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VARSITY

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University delays fossil fuel action

Felix Armstrong

Cambridge has delayed banning oil company research funding, kicking promised changes to relationships with major polluters further down the road.

After being told to reform the process by which it scrutinises the research funding of fossil fuel companies, the University has subjected this process to multiple delays, which one campaigner has said could mean “a year or more” of inaction.

A student campaign group has said that the University is “ignoring” the consensus of students and staff “in favour of delays and excuses”.

The University has been under pressure since its academic governing body proposed terminating oil company research funding. After blocking the original proposals, Cambridge commissioned an independent inquiry into the University’s research links with the fossil fuel industry.

The report, authored by Nigel Topping, a former UN climate champion for COP26, said that accepting BP and Shell funding poses “high reputational risk” to Cambridge.

The University has accepted the findings of a working group, made up of the University Council, following the Topping report.

But, the University has imposed multiple delays on these recommendations, requiring the “development” of a “Climate Research Strategy,” and the appointment of a new pro-vice-chancellor.

Even the schedule of this report was pushed back multiple times, campaigners have said. Sam Hutton, Chair of the SU’s Ethical Affairs campaign, told *Varsity* that the report “took over a year to complete, breaking several deadlines set by the council”.

The focus of the report’s recommendations is the process by which the University reviews and accepts research funding, which the Topping report demanded be “clarified”.

This system, used to scrutinise the ethics of associating with fossil fuel companies, and which has been in place since 2018, was found to “lack clarity and transparency”.

The board which reviews funding, the Committee on Benefactions and External and Legal Affairs (CBELA), must rely on “third-party analysis” and external definitions of the term “fossil fuel company,” Topping found.

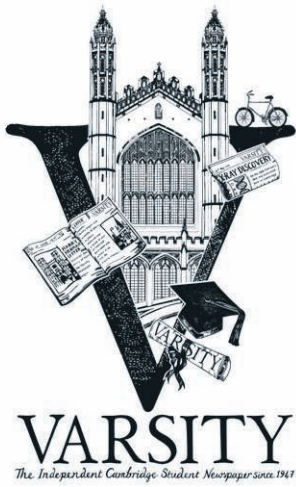
The working group findings, however, now adopted by the University, merely “invite” CBELA to “review its processes”.

This review will be carried out in “reference [...] to the priorities set out in the

▲LOUIS ASHWORTH

Week 8

"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

Coming to Cambridge, you enter a strange and ancient world: one where you stumble home from the club down cobbled alleyways as monastic statues leer at you from above. In this city of so much history, each of us questions how to make the most of our time here. Cramming a packed agenda of degree work, extracurriculars, and the frantic social calendar into a short eight weeks can make time in Cambridge feel simultaneously fast and slow. It's easy to let the beauty of the city slip to the back of your mind.

Of course Cambridge is still far from perfect and it also has far to go, espe-

cially when it comes to its pledges to the planet (p. 1). But its important to remember that we can all play our part as well - even if that means we make our escape from Cambridge by boat rather than plane (p. 10). Though sadly we may still be a few years off escaping by flying car (p. 16).

As another hectic term reaches its close and Christmas lights begin to adorn Market Square, there's a desire to return home to our roots and the places we feel most at ease (p. 13). However, with only a brief three years to enjoy our time here, there's an eagerness to make the most of the city as well. To ensure we explore all the local gems of Kettle's Yard (p. 22), student-made

pantos (p. 23), and the daily joys and magic of Cambridge - both the town and the gown (p. 21). Where else in the world will we get to attend Dr Who formals (p. 7)? Or Binson bops (god bless their glorious return)?

Wherever you are in your Cambridge journey, it's important to remember that the best things come unplanned. Who knows - maybe you'll even stumble your way into becoming the next Hacker T Dog (p. 15)? Whatever the future holds, for now take time to relax after a long and stressful term. We wish

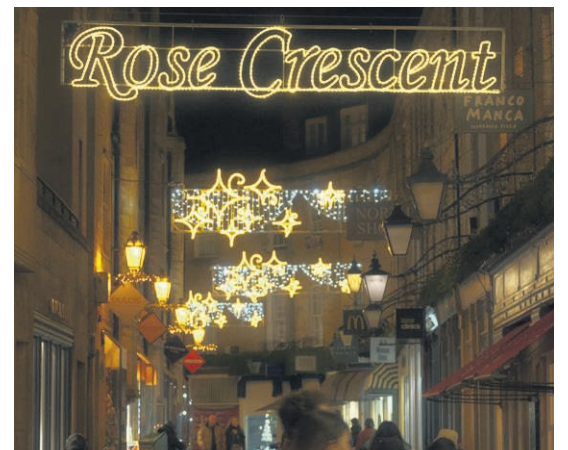
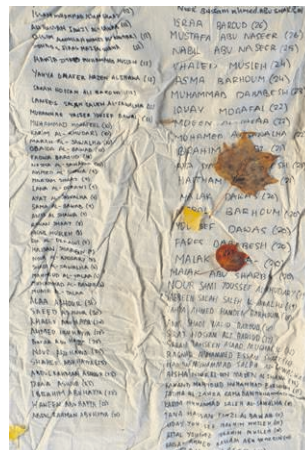
you a very merry Bridgemmas and a happy new year!



Week in Pictures



Remember Their Names from CU Palestine Solidarity Society (20/11) [Hannah Mawardi]



Bridgemmas comes to Rose Crescent (23/11) [Daniel Hilton]



CUCFS X Varsity shoot [Yen Min Ting]



Homerton Dr Who formal (21/11) [Robin Bunce]



A night at the panto (22/11) [Amy Riordan]



Cambridge v ARU american football match (19/11) [Dik Ng]



Trinity Hall on a roll (16/11) [Isabel Dempsey]



Bridgemmas in Market Square [Isabel Dempsey]

Cambridge and the fossil fuel industry

2015 First Zero Carbon protest

In November, Student members of the Zero Carbon activist group stage the first recorded protest against the University’s links to fossil fuels.

2015 SU backs Zero Carbon

Later the same month, the SU votes to back the Zero Carbon campaign, giving the group a £600 grant to kickstart the movement.

2017 Divestment working group created

The University Council sets up a working group to consider the “advantages and disadvantages” of cutting ties to the fossil fuel industry.

2017 Oxbridge investments in Big Oil revealed

The Paradise Papers reveal the tens of millions invested by Cambridge and Oxford in offshore funds, including in ventures to develop oil exploration and deep-sea drilling.

2018 First College promises to divest

Queens’ becomes the first College to cut ties with the fossil fuel sector, amid growing student protests. Just a month before, the University refuses to withdraw its £6 billion endowment from fossil fuels.

2020 University commits to divestment

After years of pressure, the University commits to cutting ties with the fossil fuel sector by 2030. The move was described as “hugely encouraging” by Sir David Attenborough.

2022 Academics ask Uni to cut research ties

84 academics submit a motion calling for the University to halt accepting research funding from the fossil fuel industry. The motion, however, is blocked from going to a vote, and a report is instead commissioned.

2023 Inquiry says Uni must cut research ties

The long-awaited Topping report is released, calling for the University to stop accepting research funding from Big Oil. Research ties with the industry pose “high reputational risk,” and are not aligned with Cambridge’s climate ambition on “any level,” the report finds.

2023 Sustainability pro-VC role proposed

The University Council publishes plans for a sixth pro-vice-chancellor, who would “play a key part in driving progress” on Cambridge’s climate agenda.

Continued from front page

Climate Research Strategy” (CRS), which is yet to be created by the University.

