of internal light management structures, such as textured, reflective surfaces within the solar cell, would help to optimise the solar panels' energy production. The team will also apply a thin film coating to the prototypes, allowing the device to regulate its temperature by releasing excess heat into space.

Professor Hirst's team is also working to minimise

the costs of this new technology, enabling what Hirst described in a University press release as “a complete, technically feasible, robust, and relatively inexpensive solution for generating power from space”.

“
The same science that heats up your pot ramen could transport gigawatts of solar energy from orbit to the Earth's surface

The general decreasing trend in the cost of launching heavy cargoes into orbit will also ease the start-up cost of space-based solar farms in the coming years.

The potential for energy generation in space seems highly promising. This raises the question, though – how will this energy be transported back to Earth? The answer is, shockingly enough, microwaves. That's right – the same science that heats up your pot ramen could transport gigawatts of solar energy from orbit to the Earth's surface. Just this year, researchers at Caltech launched a prototype spacecraft and successfully transmitted solar power to Earth through the use of microwave technology.

To justify the costs of space-based solar farms, this technology must become highly efficient, rather than merely technologically viable, by retaining a significant portion of the energy generated in the transfer. This technology will need to develop alongside Hirst and her team's lightweight panels in order to make space-based solar power a feasible source of renewable energy. The technology may not be ready to launch tomorrow, but for a 24-hour completely renewable energy source, with little to no carbon footprint here on Earth? We're willing to wait.

Research round-up

Daniel Hilton

Cambridge discover new drug that could stop gout

College dons and masters can finally wash down their swan and beef with copious amounts of port without fear of gout as scientists discover a new drug. Academics based at Cambridge's Heart and Lung Research Institute have found that a cancer drug in the final stages of development could help reduce inflammatory diseases like gout and heart failure.

The brainiacs have identified a molecule that triggers inflammation in response to harmful materials coming into the body. This molecule though occasionally gets it wrong and accidentally attacks natural bodily functions – this is how we get gout.

Red-meat-lovers shouldn't fear though, as they have discovered that the PLK1 molecule, which helps organise cells' internal transport networks, can be inhibited with a new drug, stopping runaway inflammation.

The miracle medication was initially developed to help the body fight against cancer, but research has indicated that in much lower doses the treatment helps stop inflammation.

The drug has been proved to work mice-ly on rodents with inflammatory diseases, helping prevent an over-the-top response. Researchers have already got the drug's cancer variant in clinical trials – the last stage of development – and have plans to test it out on gout-sufferers in the future.

While the jury is still *gout* on whether the treatment will work or not, Oxbridge dons all over the country can rest easy knowing that the likelihood that their swan-gorging and port-gulping will have lasting damage is ever-so-slightly lower.

Genius AI robots can spot hard-to-decarbonise houses

Boffins from Cambridge's Department of Architecture have trained a cutting-edge AI model to help find polluting houses in Cambridge.

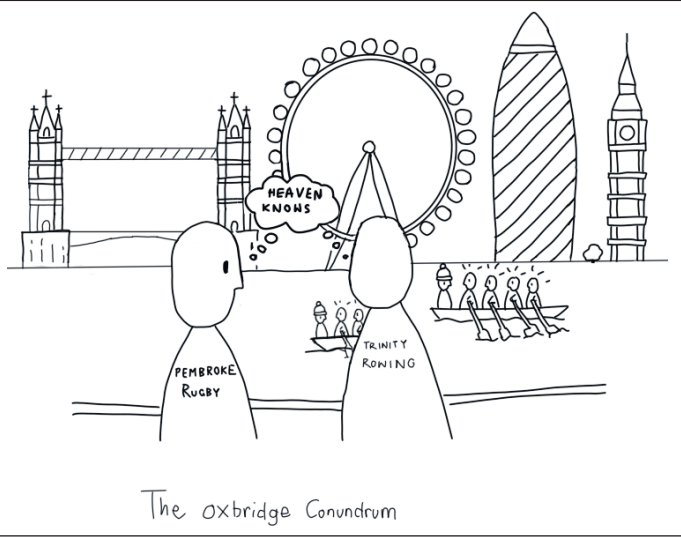
Researchers have said that 'hard-to-decarbonise' houses are directly responsible for more than a quarter of all pollution from abodes but have been often difficult to identify.

The researchers say that the new mastermind robot is fed Google's Street View data and temperature readings. It then uses 'deep learning' to analyse the data and identify if the house is hard to decarbonise.

These environmentally hazardous houses have previously been difficult for policymakers to discover but, with help from AI, they are able to be directed to high priority houses, saving time and resources

Dr Ronita Bardhan, a lead researcher from Selwyn, says that the boffins will soon discuss what they've found with Cambridge City Council and will keep on working with other eggheads at Cambridge Zero to find new ways to beat climate change.

The Smoking Area



ROSIE PETTIFER

VINTAGE VARSITY

By Paddy Davies Jones & Joshua Shortman

It's been a long time since the last Labour government. We at the archive were barely four years old when Tony Blair regenerated into Gordon Brown in the 2007 season finale. Yet if we — in the words of noted 2002 Varsity interviewee Jarvis Cocker — were to all meet up in the year 2000, we would find a rather surprising and under-reported political institution at the heart of the New Labour project. When people complain about Blair's connections with the press, don't think Rupert Murdoch, 'It's The Sun Wot Won It', The News of the World etc... — Think Varsity!

These days we content ourselves with crosswords and chats to the Vice-Chancellor, but in the year 2000 the paper would think nothing of sitting down for 'Tea at Number Ten' across from the sitting Prime Minister. The interview with Blair, is, it must be admitted, fantastically disappointing. Before the first paragraph is up, our student journo admits that "everything he says is off the record, but frankly, if I was allowed to repeat his words you wouldn't be very interested". Quickly tiring of Blair, our intrepid interviewer went rogue around Whitehall and wandered off to chat to the "master of spin", Alistair Campbell.

Campbell, the model for The Thick Of It's Malcolm Tucker is, at least, "remarkably interesting," although he "never tires of complaining about the media." Varsity is presumably exempt from the vitriol he dumps on the nation's papers. Why else would Campbell return to our pages in 2004 to reflect on his fall from power, admit tentatively that the "situation in Iraq" isn't "perfect" and wax lyrical about "the real Tony Blair"? We should try to get on his podcast. One of us at the archive even shares a college with him (Caius).

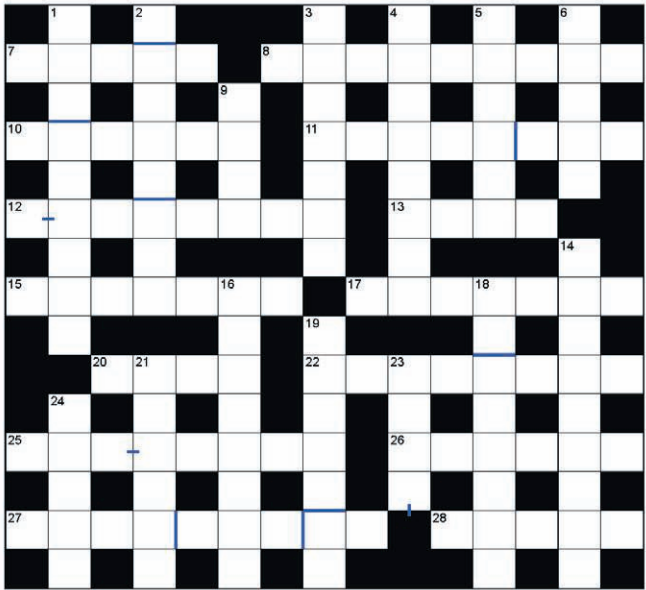
This isn't to say Varsity's political sway was reserved to the New Labour lot. A Varsity journalist was made distinctly uncomfortable by the "overly gallant manner" of the Labour chancellor from the 1970s, Dennis Healy, who "refers to me as dearie, pats my hand, and asks if the photographer is my boyfriend." Perhaps interviewing the Tories would prove more successful. We didn't get a great deal out of Conservative opposition leader Iain Duncan-Smith in our 2002 interview with him (cheekily entitled 'In Deep Shit'): "He says 'um' quite a lot", "most of his sentences are punctuated with 'you know', especially when I don't."

Amidst the failures of the Conservatives to win power in the 2000s, however, Varsity had its eyes of on the avatar of their future success, the illustrious editor of the Spectator and future work-event-attendee, Boris Johnson. The "fizzing young cannon" is "superbly endearing" and exceedingly confident in offering some perhaps slightly surprising opinions; he wants to "legalise cannabis and privatise the NHS" and speaks with disdain of the "sullen objectionable views on immigrants" held by certain members of his party. This is Johnson the foppish libertarian, pre his law-n-order, boats-to-Rwanda era; yet the same act that worked on the electorate seemed to be working on our student journos. One of them, a cheerful young Johnian named Rob Jenrick, who published an account of his job as a White House intern in the Bush administration as it geared up for war in Iraq, would even go on to be his Housing Secretary.

Hopefully we've done enough work here to prove to Sir Keir's team that we're a reputable and respected paper. Pop round for a chat whenever you like, Keir. (Preferably before the next print run.) The Varsity offices are open. We've got biscuits.