The CRS itself depends on the appointment of a new pro-vice-chancellor for sustainability, who is yet to be chosen. The appointment board for this new role has not yet been created.

These delays have been imposed in the same report that claims that the University has “undoubted prowess in certain areas of climate and sustainability research”.

Sam Hutton told *Varsity* that the University is “shuttling” these recommendations “around as many committees and boards as possible”.

“They’ve decided to implement a new PVC for sustainability, whose appointment will delay this even longer. It is hard to avoid the explanation that they just want to keep taking the money for as long as possible,” Hutton said.

Following this appointment, the re-

view of the scrutiny board will take place “behind closed doors,” with “little oversight and no guarantee that they will stick to the objective metrics” offered by the Topping report.

“Once again, the University is kicking this into the long grass, hoping that once they bury it in their bureaucracy, we’ll forget about it. Students know that we can’t afford to wait years for this, and we’re just waiting for the university to catch up,” Hutton said.

Cambridge Climate Justice (CCJ), a student campaign group, labelled the report as “a disappointing and unfortunately expected response from the university, that kicks the can down the road, again.”

“The university is relying on bureaucracy to delay the will of staff and students [...] this response will seem like nothing less than a bare-faced attempt to escape culpability for the harm they are causing,” CCJ said.

Fergus Kirman, SU President and member of University Council, told

Inside Cambridge’s opaque divestments

Eric Williams

Colleges have invested tens of millions of pounds with widely criticised asset managers and secretive private equity funds, a *Varsity* investigation has found.

Cambridge University refused to share details of its progress on divestment with *Varsity* on the grounds of protecting “trade secrets” and “commercial interests”, while its colleges continue to invest with the world’s most polluting financial institutions.

Meanwhile, three years on from Cambridge’s landmark commitment to remove fossil fuel investments from its £3.5bn endowment fund, a series of *Varsity* freedom of information requests about divestment progress have been refused on the grounds of “trade secrets”.

Almost a third of the way through the central University-wide endowment fund’s (CUEF) timeline to exclude oil and gas, details on how the contents of the fund have evolved remain largely hidden, and a member of the University Council has stated Cambridge needs to “raise its game” on transparency.

The University justified secrecy on the grounds that disclosing divestment details would “prejudice the commercial interests” of the University, and claimed revealing requested information would “constitute an actionable breach of confidence” with its fund managers and the companies in which it invests.

However, identical *Varsity* inquiries into colleges’ progress revealed extensive collegiate investments with widely criticised money managers and secretive private equity firms, which are funding fossil fuel expansion.

Queens’ College was shown to invest £12.3 million in four Warburg Pincus private equity funds. Private equity funds are a particularly opaque form of financing, in which investments are made away from public markets. Last year, analysis by two financial watchdogs ranked Warburg Pincus as the second worst private equity offender in terms of fossil fuel portfolios and transparency. Tens of millions in collegiate invest-

ments were also shown to be put into Vanguard funds, an asset manager that has led a pushback against environmental and social governance (ESG) requirements in investing.

Having continued to expand its billion-dollar stakes in the world’s most carbon-intensive companies after the Paris Agreement, Vanguard withdrew from the Net Zero Asset Managers alliance last year.

The alliance, created at COP26 in Glasgow, had united the world’s largest financial institutions around the goal of net zero emissions by 2050 in a last-ditch attempt to limit global heating to 1.5 degrees.

Under pressure from Republicans in the United States, Vanguard has also told the UK’s Environmental Audit Committee that they do not see terminating new coal, oil and gas expansion as part of their climate plans.

King’s and Pembroke had particularly large holdings with the renegade money manager, investing over £100m in Vanguard funds between them.

King’s has indirectly invested millions of pounds in oil and gas companies in this manner. *Varsity* freedom of information requests have shown that the College has invested £798,000 in Exxon Mobil, £660,000 in Shell, over £560,000 in Chevron, and another £907,000 between BP, Total, and ConocoPhillips.

Other collegiate funds were shown to have exposure to fossil fuel companies, particularly through investments with asset managers like BlackRock and State Street. Amongst those, St John’s College was notable in particular, with several million pounds in indirect oil and gas company holdings through two State Street funds.

Professor Jason Scott-Warren, a member of the University Council, told *Varsity*: “We need the Cambridge University Endowment Fund to raise its game in terms of transparency and accountability, so that we can be confident that it is genuinely decarbonising”.

The limited details about University divestment that are made publicly available are provided by UCIM, a Cambridge-

Varsity: “It’s already been 16 months since the initial Grace about fossil fuel funding was proposed, and I’m acutely aware of frustration that action has not been swifter.”

Along with the delays in reforming its scrutiny of research funding, the University has considerably slowed down its plans for discussions with students and staff about its climate policy.

The University pledged to roll out “further consultation” after receiving the Topping report, setting a deadline of the end of December 2023. When accepting the Working Group’s recommendations this month, however, the University conceded that “community engagement will start this term”.

A University spokesperson said: “Work is already underway on the Topping Study’s recommendations. The proposed Pro-Vice-Chancellor with responsibility for sustainability will play a key part in driving progress on the University’s sustainability ambitions.”

owned subsidiary that manages the central endowment fund.

Annual reports by UCIM admit the central Cambridge funds’ exposure to “conventional energy” increased last year, while touting investments in “two specialist renewable energy funds”.

“We also need the colleges to align themselves explicitly with the climate policies adopted by the University”, Scott-Warren added.

A spokesperson for the University said: “The most current information on the Cambridge University Endowment Fund’s progress towards its net zero ambitions is publicly available on the University of Cambridge Investment Management website.”

“The Fund also publishes an Annual Report, and holds annual Town Halls where Chief Investment Officer Tilly Franklin reports on the Fund’s progress and takes questions from students and staff”, the spokesperson continued.

A spokesperson for King’s said the College “has not held direct investments in fossil fuels for many years and remains committed to eliminating all fossil fuel investments by 2030”.

“With an increasing range of options available, the College has recently appointed new investment advisors to support ongoing work on the ESG impacts of its holdings and exploration of alternative funds”, they added.

Queens’ College’s investment approach states: “The College does not invest directly in any fossil fuels and it endeavours to minimise any indirect investments”.

“The College does, however, hold investments in certain funds, such as clean energy funds, where some of a fund’s underlying investments involve companies in which fossil fuel companies may have minority holdings. The College is only interested in the clean energy investment,” it continues.

John’s College’s statement on divestment says: “John’s college divested from all direct fossil fuel investments in 2013 and has no intention of acquiring such direct investments in the future”.

University watch



Amelia Platt

UEA accommodation recreated brick-by-brick

A former University of East Anglia (UEA) student who did not have many photos of his campus accommodation decided to recreate it in Lego, *BBC News* has reported. Mark Hodgson, 62 who graduated from the UEA in 1983 used around 1,000 pieces of Lego to build the Waveney Terrace accommodation block. A UEA spokesperson said: “It’s great to see nostalgia for our campus buildings, particularly during our 60th year, and we love the way that Mark’s recreated a big part of UEA history in Lego form.”

Oxford Brookes students fight to save music department

University students and alumni at Oxford Brookes University have started a petition in an attempt to save their music department, *BBC News* has reported. The petition which was started last week has reached 3,734 signatures as of writing. A decision was made recently by Oxford Brookes to remove the course from its curriculum, with the September 2023 music students being the last intake. A spokesperson for the university attributed the decision to “increasing financial challenges.”

Just Stop Oil claims Bristol student illegally arrested

Just Stop Oil has accused the government of illegally imprisoning a University of Bristol student, *The Bristol Tab* has reported. Roland Howes, a 19-year-old Bristol student was arrested following a Just Stop Oil protest that took place last week. Howes appeared in court last Friday (17/11) and was granted bail, but was not released, allegedly due to “paperwork issues.” The official Just Stop Oil X account labelled this “illegal” and encouraged users to call HMP Pentonville to demand Howes’s immediate release. Howes was eventually released this Monday (20/11).

High Court to decide on university duty of care

The High Court is to consider for the first time whether universities owe a legal duty of care to the students, *The Guardian* has reported. Campaigners argue that the move would save lives, and bring England and Wales in line with other countries. The landmark hearing will take place next month and comes at a time of widespread concern about declining student mental health and several widely reported suicides.

News



Vice-Chancellor should join me behind bars, says student activist

Ned Chatterton

A Cambridge student imprisoned for taking part in a climate protest has called for the Vice-Chancellor to join her in prison.

Chiara Sarti, who was previously arrested for spraying orange paint on King's College, was remanded to prison after slow marching for Just Stop Oil (JSO) in London.

Sarti, a 24 year-old PhD student, was denied bail after being charged with a breach of the Public Order Act 2023, Section Seven, which relates to interfering with the use or operation of any key national infrastructure.

Sarti has criticised the University's climate inaction, labelling Cambridge "utterly pathetic if not outright criminal".

"This could end tomorrow if the Vice-Chancellor and staff upheld their duty of care and went to prison with me," she said.

Following her arrest for spraying King's College with orange paint, she was banned from entering London as

bound by the M25.

She told *Varsity*: "My 'crime' is walking peacefully down a road on a few occasions. We have to ask ourselves: What is the government so afraid of that they feel they need to lock people up for marching on a road for a few minutes?"

"Students have been handed an impossible situation. We need to choose between life and liberty," she continued.

Sarti described her conditions in prison: "they're appalling, the cells are filthy, people put newspapers under the doors to prevent cockroaches from getting in. It's a total admin hell. I'm in an induction wing so I only get 30 mins of exercise outside every day."

She also described feeling unsafe: "People are having mental health episodes all the time. Being trans in prison puts you at constant risk of sexual assault. Sometimes I get a shower, sometimes I don't, and being in a men's prison is a real challenge."

Describing the impact on her mental health, Sarti said: "Being in a box is obviously not good for anyone's mental health, but what destroys mental

health is the total apathy and inaction around me about the climate crisis on the outside."

When asked in court why she was in London, she responded: "I have a moral responsibility to be in civil resistance. [...] The government should be in this dock, not me."

The judge remanded Sarti to prison saying: "This court previously released you on bail - but clearly within two weeks you were within London. You have said to me today you have a moral responsibility to break laws in this country. I think you will break bail if released today."

Sarti will next appear in Southwark Crown Court on 30th November to enter a plea. At least five further young people, aged 18 to 22, are currently being held on remand in prison according to JSO, after being denied bail for slow marching.

The University of Cambridge has been contacted for comment.

▼ FELIX ARMSTRONG

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‘Men are the majority’: Homerton JCR dismisses ‘men-only’ gym hour

Drishya Rai

Homerton’s JCR has shot down calls for a “male-only” gym session, after a new time slot specifically for women and non-binary users triggered backlash from some students.

Ben Ward, president of the Homerton Union of Students (HUS), stated that calls for a male-only gym hour “give the same energy as people responding ‘Not all men’ to the ‘MeToo’ movement”.

The women’s hour gym policy was formulated in response to a college-wide survey by the HUS with the stated aim of fostering a “more inclusive and progressive environment for all”.

Whilst the HUS’ Sports Officer told *Varsity* that student reactions to the women’s hour have been “overwhelmingly positive,” minutes from one of the College’s Union of Student meetings shows President Ben Ward putting down “requests for a ‘men’s only hour’”.

Ward responded to the requests, stating: “as men are the majority and have no historical oppression dictated by their gender, the HUS does not support and

will not facilitate a male-only hour in the gym.”

Andreas Velimachitis, sports officer, told *Varsity* that the backlash represents “nothing more than a highly niche view.”

He added: “There has generally been a consensus across all genders that it’s an overwhelmingly positive policy that should have been implemented long ago.”

One student echoed the need for the sentiment, telling *Varsity* that “every hour is men’s hour in the gym”.

An anonymous quote on the College’s confessions page addressed the minority dissatisfied with the new gym policy: “it’s one hour a week, I think you need to work on your sense of entitlement and stop whining.”

In his statement, Ward also cited religious reasons as a key reason to institute the policy to support women’s participation in gym spaces.

Alongside the ‘MeToo’ analogy, Ward said that calls for a men-only hour “give [...] the same energy as ‘White lives matter’ in response to ‘Black lives matter,’

and the same energy as heterosexual people asking for a ‘Straight Pride’.”

According to Velimachitis, “Homerton has always considered itself a progressive college, [but] there has been a key deficiency with regards to representing those identifying as women and non-binary in college sport.”

He stressed that Homerton’s student body has “made leaps and bounds” in the creation and improvement of previously non-existent or male-dominated exercise, citing the establishment of the popular Homerton Dance Society, the success of the Women’s and Non-Binary Football Team, and “a huge uptick in female participation in wider College sport”.

“However, it remains to be seen whether this rule will continue to be respected by all in the short-term and long-term, and whether the sorely needed repairs and equipment will be set up so that the Homerton Gym can become a truly more inclusive space,” Velimachitis said.

Addenbrooke’s staff call for Gaza ceasefire

Cameron McIntyre

Healthcare workers at Addenbrooke’s Hospital have begun staging weekly vigils to protest the deaths of healthcare workers in Gaza.

Addenbrooke’s Hospital, which is owned and managed by Cambridge University, saw 200 of its staff protest on Friday, gathering outside to read the names of healthcare workers who have been killed.

This comes after Israeli forces’ seizure of Gaza’s largest hospital, al-Shifa, in their ground offensive on the Palestinian enclave, and the WHO’s description of the medical institution as a “death zone”.

Dr Hani Al-Astal, a Gazan gastroenterology trainee working at Addenbrooke’s, said: “Hospitals should be treated like places of worship, places where love and care can be transferred from doctors to patients.”

The 200 staff held Palestinian flags and chanted: “In our thousands, in our millions, we are all Palestinians.”

Sameh Ragheb, the vigil’s organiser, said: “We are healthcare workers asking for the safety of healthcare workers – to be able to work in proper conditions with proper supplies so they can continue their moral mission.”

Israel had claimed Hamas was con-

cealing an underground command centre in al-Shifa to justify the raid.

Earlier today, senior doctors at Gaza’s Indonesian hospital told the BBC that “The same scenario at al-Shifa is expected to happen” unless the Qatar-brokered four-day pause in fighting goes ahead.

Ragheb described his frustration at the UK Parliament’s recent vote against a ceasefire, stating the British public “are demanding that their government do something”, but the MPs are instead “standing with the oppressor”.

The demonstrations are being organised by Cambridge Stop the War Coalition, who have run a number of vigils and protests over the past weeks.



THE MAYS 32

The 32nd edition of *The Mays Anthology* is recruiting a team. *The Mays* showcases the best new writing and art from the students of Oxford and Cambridge, and it is sold widely across the UK. Past guest editors include Seamus Heaney, Zadie Smith, Mary Jean Chan, and Arlo Parks.