Games & puzzles by Jonathan Bingham & Marble

Varsity Crossword



- 6 Chainsaw massacres are a popular hobby here (5)
- 9 The newer yet older Bake Off judge (4)
- 14 Deep, deep respect (9)
- 16 It's not Constantinople, but that's the Turks' business (8)
- 18 From the beginning in a language at Cambridge (2,6)
- 19, 24 A game played on 31st October (5,2,5)
- 21 A liquid measurement, but not for things you drink (milk, beer, blood, etc.) (6)
- 23, 12a Cutting up 15a might yield this (4-1-7)
- 24 See 19d

- prison (8)
- 25 Bovine attendant's minute like male helper (8)
- 26 (Not including lake) badly scan all bodies of water! (6)
- 27 Bandage saint for daughter's panicking (9)
- 28 Throb of Plutonium found by University (5)

Down

- 1 Rhetoric from 70s band, Queen, taking cocaine. Wild! (9)
- 2 Six-pack contained article revealing alcohol drink (8)
- 3, 15a Christopher Lee signed one official study of geographical field (7,7)
- 4 Sing out to keep dynasty attacking (8)
- 5 Corrupting individual rode off after the Blue Helmets (6)
- 6 Insect loses one English Shilling, runs away (5)
- 9 Venerable one is Doctor of Engineering (4)
- 14 Found mad beast on Long Island. Be quiet! (9)
- 16 Failure resulting from colonel's mistake (8)
- 18 Ludicrous insult involving sailor's city (8)
- 19 Return to earth of a network introduces minor damage (7)
- 21 Spa town's likely excited (6)
- 23 A bean not a girl (4)
- 24 By ear, didn't catch unknown jazz song (5)

Cryptic

Across

- 7 Dance venues for swingers? (5)
- 8 Obviously a bally TNT explodes (9)
- 10 Horsey equipment needs adjusting, in the absence of premenstrual tension (6)
- 11 Imitated, initially, rough old rascal that's got stuck outside (8)
- 12 Aware of strange ethereal noises starting, setter hid in temporary shelter (8)
- 13 Concerning reign turned around without note (2,2)
- 15 See 3d
- 17 In opposition to a win by seats' borders (7)
- 20 The police charge! (4)
- 22 Wimbledon finalist has time in

- 26 On Hallowe'en I was arrested by a sexy police officer for these (6)
- 27 Laugh about (4,3,2)
- 28 A spooky sorceress (5)

Down

- 1 What Beatle claimed to be in a song designed to confuse listeners (3,6)
- 2 This type of sleep somehow feels better than one on a bed (1,4,3)
- 3 A snake, often venomous (7)
- 4 A spooky sharp-toothed fellow (8)
- 5 After 26a, I needed one of these (6)

Quick

Across

- 7 A spooky spectre (5)
- 8 Split apart (9)
- 10 Slang term for buy-one-get-one free (6)
- 11 The Eleventh of the Eleventh (5,3)
- 12 See 23d
- 13 Unusual (4)
- 15 An orange plant, like a squash (7)
- 17 Got out of (7)
- 20 Guy Fawkes helped with one of these (4)
- 22 Reunited - the opposite of 8a (8)
- 25 Do you pour your gin in post - or... (3-5)

Sudoku

Easy

	5	3				7		
4		8						
	2						3	8
1				4	2			
				6		1		
			2		4	7		
7		6				5		
	3	5				8	6	1
			5					

Medium

7				8				2
	9		2				4	
							5	
		9	3	5		4		
								8
	1				4			
		7	8	9		1		
2			4			9	8	
					7	3		5

ANSWERS TO PUZZLES ON INSTAGRAM @VARSITYCAMBRIDGE
TWO CROSSWORDS ARE SET INTO THE SAME GRID - ONE QUICK, ONE CRYPTIC. THEY HAVE DIFFERENT CLUES AND DIFFERENT ANSWERS.

vulture.



JENNIFER CHEN

Lifestyle

Healing from heartache in the hellscape of Week 5

Alice Mainwood thanks the women who helped her get back on her feet after getting dumped

Being dumped is pretty shit at the best of times. And on the eve of Week 5 of Michaelmas term, just as dissertation deadlines are beginning to encroach, and as exam results are being belatedly released, it's really quite a lot more shit than normal.

Meeting the end of a long-term relationship whilst at Cambridge brings about a different sort of heartbreak. When you're struggling to get up and force yourself to eat breakfast, it's unsurprisingly pretty difficult to churn out a 3,000 essay or smile your way through happy hour at Caius bar.

So what do we do? How on earth do we drag ourselves to the end of term, to reach that oh-so-longed-for time to rest, and really, time to properly recover. For me, for the first week or two, I transformed my room into a hermit's shell, let myself wallow under a duvet and three blankets, and exclusively ate Pret pastries, Sainsbury's ready meals, and Gardies' burgers. In between bouts of self-pity and complaining to my friends, I managed a couple of depressive emails to my DoS, and good amount of time ignoring mounting piles of washing up and laundry in the corner.

Despite how sorry I've been feeling for myself (and I really, really have been), I do know I've been pretty lucky in how my Cambridge experience has intersected with my break-up. My English degree has inevitably been a bit more forgiving for my lax approach to deadlines than the Medicine or NatSci trips would have been. I'd also have been in a bit of a jam if my supervisors weren't so enduringly compassionate in my moment(s) of self-pity and need (for extension deadlines). And to add to that, my family live close by, and have been willing to make

the visit to see me and buy me a fair few pity presents.

Really, though, it's my friends that have dragged me, kicking and screaming, through the really shitty bit, and into the light – by which I mean into the phase where I don't want to hurl myself into the Cam every time I walk past a couple holding hands in Market Square. The women who wouldn't let me spend a minute alone in my break-up shock phase; who constantly affirmed that this would get better; and

who have helped me back onto my feet and into the library are my saving grace. Having people just down the corridor who don't mind you lying silently on their bed, apart from the occasional grunt of “this is so fucked,” makes the world of difference. Sometimes you just need someone to sit down with you, listen to an excessively long rant, and then say something shockingly, unduly harsh about your ex. It's healing.

When the shock – and horror – of the

break-up began to fade, it left me flailing in the midst of Week 5, feeling really pretty lonely. There's inevitably a horror in the little things – throwing out the mug they gave you, taking down the photos of them, and then sitting through those bitterly pointy moments where the sadness and rejection of being dumped feels just a bit too much. Those pointy moments get less painful, though. And eventually, that tricky balance between heartbreak and doing a Cambridge degree gets easier.

“

Loneliness can fade into something much less aggressive; it can fade into an understated calm

As those moments start to relent, there's finally space to find something hopeful in a break-up. Loneliness can fade into something much less aggressive; it can fade into an understated calmness at the thought of being alone. There's room to breathe again, fully and deeply. That tiny, well-hidden feeling of calm in the aloneness is reassuring. It can take up some of that space left behind after losing love, and the calm can be productive. Healing really is the right word for it, even if healing in Cambridge has a less linear shape than elsewhere.

▲ ALICE MAINWOOD



Ask Aunty Maddy: Culinary kleptos and double dates

One of my roommates is a serial snack thief. Crisps, biscuits, fruit, you name it – even alcohol. Precisely one glass of wine disappears from every bottle I buy! I don't know who it is or how to stop them. What do I do?

Not very left-wing subversive sidgilled anti-capitalist of you to be withholding such precious resources from your kitchen comrades now, is it? Have a little empathy for those of us who may or may not have rinsed the vast majority of their student loan a week into term in a haze of

Gardi's binges and torrents of triple vodkas, i.e. a last-ditch effort to salvage an average night spent at Revs; those of us who are now living in an ongoing state of ravenous hunger and filth, à la Stig of the dump. If I were you, I'd be glad they're eating this healthy – they've got crisps, biscuits, wine and fruit. That's basically the whole food pyramid, right? If you're still hell-bent on guarding your grub (killjoy), have you ever considered booby (hehe) trapping the cupboards with an elaborate anti-theft device? If you succeed, hooray! Bask in the successes of your stinginess and alcoholism! And should they succeed? Well, if you're the one outsmarted, the only thing to do would be to submit to your new gastronomic overlord – perhaps starting with the rest of the wine. You should be glad they're exercising moderation (only one glass!);

we're in a cost of living crisis, and any seasoned culinary klepto would have swiped the bottle.

I accidentally scheduled two dates at the same time and I'm too embarrassed to tell them. What's the plan?

“
Two dates! Oh no! Two people vying for your love and affection!

Two dates! Oh no! Two people vying for your love and affection! How terrible! We must set up a GoFundMe immediately, so that you can be supported through this harrowing experience. Since every other answer in this column seems to be some jaded gesture towards the speeding car crash that is my own love life, I'll be earnest.

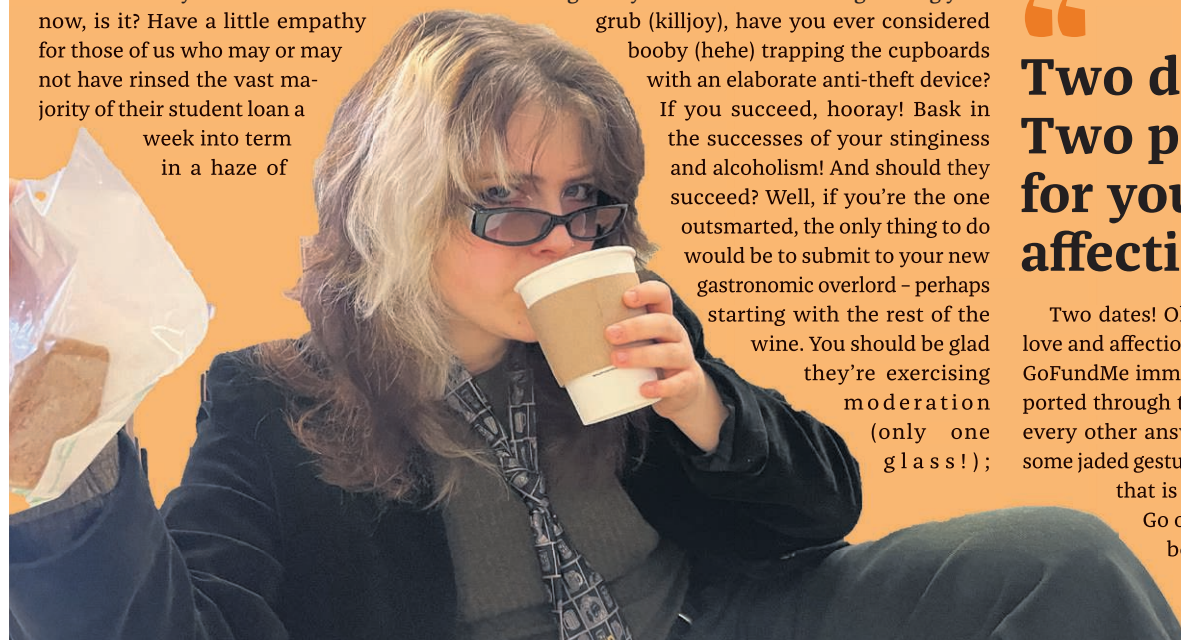
Go on a double date! That is, you will be taking double the amount of

people on a date, all at once. Time is money, and economising is the sexiest thing someone can do when our collective schedules look like the opening scenes to (idk, movie about guy going mad). Plus, if things get hot and heavy, that's your workload in the bedroom significantly diminished. Threesomes are all the rage right now! The only danger is that they inevitably get on like a house on fire, and suddenly you're hitting the figurative road as you console yourself by bingeing on the complimentary bread basket in the corner of whatever establishment you once foolishly thought you'd find success in.

How do I get over my imposter syndrome?