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News

Around town



Tommy Castellani

Pop eye-sore

The Cambridge branch of the American fast food chain Popeyes is fighting to keep its signs after it was told to take them down by the Council, *Cambridge Independent* reports. Popeyes has claimed the signs are “vital to the operation of the shop” and has appealed to the National Planning Inspectorate to keep them. The Council says the signage is “overly large,” and contrary to what was previously agreed with the company. After being told to take them down, the fast food chain submitted a retrospective application to keep them, which was refused. The Council’s conservation officer said that the “historic relevance” of the shop’s building is “lost with this inappropriate signage”.

Jingle bell flop

Cambridge’s lacklustre Christmas lights switch-on has been criticised by some residents after the event was affected by technical difficulties. The switch-on was initially delayed after performances ran over and some of the lights failed to work. Becky Burrell, Marketing Manager at Cambridge Bid, apologised for the delay and said that the technical issues were “rectified in the fastest time possible.” Cambridge resident Sarah Biggs told *Cambridgeshire Live* that the switch-on was a “non-event” and a “disappointment” after “only a spattering of lights switched on.” One student spectator slammed the event, saying it “wasn’t in the festive spirit.” However, not all spectators were left feeling dissatisfied by the event.

Drug dealer jailed after death of Cambridge student

A drug dealer who was arrested after the death of a Cambridge University student has been sentenced to four-and-a-half years in prison, *The Daily Mail* reports. Benjamin Brown was arrested after Keshava Iyengar was found dead in his friend’s room at Trinity College following an overdose of anti-anxiety medication supplied by Brown. Police uncovered messages on Iyengar’s phone from the drug dealer who styled himself as a ‘pharmacist’ selling a range of prescription-only drugs through Instagram and Snapchat. Brown was arrested in 2021 and a search of his home found more than £15,000 in cash.

Students struggle to use 'accessible' college facilities

Aoife O’Driscoll

A *Varsity* investigation has revealed disparities in the amount of accessible student accommodation available at each College, and found that various facilities labelled as accessible remain difficult to use for disabled students.

Varsity spoke to students and JCR representatives at various colleges about the accessibility of college buildings and facilities.

One student at Lucy Cavendish told *Varsity* that the lift in their college library is currently “out of order,” with the college in “no rush to fix it”. This is despite the college’s Disability Access Guide stating that the library has a lift, with some rooms only accessible by stairs.

This has rendered “all but the ground floor out of use,” the student said. The ground floor “becomes extremely busy and there are not many seats anyway,” they added.

Similarly, Trinity Hall’s Disability and Special Considerations Officer told *Varsity* that “the basement and the mezzanine are inaccessible” and “the toilets are not very accessible”. The College’s Disability Access Guide, however, says that there is a “lift between all floors” and a “fairly large toilet at ground level”.

Newnham’s library is also somewhat inaccessible, *Varsity* has been told, due to building works which have rendered the lift out of order. The College’s website mentions that the lift is inaccessible, suggesting that students should “ask a member of staff to fetch books”.

Beyond the academic, students have also faced issues accessing social spaces around colleges, *Varsity* has learned.

Lucy Cavendish bar is described in the College’s access guide as “fully accessible,” but a student has said that the space is difficult for disabled students to access.

The automatic door in the bar has been broken since installation, and the room’s main doors are “quite heavy,” and

the internal door is “not automatic at all and still quite heavy,” the student said.

One student at Lucy Cavendish experiences accessibility issues with the college’s hall, too, the doors to which “are not easy to open whilst operating a wheelchair”. The hall is described as “fully accessible by wheelchair via a ramp”, however.

Other essential facilities can be harder to access for students with physical disabilities. Newnham’s Welfare Officer told *Varsity* that a laundry room in one of the buildings with accessible rooms is “too small to fit a wheelchair in”.

The accessibility of student accommodation also varies across the collegiate University. Colleges must provide some rooms which are specifically designed for the needs of disabled students, but the number of such rooms varies widely.

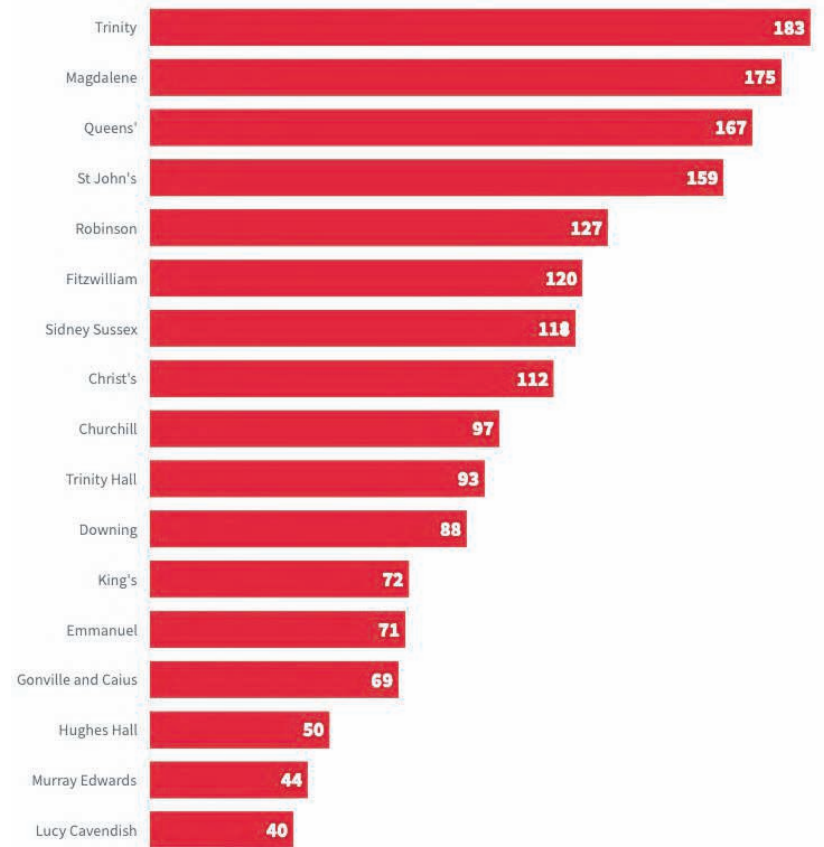
Whilst Murray Edwards and Lucy Cavendish offer nine such rooms, at other colleges such as Magdalene this figure drops to two. Robinson only has one room completely adapted for wheelchair use.

Some colleges have included rooms suitable for visual or hearing impairments within their accessible accommodation list, while others have focused on physical access and wheelchair accessibility only.

When these numbers are put into proportion with the average number of undergraduate students in a college, Trinity is the college on this list with the highest number of undergraduate students per accessible room (at 183 undergraduates per room), and Lucy Cavendish the lowest (at 40 undergraduates per room).

Members of 8 different college JCRs reported a range of ratings for their colleges’ wheelchair accessibility. On a scale of 1-5, where 5 was ‘completely accessible’ and 1 ‘not at all’, none rated it to be completely accessible. The Trinity Hall DSO rated their college a 2, and Magdalene, Lucy Cavendish, Newnham and St Edmund’s were rated 3.

Number of undergraduates per accessible room (average)



Newnham College told *Varsity*: “The College has been and will continue working with our students to improve their access around the College site. In response to an increasing number of students using wheelchairs, the College identified a group of 4 ground-floor bedrooms which could be converted to being wheelchair accessible, as well as creating an accessible bathroom and also making a kitchen wheelchair-accessible.”

“As a result of ongoing consultation with our student body, we have installed automated doors to the Library

and Health Centre and hold-back doors throughout the College,” the College continued.

A spokesperson for Trinity Hall said: “The College has just carried out a Master Plan exercise and improving accessibility was one of the key goals this focused on.”

“We are aware that some areas of our site, especially in our older Central Site, are difficult to access. This is something we take into account in any refurbishments and new building work we undertake,” they said.

SU fails to pass motion against ban on part-time jobs due to low attendance

Wilf Vall

The SU failed to vote on a divisive motion to campaign against the ban on undergraduate part-time work at this week’s Student Council (20/11), due to not enough postgraduate students being present.

Caredig ap Tomos, the SU’s Access, Education & Participation Officer, had proposed the motion at the previous Student Council, where he claimed that the ban is “hypocritical” and “restricts the freedom of students unnecessarily”.

Speaking to *Varsity*, ap Tomos refuted the idea that the inquorate meeting spoke to a wider apathy regarding the motion, saying: “The meeting was well

attended by undergraduate members, to whom the student work motion is most relevant.”

“There is no apathy among students about this issue. Students have engaged with all parts of the consultation process, and many of the students who have talked to me have been supportive of the idea,” he added.

The motion has also been met with mixed reactions from voting members of the SU, with Hughes Hall MCR saying: “Those from a tougher financial background should not be disadvantaged by the requirement to get a job.”

These concerns were also echoed by Martha Rand, External Vice President for Newnham JCR, who proposed amend-

ments to the motion, arguing for a focus on “ending structural financial inequality” rather than the ban on part-time jobs.

The amendments proposed included the following: “The university’s stance on part-time work through the university or colleges allows students to earn money in a way that is more flexible and sympathetic to their situation as a student.”

The motion to campaign against lifting the ban was replaced with a motion to “campaign for better financial support for students who do not qualify for as much assistance through Student Finance or the Cambridge Bursary but are nevertheless in financial difficulty.”

In an email to Newnham JCR mem-

bers, Rand explained their amendments saying: “The expectation that students don’t work in term time is helpful in incentivising the university and colleges to support students financially.”

“Students forced to work part-time in addition to the Cambridge workload would have less chance of a social life, extra-curricular opportunities and even good physical and mental health,” Rand added.

The motion will now be voted on at the first Council of Lent term, depending on membership attendance.

Dalek invades Homerton formal

Romilly Norfolk

Homerton College held a *Doctor Who* themed formal on Tuesday (21/11) to celebrate the show's 60th anniversary, which was attended by actors and writers of the show, and a Dalek.

The formal was organised by Dr Robin Bunce, a fellow at Homerton, whose father was a camera operator on *Doctor Who* from 1966 to 1989.

The Dalek in attendance was manned by student Daniel Crosbie, who was previously supervised by Bunce. Crosbie told *Varsity* that he had a team of 3 people to get in and out of the

Dalek costume.

250 students attended the formal alongside special guests, which included the actors who played the companions to the 5th, 6th and 7th Doctor.

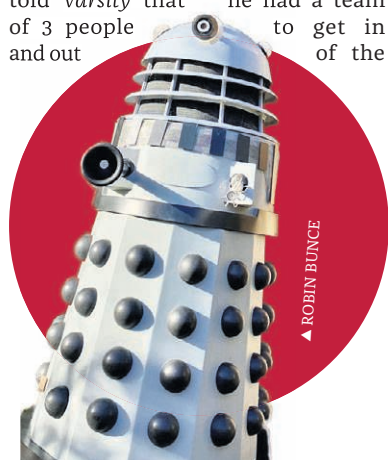
The formal also included several *Doctor Who* themed elements, as guests entered the hall through a life-sized TARDIS, built by Theo Hacking, an Engineering Director of Studies.

Homerton's Charter Choir performed the show's theme tune before the dinner, with the grace being spoken by the Dalek in attendance, voiced by Dr Bunce. About becoming a Dalek, the academic said: "I think for a while the Dalek became my doppelganger!"

The formal menu was also *Doctor Who* themed, with 'Figs O' The Quawncing Grig', 'Lamb à la Krillitane' and 'Morphoton Chocolate Delight' being served to attendees.

Bunce has also conducted research into *Doctor Who*, on subjects such as why the Daleks are so scary and The Twelfth Doctor and the Politics of Conflict.

Speaking at the formal, Bunce said: "*Doctor Who* gives us the tools to imagine better worlds, and like the very best TV shows help us understand what it means to be human."



Party's over! Binson bop-less for second week

Jasmine Heddle-Bacon

Robinson College's famous weekly bops have been cancelled for an historic second consecutive week.

The bops have been a highlight of regular social events at Cambridge's social scene in recent times. Robinson is the only Cambridge College to hold a weekly bop across Michaelmas and Lent terms, with select events in Easter term.

The unprecedented bop pause comes after stewarding incidents and complaints regarding the number of attendees from other colleges.

This resulted in a one-week bop ban, which was combined with the annual tradition of a one-bop pause between the handover to the new JCR ents officers.

The Halloween bop (3/11) was shut down by porters at 11:30 after an overflow of students crowded the room to a "dangerous capacity", one steward told *Varsity*. This move was controversial, with the lights turned back off by students unwilling to stop.

Students were informed by the College that attendees broke glasses, sat on speakers, and showed unacceptable "disrespect" to bar staff and porters.

The steward partially responsible for the "chaotic bop" that provoked the

shutdown told *Varsity* that the pause in events was "really disappointing," and spoke of their certainty that "security would have to be much tighter in upcoming bops".

A third-year, self-described as a "bop veteran", told *Varsity* that they were "shocked" at the drought of bops that followed this, and said that they, like most college members, were "itching to get back" to routine events.

For many students, the loss of the Friday bop has provoked a crisis, with several jokingly wondering how they would spend their Friday night now.



Bops are viewed as a vital part of Robinson's identity as the "social college" of Cambridge. One JCR member told *Varsity* that Robinson prided itself on its "bricks and bops".

Bops have been a weekly staple of Cambridge life since they were launched in 1981. One alum from the 1980s said that they were "proud of the college's ongoing legacy as the party college".

The 35-year alum told *Varsity*: "Bops were an amazing feature of my undergraduate experience and it is just brilliant that they are still ongoing."

The former ents officer commented on the pause, stating that most students were unaware of the organisational effort required to run a bop.

Therefore, bops being cancelled for the second week running is "surely understandable," the alum said. It's "impressive" that this is the first time this has happened, they continued.

The bop is to resume this Friday with a masquerade-themed party. The email announcing the event's "grand return" included a substantial list of bop rules to ensure that "no more pauses" are needed. The email instructed attendees to come "masked up at the very least".

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News

Flushed with pride

The Wetherspoons toilets have been honoured with a national award. The facilities at the Regal received a platinum rating in the Loo of the Year Awards 2023, *Cambridgeshire Live* has reported. Inspectors made thousands of unannounced visits to toilets around the country. Toilets are graded silver, gold, platinum, platinum plus, or diamond, while 'unacceptable' toilets are not graded. David Ormrod, manager of the Regal, said, "We are delighted with the award." The Director of the awards described the toilets as "clean and well maintained".

Newnham celebrates 75 years of full degrees

The College will celebrate the 75th anniversary of women being admitted to full degrees at their Christmas Formal Hall on Monday (27/11). Their 1948 change in policy meant that female students were able to attend graduation ceremonies and participate in University governance. Vice-Chancellor Prentice will speak at the event. She is only the third woman to be appointed Vice-Chancellor since the university was founded in 1209. Second year History student, Molly O'Neill, who created the event, will also speak.

Charles Dar-gin

Cambridge Distillery has released a gin inspired by Christ's College alumnus Charles Darwin. The tippie was created to pay homage to the celebrated naturalist's voyage across South America. The spirit, named 'Americas Herbarium', was devised in partnership with the Cambridge Botanic Gardens, using botanicals discovered during the biologist's expedition. The co-founder of Cambridge Distillery said: "The opportunity to express some part of this voyage through the medium of flavour is a career highlight for me – a truly humbling one, at that."