Huh? You've got what? Oh, my... well, I've never heard about that before. That sounds most concerning. Are you sure you're fit to study, suffering from a condition like that? I'm no sort of expert but the kind of person that studies here typically doesn't suffer from that sort of thing. A 'syndrome' is the kind of problem that us hard-wired, endlessly academic scholars really don't have the time for. If I were you, I'd drop out now and save yourself the trouble – heaven forbid you burn out faster than a frazzled third year who masks their own neurosis and sheer academic incompetence with the meagre authority ascribed to a biweekly mediocre advice column in the student paper!

MADDY SANDERSON



Why don't you come on over to Patisserie Valerie?

Isabella Steinmeyer thinks these tiny portions might be best eaten with Granny and Grandad

The last time I 'took tea' was with my German exchange student. Between us stood a tower of fondant fancies, triangles of dainty sandwiches, bite-size cupcakes and a language barrier. The starched tablecloth was as stiff as our conversation; but that wasn't going to put me off this time. Did you say Afternoon Tea at the newly refurbished Patisserie Valerie on Bridge Street? With a new menu too? Ja, bitte.

I am greeted by sunny staff who seat me at a marble table with a pink suede booth – it's giving 2015 Zoella, but the cushions are comfy, so I can't complain. The ambience is... well there is none; the Arc Café has more buzz, but I suppose it's 2pm on a Wednesday so the average age of 60 is to be expected. I opt for the mint tea: it does what it says on the Premium-labelled tin, leaves of fresh mint soaking in a royal blue teapot. We are amused.

Out comes the tea stand. A multi-storey cake park of sweet delicacies and perfect rectangular sandwiches to make Barbie jealous. I exercise some restraint by starting with the savoury. There's a selection of four sandwiches and I dive into the cucumber and cream cheese first. Though simple, the pillowy white bread, fresh cucumber and generous dollop of cream cheese is a treat. Crusts off, it's primary school lunchbox nostalgia in the best way. Next, I try the turkey and stuff-

ing, which is not so good. The lack of sauce on a notoriously dry meat makes it stick to the roof of my mouth – chuck in some cranberry sauce fellas! The smoked salmon and cream cheese redeems the turkey debacle, but the winner of Round 1 is easily the egg and cress sarnie. I'm as surprised as you are. As someone who is often afflicted with the 'egg ick' I steer well clear of eggy sandwiches. It was pure journalistic integrity that forced me to give this one a go, but the sweetness of the brioche married perfectly with the creamy eggy mixture. This was no Meal Deal affair.

“I left the café as a Lothario leaves his mistress and sneaks back home to his wife

Next up, scones. There are two: one plain, one raisin – and in the interest of regional equality, I spread one with jam then cream, one with cream

then jam. The scones were buttery and flaky, and the tart raspberry jam balanced the sweetness perfectly. I'd intended to take a bite of each and move on, leaving plenty of room for the proper puddings. Too late, they were so moreish, I gobbled them down with ease.

Enough foreplay, it was time to get down to business. I warmed up my pudding stomach with a dinky chocolate tart, smattered with hazelnuts and coated in a glaze of... I don't know what, but it tasted lovely. Lucky I was tea-ing alone: they were fit for a Sylvanian family, but I suppose you could call these one bite wonders 'refined'. I moved onto the Smurf-blue macarons, which I have to say were the low point of the experience. They were sweet but beyond that I couldn't say, and I didn't return for a second bite. Not to worry because the cakes saved the day! I began with the gingerbread, it was moist (sorry) and had a subtle kick that warms the throat as it battles week 5 lurgy. But the *pièce de résistance* was the chocolate cake. With a decadent slab of fudgy chocolate goodness on top and a layer of chocolate frosting in the middle, this bad boy made me swoon. In a moment of weakness, I tore the one I'd put aside for my housemates out of its box and hoovered it up too, saving them the blood sugar spike. Am I Bruce Bogstrotter or Barry's Bootcamp? Possibly both.



▲ ISABELLA STEINMEYER

I left the café as a Lothario leaves his mistress and sneaks back home to his wife; I'd emptied my teapot, and my abandoned essay couldn't wait any longer. But what was the cost of my decadent foray with my French mistress Pat Valerie? At nearly £20 a head, I might have to stick with PG Tips. Plus, if life wasn't miserable enough for sufferers of lactose intolerance, coeliac and veganism, the menu doesn't cater to most dietary requirements. I must dock points in solidarity.

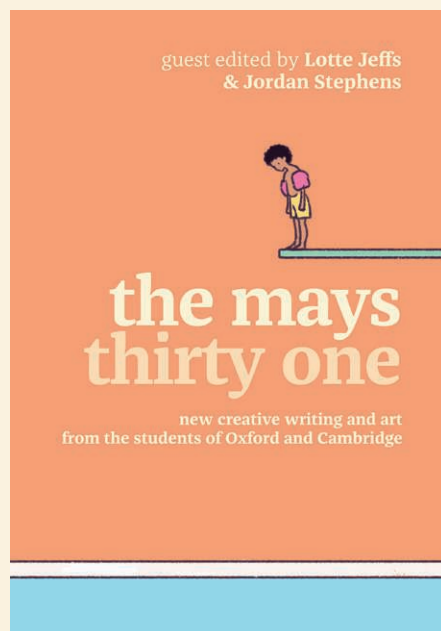
So, save this spot for when a relative/generous friend/fairy godmother comes to town – food always tastes better when it's free. Until then, Hobnobs will have to do.

GUEST EDITED BY **LOTTE JEFFS & JORDAN STEPHENS**



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Film & TV**At the Cambridge Film Festival****In conversation with Asif Kapadia****Isaac Jackson** sits down with the Oscar winner to talk movies and Maradona

“When I made *Senna* I had no idea I’d make another doc,” Asif Kapadia tells me a matter of minutes into our conversation. It’s a surprising admission to hear from a man who, now over a decade after the release of that film, can safely be considered the most notable British documentary filmmaker of his generation. Kapadia’s self-characterised trilogy of films about “child geniuses and fame” have, after all, earned him tens of millions in box-office receipts, an Academy Award (for 2015’s *Amy*) and, in 2023, a (surely no less coveted) prize for Outstanding Achievement in Cinema from the Cambridge Film Festival. “It’s a real honour,” Kapadia says, talking to me just a few hours before he’s due to accept the award at Arts Picturehouse. “I vaguely remember doing a Q&A for *Diego Maradona* here, back in 2019 – but you get so caught up in the universe of what you’re working on, it’s hard to know for sure. I don’t really really think too much about what happened in the past, I just get working on the next one.”

This inherent drive to always keep moving forwards is very much apparent just talking to Kapadia; here is a creative mind evidently brimming with new ideas and enthusiasm, a filmmaker who seems to truly live and breathe cinema. “I always try to slightly push myself into the unknown, but also push the form slightly.” Indeed, Kapadia’s films have had an unparalleled impact on the shape of the modern documentary, relying largely on repurposed archive footage and foregoing retrospective narration

JEANLUC BENAZET



from so-called “talking heads.” “The minute you do that,” Kapadia tells me, “you see someone older looking back. The key thing that I’ve tried to do with these three films is to tell the story *in the moment* from the point of view of the central character. I want you to feel what it’s like to be Ayrton Senna in the car... I want you to leave the cinema thinking you’re Brazilian.”

Melding a sense of narrative drive together with the documentary form seems, then, to be the Kapadia touch – even to the point that some of the director’s favourite fiction films regularly appear as ‘references’ for his factual work. Notice the parallels, for instance, between the last movement of *Senna*, which tracks the final days before the racing driver’s death in a car crash at the age of just 34, and the narrative structure of Martin Scorsese’s *Goodfellas*: “you have this kind of arc with

“I want you to leave the cinema thinking you’re Brazilian”

someone young who rises in an organisation and then becomes the greatest... you’re going quite fast through their life and then, the final act – you slow down time. That way you really start to feel the tension.”

While the process of making the documentaries seems to always start somewhere different (*Senna* with raw footage, *Amy* with audio interviews, *Diego Maradona* with a biography Kapadia read as a student), the filmmaker tells me that, with each subject, he finds it helpful early on in the process to literally “draw out” narrative arcs. “*Senna*’s arc is like an upward journey; until you get to that final weekend and it’s a real sharp drop. *Amy*’s is like Mount Fuji, another very quick rise but then a much slower decline. *Maradona* isn’t a classic up and down, it’s a circle. He’d go somewhere and everyone would love him, he’d be like a god. And then it would all fall apart, so he’d just go somewhere else, and they’d love him there... until it all ended badly. That same cycle, again and again.”

But can such narrative inclinations (even if not specifically those of Kapadia himself) be taken too far? When, if at any point, does dramatisation of tragedy risk tipping over into the sensationalistic, or perhaps even exploitative? I’m interested to hear Kapadia’s thoughts on the (already much ma-

igned) *Amy* Winehouse biopic currently in the works – do we really need yet another retelling of the story of this young woman’s suffering? He initially seems unsure (“it’s really not an easy answer,” he says, before asking me what I think) but goes on to admit that, more recently, he’s “fallen out of love with actors pretending to be famous people.” “Personally, I don’t think there’s any actress out there who can look like *Amy*, sound like *Amy*, perform like *Amy*. I think a well-made doc will always be more emotionally powerful than a fiction film about the same subject.”

What does Kapadia have to say, though, to that sizeable minority of detractors, who argue that his version of Winehouse’s story itself borders on gratuity, his camera becoming just another cog in the paparazzi machine that many believe played a substantial part in the singer’s death? “Partly it was to turn the camera back at the audience... saying someone’s *laughing* at this woman and her suffering. Who holds the camera is also something that changes during the film. By the end, it is the paparazzi, but the cameras are physically attacking her, literally hitting her in the face. I want people to be uncomfortable with that, and find that shocking.”

If *Amy* presented Kapadia with the difficulty of handling the story of someone whose passing, at the time, remained relatively raw, then *Diego Maradona* brought quite the opposite problem – for the first time, he was making a documentary about someone who was still *alive*. The film plays on a certain bifurcation suggested in the title, a gap between the celebrity persona, ‘Maradona’, and the man behind all the flash, ‘Diego’. I ask Kapadia whether, in interviewing the footballer himself, he ever felt like he managed to go some way towards seeing under that mask. “I don’t know if I did, no. Maybe no-one could. I’m not even sure ‘Diego’ existed anymore.” Maradona publicly disavowed the film at the time, cancelling a purported trip to attend its premiere at the Cannes Film Festival. “I’m still not sure if he ever saw it,” Kapadia laughs, “but I should say that the film was later shown on one of the main channels in Buenos Aires. Diego had a huge TV in every room of his house – the idea that, if there was a film all about him on one of his huge TVs, he wouldn’t watch it? I’ll let you decide how likely that is!”