Cambridge marks 150 years of bursaries

A Cambridge institute providing bursaries to adult learners from disadvantaged backgrounds has celebrated its 150th anniversary. The Institute of Continuing Education (ICE) has awarded 80 bursaries of £1,873 since its creation. The institute is based at the 16th-century Madingley Hall. BBC Cambridgeshire profiled Yemi Ayeni, who took a bursary from Madingley Hall after being made redundant during the pandemic. The bursary made it "more accessible than I would have realised" to study at Cambridge, Ayeni said.

Industrialisation fuelled fascism, says AI don

A Cambridge academic has said that the industrial revolution "fuelled the rise of communism and fascism," when launching a new AI institute. Dr Stephen Cave, director of the new centre, has said that "waves of technology" both help humanity to "thrive," and bring "huge costs". The new Institute for Technology and Humanity will "ensure new technologies are harnessed for the good of mankind," says the University. The new centre will blend various existing University initiatives, such as the departments for the Future of Intelligence and the Study of Existential Risk.



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Student societies are 'working for China'

Chinese university societies are being used "as a tool by the Chinese state" at UK universities including Cambridge, a report has claimed. The Henry Jackson Society has alleged that overseas Chinese students are being used as pawns to advance China's "political interests," citing a meeting between Cambridge's Chinese Students and Scholar Association (CSSA) and the Cambridge City Council in 2011, and a 2015 tour of China in which Cambridge PhDs took part. Sir Iain Duncan Smith told *The Times* that the idea that Chinese student associations act as "normal student societies" is an "astonishing fiction". Referencing the Cambridge SU's temporary disbanding of the University's CSSA in 2011, the report states that student unions must recognise that these societies "are not independent from [...] Chinese diplomats".

Other Miliband criticised for Fitz lecture

Former foreign secretary David Miliband delivered Fitzwilliam College's annual Foundation Lecture this week, speaking about crisis in its various forms. It is vital that values of "care, consideration, common ground [and] second chances" are protected in times that "feel brutal, divisive [and] unforgiving," Miliband said. The MP discussed various geopolitical crises, including the conflict in Israel and Gaza, before turning to climate catastrophe. Miliband briefly mentioned climate writers such as Rebecca Solnit, but quickly moved on from the topic to discuss his belief that "action creates hope". Caius Professor Jason Scott-Warren criticised this tactic on X (formerly Twitter), writing that the MP "kept namechecking the Climate Emergency [...] but didn't engage with it".

Students propose motion to demilitarise University

Student activists have called for the SU to campaign for the demilitarisation of the University, in a motion proposed at this week's Student Council. Put forward by Harvey Brown, the SU's Welfare Officer, the motion notes that Cambridge received more than £100 million from arms manufacturers and military bodies between 2002 and 2020. The proposal calls on the SU to "publicly support" groups working to push the University to cut financial ties with arms corporations, saying that the industry "has no place" in an institution "committed to 'freedom from discrimination'". The motion is yet to be voted on, as the Council meeting did not achieve necessary attendance.

Grappling with grief in 8 weeks

Lauren Welsby-Riley explores the experience of bereavement as a student

Grief has been described to me as feeling like a bouncy ball inside a box. Every time the ball hits one of the sides of the box, you feel the pain of grief in all its intensity. As time passes, the ball does not decrease in size, or velocity, nor do its collisions with the sides become any less painful. But the box gets bigger, so the collisions become less frequent, and you might even find ways of padding the inside of the box to help you cope.

But what happens when you, and your ball, attend one of the most academically rigorous institutions in the world?

To find out more about what grief looks like inside the Cambridge bubble, I spoke to several students about their experience with life after loss.

“I felt guilty for not making the most of the time I spent with him at Easter because I had so much coursework to do

The structure of the Cambridge term, designed to allow students to throw themselves entirely into their work for 8 weeks, with at least 6 weeks off at the end for recovery, is highly effective on paper. But as Ella, a recently graduated HisPol student from Sidney Sussex points out, this structure does not allow for when, “your personal life is forced into those 8 weeks where you’re meant to be working.”

Ella lost her grandfather, to whom she was particularly close, just two weeks before her final exams. She spoke to *Varsity* about how her personal and academic life was disrupted by this loss.

“I felt totally blindsided, and guilty for not making the most of the time I

spent with him at Easter because I had so much coursework to do,” Ella told us. It became clear from the interviews that guilt is something of a universality when reflecting on mourning. This can take on a few different forms; perhaps, like Ella has described, there is guilt surrounding not properly taking advantage of the time you had left with your loved one. There is also a particularly Cambridge stigma around taking time out of your studies to go home to be with your family during a difficult time.

For Ella, as an international student whose grandparents lived in Australia, this was especially poignant. The process of getting permission to fly out for the funeral, Ella said, was “the first time I had ever met or spoken to my tutor, so going from initial introductions to suddenly crying and debating whether or not I could go home gave me whiplash.”

“I was [in Australia] for two days, and on the day of the funeral I came back from the service and had to finish my timed essay for my revision supervision the next day. Then I had 2-3 days to get over my jet lag before I sat my first exam. It was just really, really intense.”

Cambridge, for better or for worse, invests the overwhelming majority of its staff and resources into creating the best academics possible, in order to keep results (and university league table rankings) high. So when somebody you love dies right at the most important moment of your educational career, there is an enormous amount of pressure to keep up with your work despite the emotional turmoil you are experiencing. We received positive comments from all of our interviewees about support from university and college staff, with one student describing her college nurse as a “godsend”, and another

praising the wellbeing team who were with her when she received the news that her grandmother had passed away.

However, there were also several complaints about the university’s handling of bereavement during exam term. One student told us about the “casual cruelty” she received at times from staff, including one who told her that her grandfather “would have wanted [her] to sit through [her] exams”, and described feeling like she was constantly reminded that her finals should be her main priority. In the end, the only mitigation she received for her exams was an exam warning which would see one of her marks being dropped if it was drastically lower than the rest of her papers.

The University’s Exam Access and Mitigation Committee has come under fire in the past for being, at best, needlessly intrusive or diffi-

cult to navigate, and at worst, dangerously negligent.

Support can also come from unexpected places, as was the case for Michael, a second year MML student at Trinity, who described the chaplaincy at Fisher House as a “great source of comfort” for him.

As someone who never fails to point out a white feather when I see one, I am constantly fascinated by the symbols and repeating images that the grieving mind is able to pick up on. Speaking to one student about this phenomenon, we both agreed that these routines are most likely an irrational placebo effect of sorts, but why deprive ourselves of the momentary comfort for the sake of being logical? This student took a leaf home because it landed on her dog while walking, and sees her dad in foxes while out and about. Amelia, a second year HSPS student at Trinity Hall, can’t imagine she will ever spend the £10 note she found in the last Hanukkah card her grandmother wrote her before she passed.

When speaking to students about how they feel they could be better supported by the people around them, a general disdain for “I’m so sorry for your loss” as a response came up repeatedly. One student from Girton, whose father passed away suddenly in March, said: “It seems a bit trite. It’s like when someone says ‘thank you’ and you respond ‘you’re welcome’ - it doesn’t really mean anything, it’s just words.”

Both this student and Amelia expressed that they appreciated casual sympathy far more than “the pity face and the head tilt.”

Perhaps a less frequently spoken about facet of experiencing grief while attending Cambridge University is the effects on a student’s ability to enjoy their social life. Ella described feeling immensely bittersweet about the end of year festivities which, for her, would mark the

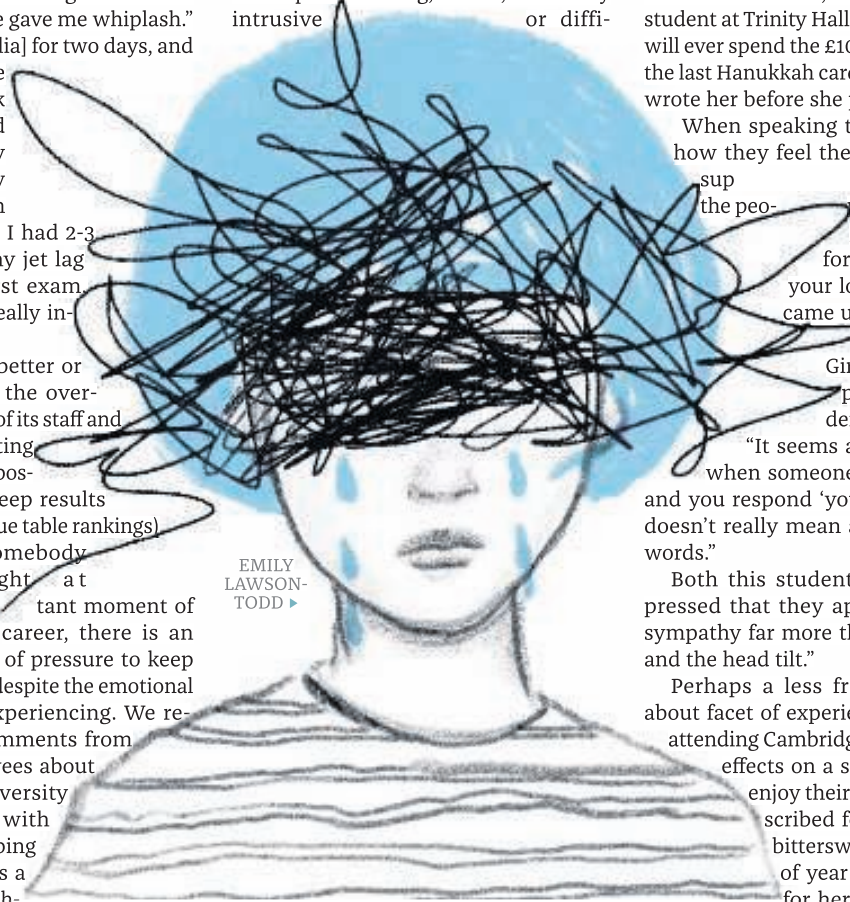
end of her time at Cambridge altogether.

“While my family was in Australia struggling to cope with what happened, I was here trying to pick out pretty dresses for my college May Ball. I remember walking down King’s Parade while I was waiting for my passport, seeing people sitting on the grass with Jack’s Gelato, and really irrationally thinking, ‘don’t they know that my grandad is gone and I didn’t get to say goodbye?’”

“Why deprive ourselves of momentary comfort for the sake of being logical?”

This feeling — anger or confusion at how everybody else’s world can continue to turn even though the worst thing imaginable has just happened to you — seemed to be a common feature. From this, one student said that she wishes people would be more understanding about the non-linear time frame of grief, and would acknowledge that, “Sometimes you are going to disappear out of a conversation and into your head for a little bit.”

The human brain is not wired to experience grief, and a large part of the process after losing a loved one is remodeling your cognitive processes around this huge gap that their death has left. At a university which prides itself on academic success — numbers on a page — it can be impossible at times to juggle this immense adjustment with the workload. The processes for requesting some kind of compassionate leave seem to be unnecessarily callous, and risks making the already difficult bereavement period even more stressful.



Almost there:
The end of Michaelmas through the decades

- 1 Bridgemas cartoon from 1953
- 2 Sidney’s 1973 decision to admit women
- 3 1983; the first year successful state school applications exceeded private schools
- 4 Prince Charles opening Downing College library in 1993

Features

Coming down to Earth with Cambridge's flight-free travellers

Students are trading the runway for the railway. Alex Levy speaks to those who are charting a more sustainable course

The sun grew low in the sky over Mount Pantokrator on Corfu, and I had four hours til I left for Italy. Watching creaking car ferries chug in and out of the port, sleek jets roared overhead at regular intervals, making broad turns over the bay before disappearing with a twinkle into the pale orange of the dusk. In four hours I had a beer, watched Greek men pontificate from within a cloud of cigarette smoke, and considered the long journey ahead with trepidation: across the Adriatic by night, along the spine of Italy, meandering through the Alps to Munich, and on to London. A rich patchwork of terrain, language, interchange – a highly impractical one.

"I get my best night's sleep on a train," says Rosie Smart-Knight, finalist at Trinity Hall, who last flew three years ago. "Going to sleep in one place, feeling the rhythms of the train and waking up to the sunrise over a place you've never seen before. There's something that feels really romantic about it." But for all its Agatha Christie allure, it's "often incredibly stressful."

Air travel, by contrast, is a well-oiled institution. Over the last twenty years, the hegemony of easyJet and Ryanair has brought a host of global cities and balmy suntraps within easy reach of the UK, democratising travel for working people on tight schedules, and students on even tighter budgets. All highly appealing, even in a world on the brink of climate catastrophe. But unease has been creeping into the minds of a growing proportion of the population.

"Flying is basically the most time and cost-efficient way of producing CO₂ for an individual," William Smith, a PhD candidate at the Uni-

versity's Centre for Climate Repair, told me. It is the environmental factor which drives William and Rosie to forego both flights and meat. But a natural response to this pretty tall order, would be to ask where is the government in all this, and why should we as students make the sacrifice?

The answer, ironically, might be to think a little further afield. "People are generally quick to blame climate change on the rich," said Will, "but if you are someone who has regular access to flying, as we are, you are the rich glob-

Flying is basically the most time and cost-efficient way of producing CO₂ for an individual

ally. 80% of the world's population has never set foot on a plane and it causes 2-3% of global emissions." He doesn't agree with pitting the individual against companies and governments – "an institutional change will be an individual change at the end of the day; if you want the government to ban domestic flying," (as France has done) "you will still have to stop flying domestically. Are you going to wait for the government to tell you?"

Considering climate change's dispro-

portionate impact on the Global South and her middle-class background in Britain, Rosie agrees: "in order to feel okay about living this life of immense privilege and often immense damage to other people's ability to live, I have to make sacrifices." But government action is imperative, and she says we can't talk about taxing flights without improving access to alternative forms. Will stresses voting as probably the biggest single thing an individual can do.

Despite their principles, William gave the important exception of international students, and Rosie is conscious that in an overwhelming world, what people can do is highly individual; not everyone sees this as a worthy or affordable sacrifice. At the time of writing, covering 1500km for an early-December sojourn in Rome sets you back just £34. Hot-footing it to the continent mid-term is also on the table. With favourable queues and low-cost tickets to paradise at Stanstead, such trips seem effortless. You can be in Cambridge within an hour and a half, evidenced by viral posts and TikToks of students popping to Milan for pizza and a spritz.

But slow-travel proponents are sceptical of this shrinking world. In Rosie's opinion, when flying "we don't have to critically engage with how we are able to go from one place to another and how one place evolves through space. You walk through security and the most inconvenient thing that happens is you have to take off your belt." She feels flying mirrors a modern culture of time scarcity and instant gratification; we can't be conscious within experiences, "because the system is designing it so we don't see all the workings going on around it." We accept convenience as unquestionably

positive, but "there is something beautiful about taking the time to do something as a process, not as a means to an end."