Our time’s almost up, but I’ve got one more question for Kapadia: as a self-professed ‘underdog’ (“a lot of the film industry in the UK come from a certain background... I just worked my way up”) does he have any salient advice for budding student filmmakers here in Cambridge? “There’s a key line at the end of *Senna* where he sort of looks back in time and says that what he used to love about doing go-kart racing is that it wasn’t about money and politics. So, I’d say when you’re starting out, you’ve got to remember that it’s not about money, it’s not about politics, it’s not about what movie star you’re going to get in. The main thing is to really *enjoy* it, push yourself and make sure you finish what you started. The scariest thing is putting it out there in the big bad world, getting your film shown somewhere. Not everyone will love it, but that’s okay. It’s all a learning curve.”

JEANLUC BENAZET



Cambridge film festival in pictures - MIKE O'BREIN





Exploring 'fantasies and fears' with *Creatura*

Sam Allen chats to Cannes award-winner Elena Martín Gimeno about her film success and female sexuality



Creatura is a distinctly physical film, underpinned by a rare and exhilarating depiction of female sexuality. The very first shot in the film is of a young girl growing curious about the way her body works and discovering physical stimulation for the very first time. It is a moment that occurs for every child everywhere, but one that – particularly as women – we are sworn to secrecy over. The film goes on to show her experiencing sexual attraction for the first time, being sexualised for the first time, and sexualising herself for the first time. It's a film composed of firsts; firsts that Gimeno directs with an impressive and captivating realism. I sit down with Gimeno to discuss the myriad of complex and deeply personal issues at the heart of this film, and get to the bottom of why it's garnered so much success at this particular point in time.

Gimeno's second feature is a striking, visceral tale of one woman's life, Mila, as she slowly discovers her sexuality and deals with the contradictory forces of love and shame that accompany it. We meet Mila as a child (Mila Borràs), see her experience all of her 'firsts' as a teenager (Clàudia Malagelada), and then watch her navigate a long-term adult relationship (when she is played by Elena Martín Gimeno herself). The whole way through, Mila's complicated relationship with her body and her desires are represented through a persistent rash which occurs when she is stressed and unfulfilled. Repeatedly, she seeks pleasure and intimacy, and repeatedly, she is denied it, ostracised for it, and made to feel ashamed of it. The candour and effectiveness of Gimeno's film has been rewarded with the Best European Film award at Cannes' Directors' Fortnight, and Gimeno tells me it "took a few months to understand that it was really happening," but the success was "really beautiful."

When I finish congratulating her on her win at Cannes, I am desperate to know how Gimeno managed to write, direct, and star in what might be one of the most groundbreaking films of the year. "In my first feature I was acting too, so I don't know how it feels to write and direct without acting," she says, adding that "in this movie, I feel like stepping in as an actress made me understand the movie in a very physical way. It made me understand the movie better." After watching the film, I can see precisely why. While there are endless shots of half-naked bodies in the sea or at nightclubs, they never feel formulaic, because they are always being shown to us through Mila's eyes. Bodies are unique, as is the gaze with which each person looks at them. We

watch a woman grow from childhood to adulthood and the whole time we are made to focus on what she feels, and what she sees.

This is a film about what it means to be a woman and to look, and, more importantly, to want. Gimeno emphasises that this was her intention, saying that "in the last few years, we've talked a lot about sexual violence, and we do need to because it's a very important topic, but we haven't talked so much about desire." She clarifies that "sexual repression is a very important tool to control society, and people who can connect with their desire or sexuality are more powerful, and feel more free. That's why I'm so interested in talking about this topic."

The repression of female sexuality and the differing responses to it are expertly and delicately handled by Gimeno. A young Mila describes her own sexual actions as if they were the actions of a friend in conversation with her family, and has to listen to their condemnation and disapproval. When she becomes more open about her sexuality with her parents, her dad tells her: "you make me uncomfortable. It's not normal to live like that at your age." Years later, her boyfriend cuts a heated argument about their sex life short by saying exactly the same thing: "I'm uncomfortable." We begin to see a disturbing process repeat itself: a woman explores her sexuality, the men around her express discomfort, and, ashamed, she represses it.

Gimeno doesn't just draw attention to the phenomenon of sexual repression, but actively fights against it. Mila avoids the absurd euphemisms for a vagina used by other characters in the film and real life – directly describing her "vulva" in her journey of curiosity about her body. Most strikingly, we see a woman actively and passionately initiate sex with a man, and communicate her desires and fantasies directly. This element of the film prompted me to ask Gimeno what she thought about recent online discourse surrounding sex scenes: how necessary are they, how explicit should they be, and are audiences ready for them? She tells

me that she's already "seen a bit of fear in the industry about the sex scenes in *Creatura*," which came as no surprise. "People in movies behave very strangely during sex with very studied and clean movements, which don't represent intimacy or reality"; it's safe to say that the opposite is true for this film. I ask her whether she thinks these depictions come from a place of fear about female sexuality, and she says that "we've become too comfortable with sex scenes filmed from the perspective of the male gaze. People even see sex scenes with violence against women and they feel comfortable, then people see a movie that has intimacy and realness and because people feel really reflected, they suddenly feel uncomfortable. That is frightening to me."

I want to close by asking how the film had been received so far, and what effect she wanted it to have on audiences. Gimeno said her favourite reaction to *Creatura* is "when women or people who aren't cis-men feel more encouraged to share their inner fantasies and fears and are less judgemental of themselves." She adds that, "something that's already happening is people telling me that they feel represented by the film, that they feel less alone, and less crazy. That's what I want to happen." And it's no overstatement to say that that is precisely what *Creatura* did for me.

▼TOMOS
ALWYN
DAVIES



Fashion

Surviving Cambridge in the cold

Zoe Blackburn guides your winter wardrobe

Transitioning from autumn to winter dressing can feel like an impossible task, so here are some creative tips for surviving this winter in style.

Swapping out your basics for thermal versions of the same thing is a lazy way of coping with transitioning autumn outfits to winter looks, meaning you can get away with the same autumnal outfits for much longer and feel smug that you're not even suffering for it.

The leg warmer is a retro option that plays into the Cambridge nostalgia, and a cute way to protect your legs more than your optimistically-sheer nylon tights ever could. Failing that, a pair of thick socks over tights can look just as good.

The cap is an underrated accessory if you want to avoid the unglamorous problem of 'hat hair' when you get inside. It's much less likely to cause static than a woollen bobble hat. It also looks good with a ponytail, a huge plus if you don't want your hair ruthlessly matted by the wind.

If you're mid-essay crisis and would rather not

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Week five blues aren't meant to be from frostbite

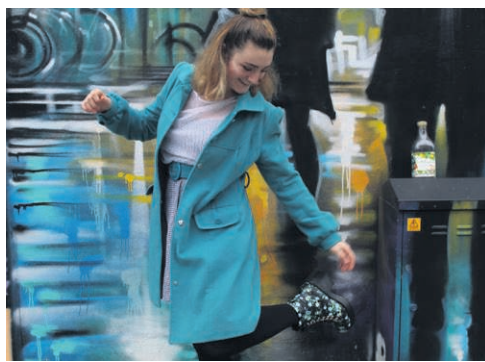
lose all the heat from your limbs on the sprint back from the UL, joggers that have tapered ankles are great to stop the chilly air. You can even hide a pair under a maxi skirt! If you're particularly attached to wide leg life, make sure to sneak some extra long socks underneath. The 'week five blues' are not meant to be caused by frostbite.

Layering is the name of the early winter game. Thin jumpers are a good way of ensuring that you don't overheat. A collared shirt under a cotton jumper with an optional coat is far better than one thick polyester layer in an overcrowded lecture hall (trust me!).

An oversized jumper with lots of room for layers is a life-saver once it gets cold. The best ones can reliably be found in the unexplored depths of Grafton charity shops. The jacket or blazer is easy to take off if it gets too hot and allows you to power dress your way through a deadline at the same time, and a trench coat is a great barrier against the wind and rain.

If you want to ditch the mini skirts altogether, the denim maxi skirt that's been trending all summer can be adapted for winter too. The sturdy fabric and length provides a warmer but equally cool alternative.

You don't have to sacrifice street style for a stable body temperature this Michaelmas. Whether you accessorise, experiment with layers or revamp your summer wardrobe, don't let the Cambridge blizzard get you down.



▲ WITH PERMISSION FOR VARSITY

£900 and a punk moodboard: costuming 5/11

Alice Mainwood talks to the mainshow's creative team

“Having once been involved in a 10-person show where the costume budget was £30, this is lush.” Freya Cowan, one of 5/11's costume designers, chuckles to herself as she tells me how completely out of the ordinary this show's approach to costume design has been. Working alongside Lucy Wright, the pair have spent over 5 months turning a visionary Pinterest board into a impressive set of 25 carefully curated punk-period fusion costumes ahead of the week 5 show. The time, devotion, and cost required to costume the 23 person cast of 5/11 has been a leap beyond the normal experience of a Cambridge student costume designer.

5/11's director, Evie Chandler, has always had a clear vision for the costume design. She wanted the costumes to inspire “rebellion, revolution, freedom,” with inspiration taken from the punk sub-culture: “protests, gigs, the Sex Pistols.” The period-punk fusion, which Evie hopes is going to bring “something new” to the Cambridge theatre scene, meant that very little of the costumes could be sourced from the ADC's costume store. Freya and Lucy have therefore been raiding the casts wardrobes to avoid the challenge of sourcing “10 leather jackets” but have also been left having to make most of the costumes themselves.

Evie and her producer, Lottie Wood, did encounter questions from their funding body. A costuming scheme where so little can be outsourced, and so much had to be made from scratch was never going to be cheap. They had been awarded an overall budget of £2300, and have allocated an astounding £900 of that to Freya and Lucy's costume design. Evie knows this to be a stand-out feature of her play, explaining that “normally you'd get £150 to £200.” The funding body were eventually appeased by Evie and her team's ambitious plans, with Evie recalling how they told her that “if that's what you want to spend your budget on, go for it.” In exchange, the team have had to “make concessions in all other areas of their budget,” opting for a “brutalist set” to reduce costs, and relying on the cast's own hair and make-up provisions.

Devoting so much time and money to the costuming hasn't only resulted in a visual spectacle, but has also led to a promising atmosphere amongst the cast. One cast member has praised Lucy and Freya's work, referencing how often in the past she has felt uncomfortable in costumes that didn't fit properly, but hasn't had that problem at all in 5/11. It's been a top priority for Evie that her cast feels a sense of ownership over their costumes.

She described how much she, Lucy, and Freya have enjoyed “working with the cast, asking them *what do you think your character would wear?*” The costumes aren't designed to be “completely untouchable artefacts, they really are supposed to be worn and enjoyed.”

However, creating this vision has been no mean feat. Beginning the process online over the Summer vacation left the team's vision overwhelmed by what Freya described as “a lot of zoom calls” and “a lot of spreadsheets.” The upside, however, was being free from the pressures of their studies.

“

Protests, gigs, and the Sex Pistols

Both Freya and Lucy felt that having more time for the project left them with the capacity to be more creative. Not only that, but both costume designers have access to sewing machines at home, but are now left making all final alterations by hand, without access to one in Cambridge.

The pair knew they were signing up for a lot when they applied; Evie's moodboard and vision inspired a costuming scheme unlike anything else either Freya or Lucy had worked on before. Lucy's recent Camdram credits include her work as costume designer for Easter Term's *The Seagull*, a show with not only far simpler costumes, but with a budget not even a quarter of 5/11's.

As opening night approached, the team were busy putting finishing touches and alterations on costumes. Joining our Zoom call from the ADC's dressing room, Evie seemed to be in the middle of an exciting but full-on week of preparations. She described the pressure of Cambridge theatre's “tight deadlines”; and it struck me that despite the team's complete devotion to this play and its costumes for the past five months, there remained a final sprint to opening night. The costuming scheme for 5/11 is

fuelled by a revolutionary ambition that promises a spectacle unlike any other show in recent years at the ADC.

▲ JENNIFER CHEN



The European Theatre Group preps for a tempestuous tour

Martha Vine covers the distance travelled by the ETG before they embark on their next dramatic expedition

"I've got facepaint in my pocket," Manon Harvey announces as she drops into a booth at the Newnham café with a backpack and cycle helmet in hand – she's just come back from a three-hour lecture followed by a power walk to Grafton to source facepaint for the headshots that are going to be underway this week for the European Theatre Group. Manon Harvey, director of the Cambridge University European Theatre Group, and Jacob Gaskell, its tour manager, are busy people. The ETG demands a level of organisation unmatched by any internal Cambridge theatre: travelling across Western Europe to put on seven performances in two weeks, Gaskell has to get 24 Cambridge students in a coach on the 2nd of December that will drive to European schools, theatres, and universities with a production of *The Tempest* that's been in the works since April. When I ask him how many miles they will cover, he laughs. "A lot."

"Theatre becomes an immersive experience and a place of learning, not merely performance

The ETG first started touring in 1957. The first group to go composed of half a dozen actors in two revamped fruit vans headed for Switzerland. It's come a long way since then – Gaskell marvelled at the impossibility of its execution in a pre-email world, especially since so much of what the ETG does is "built on decades" of relations between schools, sponsorship companies and teachers. Re-establishing venue links

post-pandemic proved tricky (CAST, the USA-touring Cambridge theatre group, had to cancel its first post-Covid trip), especially as ETG is, at its heart, an interpersonal project. "We've stayed everywhere," Gaskell tells me. "Universities, host families, even a commune, once." A few years ago, one team slept on a barge in Amsterdam.

Clearly, the aim of the ETG is not just to put on a show. Alongside its performances, an educational pack is taken to schools so students can get a better understanding of the play before they see it live. Shakespeare isn't always accessible, Harvey notes, and how much more so if English isn't your first language? The ETG understands that the play must transcend the words on a script. "It's hard, but it forces you to be innovative." Performing on stages they haven't seen before with a bare-bones technical set and an audience that may not exactly understand the dialogue is a catalyst for creating something deeply alive. Theatre becomes an immersive experience and a place of learning, not merely performance. Even the crew, not just the audiences, are learning as they go; four of the troupe are fresher techies, or 'frechies,' who've never worked on a production before and are trained up as they go. "It's important to have that continuation," Gaskell replies when I ask him why, on a performance that already takes so much organisation, they'd choose beginners to get involved. "That's what theatre is. Letting people improve their skills." In this way, the ETG has a familial feeling to it. Newcomers are welcomed and taught so that they can hopefully take over in the following years. One contact Gaskell reached

out to about a performing space was a n

ex-ETG member himself; he turned up wearing his old merch. "Maybe that'll be you someday," I suggest. Gaskell smiles.

"There's nothing to fall back on, no Cambridge executives to sweep in if something goes wrong

He's just excited to be "sitting on the coach on the second of December... and for it to leave." The amount of thought that has gone into every element of their coming tour is tangible. Harvey chose to pitch *The Tempest*, a fascinating play, but a difficult one to stage; nothing can fly in, nothing can be projected, and for a work about the supernatural, she's had to get creative. I wonder why she chose it; having laboured over this particular Shakespeare for my A-Level exams, I know it will be no easy task to convey the wonders of a magical, secluded island filled with otherworldly inhabitants in a theatre halfway across the world that she'll lay eyes on for the first time as she walks off the coach. Harvey thinks for a moment. "It's a celebration of creativity. Creative forms." *The Tempest* is filled to the brim with music, dancing, masques, and beautiful, lush verse. A "showcase," she calls it. Not just a piece of art, but a question of why art is made – what purpose it fulfils.

Here, the purpose is evident. This tour of Shakespeare is an exploration, both of the words and of the response it elicits. The risks are pronounced, both Harvey and Gaskell agree. There's nothing to fall back on, no Cambridge executives to swoop in if something goes wrong. But that's perhaps why the ETG is doing something so important: "higher stakes," maybe. After meeting Gaskell and Harvey, though, who have already given this their all for almost half a year, I get the feeling it will be a triumph.

Footlights' alumni kept in the shadows

Charles III

All hail His Majesty the King! And apparently, alum of Cambridge Footlights before his graduation from Trinity in 1970. Can't really imagine his royal highness bumbling about improvising on the stage, but I guess you have to start somewhere...

Salman Rushdie

Booker Prize winner and survivor of several assassination attempts, Rushdie's publication of the provocative *Satanic Verses* in 1988 was preceded by a surprisingly prolific career on the Footlights stage during his studies at King's in the sixties.

Dan Stevens

Actor Dan Stevens is typically known for his more serious roles in shows such as *Downton Abbey* and Shakespearean theatre, but he was actually discovered by Peter Hall in his production of *Macbeth* as part of the Marlowe Society. While studying English at Emma, he was a member of the Footlights alongside comedians Tim Key and Mark Watson.

Miriam Margolyes

Known for her eccentric personality both in life and in character, flaunting her comic prowess in high-profile roles such as Professor Sprout in *Harry Potter*, this one's perhaps less surprising. Margolyes' Footlights career spanned her years reading English at Newnham in the sixties, and she has since made a name for herself that far exceeds the prestige of a Camdram and ADCbridge.

Douglas Adams

His writing might have been out of this world, but Douglas Adams had his beginnings in the definitely earth-bound Corpus Playroom. He became a member of the Footlights in 1973 (maybe to the detriment of his academic work, since he admitted to completing only three essays in three years), and went on to contribute to *Monty Python*, write three *Doctor Who* serials, create Dirk Gently's *Holistic Detective Agency*, name a Pink Floyd album, and, most famously, pen *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*.

Olivia Colman

As one of the most highly-regarded actresses today, Colman is known for roles ranging from Queen Anne in *The Favourite*, to Deborah Flowers in the dark comedy series *Flowers*. While she only studied at Homerton for a term, Colman certainly made the most of the Cambridge stage, auditioning for Footlights where she met her future co-stars David Mitchell and Robert Webb.

Ali Smith

The novelist, playwright and academic behind *How to Be Both* and the *Seasonal Quartet* attended Newnham College in pursuit of her doctorate in American and Irish modernism. As is often its way, Cambridge Theatre soon derailed her studies. Smith began writing plays for the Footlights, which were performed at the Edinburgh Fringe in 1986, 1988, 1989, and 1990.



PAUL ASHLEY

Arts

Diving into 'Women and Water'

Blossom Durr takes a plunge into Murray Edwards' new exhibition, and decides whether it sinks or swims

Seductive sirens, dramatic drownings and girlish nymphs have long defined the artistic history concerning women's relationship to water. These biased, gendered myths and tropes prevent their complex, nuanced and meaningful union from being justly explored. Spanning from the early 20th century to present day, Murray Edwards' new exhibition 'Women & Water' challenges these tired associations constructed between women and water, combining the work of 17 women artists in a thought-provoking and deeply resonant exhibit. Intent on defying convention and changing the narrative, associate creator of The Women's Art Collection, Naomi Polonsky, has strived to include and explore the plethora of ways in which water can represent, and play a role in, a diverse variety of women's lives.

On speaking with Naomi, she revealed that the inspiration for the exhibition came from a place close to home. Lying at the heart of the College, Murray Edwards' iconic architectural feature, the Fountain Court, plays an integral part of everyday student life and, for Naomi, it was the perfect embodiment of the exhibit's theme and sparked her interest in women's relationship with water. The fountain too played an important role in the exhibition itself. Situated opposite the gallery space, the glowing presence and frothing water bubbles of the fountain added great ambience to the exhibition, its pooling waters reflecting off the glass, causing a mesmerising display of ripples to oscillate across the gallery floor as visitors entered.

Whilst this watery, theatrical effect, may have been coincidental, every other detail of this small yet mighty exhibition has been carefully considered. From the fluid title font which mimics water droplets, to the soft blue painted walls and the port hole spotlighting, the design of the exhibition ensured that water pervaded every inch of the space; the works themselves were even hung to mirror the shape of a crashing wave.

Water is part of everyday life. We are accustomed to rain falling, rivers flowing and splashing puddles. To us, water is mundane and ordinary. However, the artists of this exhibit transform water into something which embodies meaning, power and emotion. For some, it is symbolic of new life and the passage of time. For others, it becomes their grief, trauma and pain.

The exhibition's exploration of these nuances of female experience begins with a work by Joanna Moss titled 'Own Copy', which portrays a single moment during the artist's birth scan. Transforming the small, black-and-white clinical image into a large, brightly coloured painting, Moss amplifies the gravitas of this life-changing moment, capturing our attention by colourising and beautifying what would normally be a monotone scan.

Water here is both the amniotic fluid which surrounds the baby, depicted in a network of marbled lines in various shades and tones of blue, but also comes to represent new life, the future, love and excitement.

Moving from birth to ideas of motherhood, Brit-

ish artist Eileen Cooper uses water to represent the struggles of being a new parent. Painted shortly after the birth of her second son, her work 'Seasick' depicts two women floating in a sea of expressive blue brushstrokes. The female forms, portrayed with primal humanity, are pulled in different directions, symbolic of Cooper's own struggles with the conflation of her role as a mother and artist. Her emotional turmoil is implied by the tumultuous

“For some, it is symbolic of new life and the passage of time. For others, it becomes their grief, trauma and pain

ocean which surrounds the figures, while a small boat, illuminated with a pool of white light, seems to remind audiences of the age-old cliché that “life isn't always plain sailing.” Whilst the swirling blue waves of Cooper's composition relate to her new role as a mother, artist Tracey Emin harks back to her childhood, exploring her turbulent past through the depiction of an annual boat race near her home. A churning seascape engulfs a fleet of boats, their masts and sails ablaze, an explosion of pinks, oranges, greens, yellows and blues juxtaposing their jet-black silhouettes. Being the first print to ever be published by the

artist, the loose spontaneity of Emin's lithograph seems to reflect her young, reckless self. The print's border, adorned with scratchy maritime illustrations, includes the work's title 'Sixty A Day Woman', relating to Emin's then partner's remark about her bad smoking habit. The title lends itself to the idea of a representation of self, possibly suggesting that the piece has symbolic ties to the ups and downs of Emin's adolescence and her struggles to discover her identity.

However, the artists in 'Women and Water' not only explore water through thematic conceits, they also experiment with its materiality, creating works that use water as their primary medium. Chloe Ho's 'Nature Embodied 1' combines Chinese ink, spray paint, acrylics, and coffee to reveal a watery female figure. Reinterpreting the traditional genre of Chinese landscape art, Ho's work is intent on capturing the primordial essence of being, the work integrating water symbolically and literally to act as a key to both life and artistic expression.

Defying the male-dominated realm culpable of constructing a biased relationship between women and water, Naomi ultimately aims to use the “personal and visceral” theme of 'Women and Water' to showcase the multiplicity of female human experience in relation to the natural, life-giving source that is water. Alive with impassioned conversation and enthusiastic remarks, the exhibition, despite its modest size, gives audiences the opportunity to view the union shared between women and water in a new light, while giving them the space to reflect upon their own connections to water. So, as the seasons change and winter creeps in, what better way to spend a rainy afternoon than visiting

'Women and Water' and contemplating what water represents to you in your life.

'Women and Water': 7th Oct, 2023 to the 25th Feb, 2024

◀ **EVA WEINSTEIN**

Books to banish your mid-term slump

Percy Jackson and The Lightning Thief by **Rick Riordan**

After a term of forcing myself through Euripides and Aeschylus, I've realised that maybe Greek mythology is not quite as easy reading as Rick Riordan gaslit me into believing. Trapped in the third-year tragedy slump, it's time to re-pill myself by turning to the real classics – hard to believe Sophocles managed to desecrate source material as perfect as *Percy Jackson*. When you need to remind yourself of the nostalgic joy of feeling like a silly little carefree ten-year-old again, then you know it's time to crack open *The Lightning Thief*. Reading is allowed to induce pleasure not just pain, I promise.

Lilith by **Nikki Marmery**

A retelling of the Hebrew myth about Adam's first wife – yes, there was one before Eve – who is kicked out of the Garden of Eden for refusing to be subservient to him. A story of female rage, and ultimately, of female revenge, this Greek retelling is a powerful tale of a character who has been demonised and sidelined. So gripping that your busy week will fade into a distant, hazy memory.

Flappers and Philosophers by **F Scott Fitzgerald**

A collection of Fitzgerald's short stories to zip you away from the dark skies of Cambridge and plunge you into a spangled 1920s world, the Jazz Age. Filled to the brim with dazzling parties, absurd costumes and witty snatches of conversation, these bite-sized tales of only a few pages each are short enough to flip through before bed; a perfect reintroduction to reading for the commitment phobes amongst you.

Anne of Green Gables by **Lucy Maud Montgomery**

Everyone's favourite children's book, what better a story to revisit when looking for a bit of comfort and stability in the middle of a manic Michaelmas moment. Make a cup of tea, float through the pages and into the familiar world of Avonlea, where you can fondly reminisce over Anne's fickle fancies and impish antics.

Seagull by **Jonathan Livingstone**

A novella about a seagull who is trying to learn about flying, this tale is moving, uplifting, and particularly relatable when in the midst of a bout of imposter syndrome. Escape the claustrophobia of Week Five with this heart-warming fable about a seagull searching for a higher purpose, aided by the soothing photos and illustrations interspersed throughout. With its unpretentious, refreshing tone, Jonathan Livingstone will undoubtedly bring you some much-needed perspective in the midst of an essay crisis or after a humbling supervision.

Pippi Longstocking by **Astrid Lindgren**

As the nights roll in earlier and earlier, and that deep-seated existential dread starts to roll in, all you need is a shot of joyous whimsy. Re-reading *Pippi Longstocking* as a work-frazzled twenty-something transports me right back to being a gobby seven-year-old who wanted to do nothing more than make biscuits on the kitchen floor and dance the polka with robbers like the heroine of this story.

Processing touch: 'Artists Buttons' at Kettle's Yard

Eve Connor ponders the social significance of the limited edition sets of buttons created by leading artists in support of Kettle's Yard

In a letter to his sister, Keats lamented the shortcomings of the written word compared to "speaking — one cannot write a wink, or a nod, or a grin [...] One cannot put one's finger to one's nose, or yerk ye in the ribs, or lay hold of your button." When Lucie Rie couldn't secure a licence to make pots, she made buttons instead. On both occasions, the button is a substitute: the bridesmaid and never the bride.

“For a moment, the buttons were everything

Drawing inspiration from the gallery's recent *Lucie Rie: The Adventure of Pottery* exhibition, *Artists Buttons* challenges this pattern. The project commissioned ten leading artists to craft their own sets of buttons, available until December for purchase from the Kettle's Yard shop.

Each set of buttons is affixed to a simple sheet of card beside the name of their artist and propped on a shallow shelf. What lies behind the pane of

glass is frustratingly tangible. For example, Jonathan Anderson's "metropolitan" pigeons, their throats ringed with the better blues and pinks of an oil spill, and Cornelia Parker's "mini theatres of war", lead toy soldiers stabbed with red thread, both make their static setting feels incongruous. Caroline Walker rewards your attention. Her porcelain buttons are painted to resemble tortoise shells; only squinting do the paler reflections of light reveal their thicker texture. Similarly repurposing the real world, Ai Weiwei worked with Firmin & Sons Ltd, the official button supplier to the British royal family, to reproduce the stars on the uniforms of China's Liberation Army. Weiwei's work complicates the button's substitutive role, recalling the two guards monitoring his secret detention in Beijing: "I was instructed not to look at the guards' faces, so I focused on their buttons." Other artists expand the button into new territory. Antony Gormley returns to first touch, the "rite of passage in childhood when you must become competent to fasten your own clothing." His charcoal buttons are edged like a shortcrust pastry, and the fingerprint impressing their surfaces prompts "the twin tensions of desire and propriety." I am reminded of how in censored films or tel-

evision programmes, actions like the unfastening of a button stand in for a myriad of human passions.

Edmund de Waal, an alumnus of Trinity Hall, has written before about the significance of objects in *The Hare with Amber Eyes: A Hidden Inheritance* (2010), his family memoir about 264 Japanese

netsuke miniatures, the remnants of an extraordinary collection confiscated by the Nazi regime. His buttons, delicate as seashells, are an elegy to Lucie Rie, inscribed with the potter's name and studio addresses. Even the set's asymmetric arrangement on the card is considered, seemingly dropped by an open fist yet sewn in place.

Callum Innes also utilises collections, the thumbhole of an old palette informing the shape of his buttons. The electric blue and "leaf-like" buttons of Vickien Parsons are interested, like Gormley, in their own touch: "I

▼ EVA WEINSTEIN

took a small piece of clay in my hands and pressed it three times using equal pressure with both hands." Rana Begum returns to the floor tiles created during a residency in the Philippines to construct her two-tone buttons, their distinctive central pinch moulded from wet clay. Jennifer Lee mixed metallic oxides to create her earthy buttons, their speckles and bands of colour familiar to anyone who has turned over a stone on the beach to discover how the sea has gone to work.

Leaving Kettle's Yard, autumn was arriving at last in its unhurried way. I retrieved from my bag a knitted blazer, the one I think flits between the wardrobe of a Republican senator's wife and Kristin Scott Thomas in *Four Weddings and a Funeral* (1994). Fumbling the buttons into their slots, I noticed in a new light the brass-rimmed white whorls like the caps of an Iced Gem, and the union of touch, beauty, and simplicity pleased me. For a moment, the buttons were everything. I was glad there was no glass between us.

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Music

‘Realistically, I’m not that talented’

Alex Brian discovers the secrets behind student band Last Resort's wild performances

At their recent gig at The Six Six Bar, Last Resort delivered a barrage of indie bangers with ferocious energy and an uncanny ability to charm the crowd. By the end of their performance, frontman Zaki Lim’s gangster glasses long since flung into the crowd, the audience was crying for an encore – and all this while lead guitarist Sean Conrad had his arm in a cast.

Formed in 2021, the group are primarily a covers band but have just started to introduce originals into their setlist. Lim met keyboardist Connor McAteer, whose role is bizarrely to play basslines on a synthesiser, at an open-mic night: “this guy came up to me and said, ‘we should start a band’ and then just disappeared.” After eventually tracking McAteer down, Lim recruited Conrad and found drummer Saksham Shah through Instagram. Although they did not all know each other initially, the band “hit it off straight away.”

When it came to band names, however, they did not necessarily see eye to eye. “Our original name was Empty Classroom, which I still prefer to be honest,” Lim says indignantly, “but the other band members’ friends kept saying it was a s**t name.” Inspired by the band Last Dinosaurs, they eventually settled on the name Last Resort. Lim likes that it lowers people’s expectations: “if we’re called Last Resort, you expect us to be s**t.”

This kind of self-deprecation is typical from Lim, who goes on to say that, while McAteer is a “musical genius,” “realistically I’m not that talented but I can put on a show.” Overall, he gives a chaotic

impression of the band: “we don’t do soundchecks, Connor doesn’t even know the bassline, he just plays random s**t, Sean’s guitar is always out of tune.” However, things are looking up. “We’ve got pedals now, which is a big thing for us,” Lim laughs.

This feeling of inadequacy, whether deserved or not, is what inspired the band to focus on the performative aspects of their show. “It was a Sidney Bar gig that kickstarted us becoming a hype band,” Lim reveals, explaining that he felt compelled to adopt a persona to avoid embarrassing himself in front of his college mates. Consequently, his favourite song to play is ‘Are You Gonna Be My Girl’ by Jet because of its ability to energise any audience. “The crowd doesn’t care if it sounds good,” he admits, “they just want it to be something they know.”

Yet this attitude has led

to disagreements within the band, with McAteer often wanting to include fewer mainstream tracks on the setlist. “There are definitely stubborn figures in the band, including myself,” Lim admits. Nevertheless, Conrad and Shah are always able to smooth things over thanks to their slightly less perfectionist tendencies.

One issue that occasionally causes clashes within the group is writing originals. “Connor just mashes them out,” Lim explains, “we’re cooking up a potential five but we never have time to finish them.” According to Conrad, their sound is “really varied”, ranging from metal to pop-punk and funk. As for Shah’s effort, he laughs, that’s a bit “cult-y and weird.”

When I ask about their favourite moment performing in Cambridge, Lim is

indecisive: “Sid Bar was the best. No, actually, crowd surfing.” Eventually, he decides against crowd surfing, remembering that a security guard grabbed his leg to stop him from moving, causing the audience to drop him.

Their worst movement would have to be their initial gig on the hottest day of the year: “I was like, ‘Everyone stand up!’ but everyone just stayed sitting down.” That, or the Big Audition Weekend, when Lim’s borrowed guitar broke halfway through ‘I Bet You Look Good on the Dancefloor.’ “Afterwards, I had to go to my room and just stare at the ceiling for two hours,” he laughs, “I was quite confident going into it, which I think is why it broke me so much.”

Their advice for bands that are just getting started is not to wait until you sound perfect before booking shows, because you learn a lot through the process. College bars are always desperate for performers but “you have to be proactive about finding gigs.” They also recommend weekly practices and professional social media accounts before admitting: “we say this stuff but we don’t do it. We just botch our way through things.”

Earlier, however, Lim came closer to the truth: “we’ve built a rep by grinding out gigs and putting on a good show.” Indeed, despite all their self-criticism, they are each incredibly talented performers. If you want to seem them in action, you should visit Christ’s Bar on November 10th or Grandma Groove on January 23rd.

◀ SUSIE KIRSTEN



Behind the scenes at a Brazilian music festival

Romilly Norfolk chats to the team behind the lighting design for The Town

Most of us are familiar with festivals in the UK, whether that’s revelling at Leeds or enjoying Glastonbury from your sofa. Festivals are an integral part of UK culture. But have you ever wondered what goes into producing a festival, especially those beyond our shores? If so, this article is for you, revealing what goes on in the lighting production of a festival abroad.

Our spotlight festival is Brazil’s newest sensation, The Town. Held at São Paulo’s Interlagos Circuit, it boasted six stages and hosted over 100,000 people daily during its two weekends in September.

However, before a festival of this scale can occur, an insane amount of preparation is required. The planning process for The Town started as early as 2019, with the layout organisation alone taking over a year.

Surprisingly, The Town, despite its Brazilian ownership, entrusted its lighting to a British company, Woodroffe Bassett Design. The corporation is well-renowned, having designed the 2012 Olympics and worked with legends like Elton John and The Rolling Stones. WBD’s Principal Designer, Terry Cook, oversaw the lighting design for 15 areas of The Town, including its six stages.

Cook explained that, once the general layout is decided, “the real fun can start.” His initial focus was the stages, with the goal of making them

“as user-friendly as possible” by creating a “bold, easy-to-understand” lighting rig. This stage of the process usually takes around three months, but due to the festival’s frequent structural changes, the final drawing was confirmed only eight weeks before launch.

Once the design is largely finished, the focus shifts to its actualisation. Construction of the 40-metre high Skyline Stage commenced in May, with the structure taking shape on site in July. Three weeks before opening night, Cook and his team finally received the go-ahead to install their gear.

This is where the production company comes in. For The Town, this was LPL, a Brazilian lighting company that managed 150 workers and installed a staggering 300 tonnes of equipment.

Since most of its managers spoke fluent English, the greatest barrier between LPL and WBD was not language but culture. In Britain, Cook notes, “we work hard, we push no matter the weather, we start at 9am and finish late.” However, abroad, you could “not meet a soul on site until post-lunch”. Nevertheless, Cook acknowledges, “when you get used to it... it’s not a barrier and becomes the norm.”

During the festival, WBD helped install the extra gear artists brought with them. Bruno Mars, for instance, doubled the number of lights on the rig. Ensuring this process went smoothly required a huge amount of work. Cook sent over 4500 emails to artists’ teams while preparing for The Town. For

Cook, this alone was a “full-time job” and “the most important element” of the festival side of his role.

Thanks to the crew’s hard work, The Town proceeded smoothly. However, no festival is without a little chaos. Firstly, there were the treacherous journeys around the site. The metal planks forming the walkway beneath the stage were littered with

“
No festival is without a little chaos

warning signs due to their tendency to flip if you stepped on them incorrectly. Other chaotic elements included a zipwire structure collapsing just days before launch, a shortage of drinking water, and several power cuts in one day.

This chaos is one of the clearest differences between UK and overseas festivals. Evidently, not every UK festival avoids this kind of mayhem, nor does every festival abroad suffer similar problems. Nevertheless, the culture of UK festivals, shaped by their often expansive, remote locations and the unpredictable British weather, means that we es-

cape much of this disorder because we prepare for the worst.

Another difference between The Town and UK festivals is a greater emphasis on monetisation. The Town had over 140 sponsors, with many receiving their own “stand” (often the size of a small house). Top-tier artists are paid millions of dollars to perform at The Town, whereas many musicians incur losses at UK festivals. Furthermore, tickets cost 10% the average monthly salary in Brazil, similar to Glastonbury’s 12%, but Glastonbury offers 5 days while The Town only sells one-night tickets.

Nevertheless, thanks to the efforts of the crew, The Town proved spectacular. Many involved worked 18-hour days, often through the night. While some of them would say their career was a mistake, I don’t think they’d have it any other way. LPL’s unofficial slogan is “Loucos por Luz” (“Crazy for Light”), which epitomises the field. These professionals are willing to work for weeks straight, only getting a few hours of sleep each night, because they are crazy about what they do.

Production crews work awfully hard to organise the concerts you enjoy so next time you watch a live performance, take some time to appreciate how it came together and the people pressing the buttons while you dance along.



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Music

Cambridge music history corner

David Quinn discovers the time that Bob Dylan entered the Cambridge curriculum

▲ EMILY LAWSON-TODD

After exhaustive research (i.e. a few hours of Googling), it appears that Bob Dylan has never performed in Cambridge. More unfortunately, Dylan certainly has played at “the other place,” bringing his Rough and Rowdy Ways Tour to The New Theatre Oxford only last year. Still, there is one piece of Dylan-ology that Cambridge can claim over Oxford. Beginning in 2017, Cambridge ran a special course on Dylan’s lyrics that generated national news coverage, the only irony being how little Dylan wishes to be studied or noticed at all.

The one thing that can certainly be said about Dylan is that nothing certain can be said about Dylan. Over the decades, he has taken many (often unintentionally funny) personas that seem to deliberately challenge the striking images of him in his 60s heyday. There’s his Victoria’s Secret advert complete with the obligatory cowboy hat, his born-again Christian phase, and my personal favourite: his utterly

confused expression while singing ‘We are the World’ (look it up on YouTube). Nevertheless, even Dylan’s strangest moments make sense from a man who tries to see life from every angle.

Dylan’s relationship with literary studies is complicated. When awarded the Nobel prize for Literature in 2016, he didn’t collect it. According to the rules of the prize committee, the recipient must



Dylan's relationship with literary studies is complicated

deliver a lecture within six months of receiving the award. Dylan did deliver his lecture, exactly five days before the deadline. During the talk, Dylan explained that “songs are alive in the land of the living..

unlike literature” because “they’re meant to be sung, not read.” His statement places me in the challenging position of contravening Dylan and stating that his lyrics are absolutely worth being read alongside the act of listening.

Dylan’s lyrics are littered with intricate references to literature and folk tradition, especially France’s favourite bad boy poet, Arthur Rimbaud. His influence appears in the “spinning reels of time” of ‘Mr. Tambourine Man,’ which owe much of their surrealism and symbolism to Rimbaud poems like ‘The Drunken Boat.’ The poet even gets a mention in one of Dylan’s most striking love songs, ‘You’re Gonna Make Me Lonesome When You Go’. Like Rimbaud, Dylan never sought attention for revolutionising language yet this is almost certainly why he has received it.

Dylan’s songs are more than the sum of their references because of how they are transformed in performance. No Dylan album is the same. For instance, death and ageing are central to 1997’s ‘Time Out

Of Mind’ due to Dylan’s increasingly weathered, cracked voice that won’t go gently into the night. His plaintive ballad ‘Sara’ works both as a poem and a performance. Each verse is a vignette of his very real marriage with Sara Lownds while remaining abstract enough to appeal to anyone who has been in love. For six minutes, the lonesome harmonica and tremble of

Dylan’s voice take us through an entire relationship from marital nerves to regretting its breakdown and the creation of another of Dylan’s love songs, ‘Sad Eyed Lady of The Lowlands’. It’s a perfect union of word and voice, which is ultimately why Dylan is so hard to cover and write about.

Why bother studying Dylan then? Whether Dylan ascribes any meaning to his lyrics or not, we can find our own unique significations. After all, students did sign up for the Cambridge course and I will be citing Dylan as a source for my dissertation. Dylan, in both his seriousness and his smile, will always keep us chasing the wind for an answer.

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Why are Blues sports so private school-dominated?

Whether cricket, rugby, hockey, or football, a disproportionate amount of Cambridge's elite athletes are privately educated. **Hannah Castle** asks why and considers how we might bridge the gap

While Cambridge University has generally improved its access over the past few years, with an intake now made up of roughly three-quarters state educated students compared to around half twenty years ago, its sport scene is yet to feel the effects of this improvement. The elitist legacy is plain to see on the school lists, with prestigious private schools covering our University's top squads. Sports teams, especially Blues squads, are frequently disproportionately filled with privately educated students, and almost all first-team players have several years of experience playing before arriving at university. State school students are underrepresented in our sports teams, for several reasons difficult to address.

This picture is not unique to Cambridge, rather it reflects the greater structural issue of investment in sports more generally and the unevenness of this between state and private schools. Statistics on sports funding in secondary schools are complex, due to funding being allocated differently depending on school location and size, but underinvestment in sport in state-funded schools is well-acknowledged.

In my own school, PE was abandoned in Year Eleven in favour of extra hours spent working on our 'core subjects' -

those which the government required we pass - and the sixth form had no PE at all. After school clubs were few and far between, and matches were even fewer. Inter-school competitions were occasional, and participation was limited. My experience of inter-school athletics was standing on the side of the track in the rain, being told I couldn't compete because I didn't have spikes - a necessary safety regulation, but one which



Students who wish to play sport more seriously are forced to play with a club

instantly excluded anyone who didn't run seriously.

State educated students in general have fewer opportunities to develop sports ability within schools, though there are some exceptions. Therefore, students who wish to play sport more seriously are forced to play with a club; the ability to do so is also reliant on an ability to pay membership fees. Private

schools on the whole invest much more in sports, with more hours and quality teaching, and many students often play at club level too.

Sports teams in Cambridge are primarily made up of people with prior experience. Therefore, players who make it to Cambridge and onto teams are likely to come from wealthier backgrounds. This does not mean those players do not deserve their places on squads, but rather that structural barriers to sport exist long before anyone makes it to university. These patterns of disproportionate access are then repeated in Cambridge.

As schools' lists reveal, sports teams continue to be dominated by players from the same types of school, or even individual schools. The men's hockey team was made up of over 90% privately educated students, including three students from the same independent school. Some teams have better representation than others and interestingly, and of the ones we looked at, women's teams are in general more proportionally representative than men's. However, of those researched, only women's football has a proportion of state-educated students that matches the proportion in Cambridge as a whole.

Another barrier that continues structural inaccessibility is the lack of funding

given by the University to sports teams. When speaking to several Blues players, a common concern was insufficient central funding. This causes problems such as expensive subs and lack of coaches, leaving it to committees and captains to run development sessions - despite the fact that these are all students, unpaid and with degrees to do. This in turn means that some clubs do not have the capacity to teach beginners. Players want to improve access to their clubs, but they are limited in what they can do.

One student said: "I think there should definitely be more options for people who want to play to a lower level (eg. development squad) but most sports don't have the funds to make this happen or to afford extra coaching which is a real shame."

While several colleges do provide sports funds to help with the cost of subs and kit, these scholarships vary significantly between colleges and therefore the disparity of who can access University sport is not necessarily addressed. Whether a new player seeking to join a club, or an experienced player who just can't afford subs, the sports scene can be difficult to navigate.

All these things sit uncomfortably when viewed in conjunction with the University's own statements on sport.

The website expresses a great pride in the Cambridge sports scene, and says "our sights are set on growing this legacy [of sporting excellence] by providing a sustainable sporting environment for students of all backgrounds and interests." This is yet to be realised. If the University is to be committed to enabling this vision for every student, more investment in sports teams is needed.

The question of how to improve the proportion of state-educated students in Blues teams remains a difficult one to answer. Several factors overlap and make it situationally less likely for state-educated students to be able to progress the sports scene - while state school sport remains so underfunded it is difficult to imagine much changing. However, this doesn't make disparity unavoidable, and it can certainly be improved. Many teams are keen to expand to new players so a greater investment in sports teams via funding and coaching would go a long way to improving access. More transparency about costs and access to clubs in general would also be a useful step. Students need to believe they could see themselves on a team so that they even bother trying at all, and this will only come about through further discussion and through expansion of opportunities.

The college kings of table tennis: King's College top the table

After King's were peerless with the paddle last year, **Ed Marsh** investigates what made them so successful

Last year, King's College Table Tennis Club (KCTCC) sent shockwaves through the world of college table tennis. Starting Michaelmas in Division Two, they achieved a rapid promotion to Division One. In Lent, they won Division One. And then, to cap it all off, they won Cuppers too. In order to get a sense of what is making KCTCC so successful, I went down to a practice session.

Perhaps naively, I'd imagined practice to be held in college: King's is home to only one table tennis table, and its various chipped edges and inner dimples demonstrate its popularity amongst students - be that as a table tennis table or, more frequently, a beer pong table. But to avoid those drinking divots, KCTCC trains on a weekly basis at the University Sports Centre.

What was so great about training was that it involved a mixture of abilities. For a team with such high aspirations, they still put inclusivity at the forefront. Harsh Luna, a fresher, told me how, before this year, he'd never really played table tennis but was now loving KCTCC due to the "casual, beginner-friendly environment" of training.

Of course, at points during the session, the intensity ramped up. Captain Joseph Kommared-

dy made clear to me his intentions for the season: "it's really important for us to do well in Division One after the success last year. We're going to hold trials which will be fairly intense. And I know we lost key players but I still believe we have what it takes to do well in Division One." Reddy is a touch understating when he says 'key players': King's have lost *all* of the squad that won Cuppers last year.

From what was on display at training, however, the next crop of KCTCC players can certainly bring more success. You can tell Kommareddy also has roots in lawn tennis as his position at the table is incredibly deep. Such an unorthodox starting position, however, allows him to counter the more powerful players and outwit those with similar technical prowess.

Louis Hobson is another player hoping to help bring KCTCC more success. A third-year undergraduate, Hobson took last year out

from table tennis to focus on rowing. Asking him why he came back to KCTCC, he simply replied "It's not rowing." Make of that what you will...

It is down to Kommareddy, however, that King's even have the chance to retain their title at cuppers this year. After the mass exodus (graduation) of last year's players, KCTCC looked set to dissolve. Kommareddy, however, stepped in at the last hour to take it on. In doing so he took on responsibilities including overseeing practice sessions, helping to train those who've never played before, and also being in charge of college funding.

After tasting glory, then flirting with death, King's College Table Tennis Club are very much back. When trials do happen, Kommareddy told me he expected around 15 players to try out for just three positions. This is a new era for KCTCC, but it promises to be just as exciting.

▼ ED MARSH



Captain's Corner: Gymnastics

Alex Berry opens the floor to the Blues Gymnastics captain Will Chapman

Who is your sporting idol?

It would have to be Louis Smith - seeing him in the 2012 London Olympics was really inspirational for me and he's just a comeback into the Commonwealth gymnastics team!

What is your best sporting moment?

My best sporting moment would be landing my vault for the first time ever at the Varsity competition last year. I'm not sure how it looked to the judges but felt great for me.

Worst sporting moment?

Hard to choose from the many embarrassing fails, but breaking my ankle in a foam pit has to be up there.

Why gymnastics?

I love how it incorporates all aspects of full body strength, power, balance and flexibility. Plus, it is quite fun to learn new flips and tricks.

What would be your go-to skill to impress with at a party?

Standing backflip is always a popular one.

Is it tricky to balance training for multiple bits of apparatus?

It can be, especially with the requirements of full body conditioning, however, this can also make training more fun as if one apparatus gets tiring, you can just move on to a different one that focuses elsewhere.

Where would be best for a beginner to start?

All our sessions at the sport centre are really beginner friendly and slowly build up the basic skills required for gymnastics!

Any pre-competition rituals?

I don't like to be superstitious but pre-competition usually involves a lot of warming up and a lot more caffeine.

What makes the gymnastics team the best?

From a completely unbiased perspective, everyone is very friendly and supportive, with all abilities encouraged! We are also very social outside of training, so everyone builds strong friendships along with their gymnastics skills.

CONNOR DOYLE ►



Sport

Gymnastics
Captain
raises the
bar
pg. 31



King's: table
tennis
royalty
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Mixing it up? Behind the rise of mixed netball

Alex Berry

When I first took up mixed netball as a lowly Selwyn fresher, we only had enough players for a match once every two or three games, if that. That team would include a couple of men who'd played every now and again the year prior and one that was a complete beginner, if we were lucky. Now, Selwyn is consistently putting out a strong team consisting of a big group of regularly attending players who hold genuine enthusiasm for the sport.

This isn't a trend only seen with Selwyn's team. Despite remaining in the third division in the league throughout my time playing, the standard of play has noticeably improved as the seasons have gone on. Many teams now have shooting pairings that are so in sync that it seems like they've been playing together for years, or centres that read the game like an open book, almost being able to intercept the ball before it's even left your hands. But what is it that's bringing on this change?

The concept of mixed netball isn't something I had really considered before University. Coming from a school environment which massively stereotyped netball as a 'girly sport' where you slowly jog around the court profusely apologising to anyone you bump into, it hadn't really occurred to me that there would be enough of an interest from men to allow for an entire mixed league between colleges. I can only recall playing mixed netball once at school in a GCSE PE class, a class that was quite rapidly diverted to a different sport as the chaos of trying to convince 15 year old boys to play a 'girls sport' that was 'just a bad version of basketball' was quickly revealed.

It feels like this barrier is slightly lessened at university, with many people arriving more willing to try a brand new sport. Netball lends itself well to this, as although the rules may first appear complicated, if you can throw and catch a ball you tend to get the basics pretty quickly. Given netball is rarely offered to boys in school, few men come to university with any prior experience, making this especially relevant to mixed netball. For many players, netball is taken up as a second sport, but I think this can definitely play into the hands of many players; some of the best players I know are avid footballers, cricketers or basketballers.

Last year saw the hosting of the inaugural men's netball cuppers in a round robin tournament. From the afternoon of matches, Pembroke emerged victorious, their well drilled and fast-paced play paying off as they took a clean sweep of their matches. The fact that the tournament could take place at all is testament to how much more popular men's netball has become in recent years, and hopefully will continue to do so, not even to mention the high standard of play throughout.

The establishment of the Cambridge University Men's and Mixed netball club is one product of the increased popularity of the sport, and one that aims to continue to accelerate its growth. Having only been established in Easter term 2023, the team is currently in the midst of gaining the proper accreditation as a university sports team and offers players an opportunity to train and improve their skills outside of the weekly college matches.

Captain Connor McAteer had never played netball before university, taking it up on recommendation of a college parent, but has not looked back since. Speaking on the future goals of the club, he commented that the aim is to "retain inclusion of all abilities and commitment levels to netball, while providing competitive matches for a firsts and seconds team." These competitive matches begin in a week's time as the first team takes on War-

wick University (19/11). Connor hopes that the team will make an "inspirational debut" on the university mixed netball scene, and will aim to play several more of these matches throughout the year.

I may be biased, but I do think that the uptake of men's and mixed netball is down to widening awareness of the sport as a whole and how good of a



Breaking down the stereotypes so perpetuated in schools around the country is only a good thing

sport it actually is. The friends that I've convinced to give it a go (after weeks or months of gentle prodding) have all become heavily involved with the team, actively looking forward to playing matches at the weekend. Having more regularly attending players quite quickly improves the standard of play, and those particularly keen players now have an extra outlet to train and play with the university team. Breaking down the stereotypes so perpetuated in schools around the country is only a good thing, so I only hope to see the mixed netball scene in Cambridge continuing to grow.