In those extra hours, you meet and strike up conversations with fellow travellers. I practised my Italian with a family between Turin and Paris, and Rosie met a Florentine university professor who gave her a contact that has proved useful in writing her dissertation.

Flying mirrors a modern culture of time scarcity and instant gratification; we can't be conscious within experiences

Sadly, students have the time but often not the finances to fund flight-free travel, even excluding the extra costs of getting to London and across the channel. A survey run by Newcomer Byway, a flight-free travel agency, with OnePoll, revealed a number of "real or perceived barriers people see with flight-free travel: over a quarter (27%) said planning and booking a flight-free trip felt like too much hassle, with nearly one in ten (8%) reporting they wouldn't know how to organise [it]."

Proving the point, Fashion editor Anna Metzger recently had to abandon a flight-free trip to Ireland due to disruption, and complex routes often pose difficulty. For Byway, "the trick is to remove the faff and hassle to easily give travellers a taste of just how joyful slow travel can be." Speaking to a travel consultant at a top high street brand revealed this thinking to be far from mainstream, however, as "people want a tailor-made, high-quality holiday for a price they feel is a deal... most of the time, sustainability never comes into that equation."

The pandemic forced a sobering look in the mirror for business travellers (reflections ashen-faced from gruelling hops between London, Frankfurt and New York), but commercial flights have rallied post-COVID. A pressing question for universities, too, with *The Independent* reporting in 2020 that eight institutions, Cambridge included, had spent "tens of millions" on "170,000 flights" in the four years previous. Another moral dilemma for climate

scientist William, whose second last flight was for a conference in Main. While he initially doubted the necessity of in-person attendance, he found it "incredibly useful", though on balance believes people should think twice.

William's boat club has a training camp next year in Spain, and as captain he pushed for the club to travel flight-free, facing resistance. In the end, a route by two trains and a coach has worked out at £50 more, a relatively small proportion of the trip's total cost, but only one of his teammates will join him. The University's policy on travel does not seem to produce a coherent approach across the collegiate University. The same seems to be the case globally, with aviation existing in an international grey-zone criss-crossed by thousands of aircraft daily; the industry is not as easily-regulated as others. The Paris Climate Agreement, already considered a lame duck by some, does not include aviation emissions in its 'nationally determined contributions', and Corsia has been criticised for its lack of breadth and acceptance of damaging biofuels.

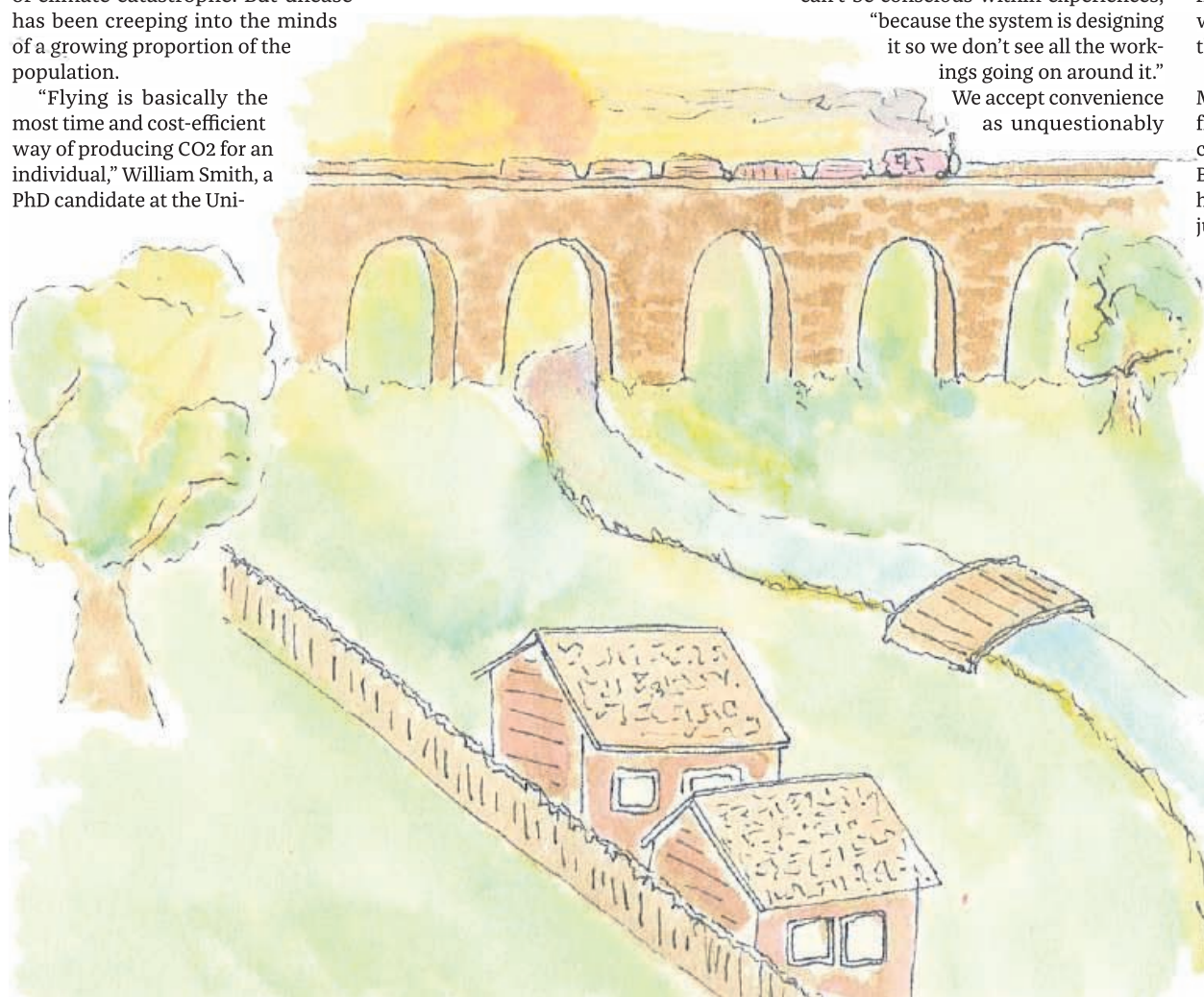
William sees perceptions of green travel as a significant psychological barrier: "people will only change when they think of something as normal, and they'll only think that when they see other people doing it." To that end, visibility and discourse is key to shedding the image of the "weird environmentalist" – a favourite naysayer's retort is that 'the flight is going anyway', but your choice not to fly may encourage another person to think again. Confirmed by Lucy Fowler, Byway marketing manager: "94% of our customers say they'd book another Byway trip or refer a friend on homecoming [...] there is a snowball effect, with train-based options gathering momentum."

Longer-term carbon offsetting is ineffective if we consider climate change an urgent crisis, and biofuels give rise to a 'fuel vs food' tension which could exacerbate impacts on food security. Ultimately, slow travel may remain too expensive to become a realistic option for students, limited to one-off inter-rail trips. But it is slowly entering the mainstream, with 67% in the UK in 2020 saying they are willing to fly less for the sake of the environment, and new sleeper routes opening across Europe, notably between Paris and Berlin. Is there hope the trend could accelerate, bringing ever more people down to earth? Will says: "it's got to. There's no such thing as sustainable aviation."

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What do we owe to the places we leave behind?

Outgoing Editor-in-Chief **Taneesha Datta** reflects on cultural borders and Cambridge's links with the past

As the plane starts to skim the ground, the hum of conversation dies down. With the soft jolt of landing, passengers begin to straighten, now alert, wary, as if in preparation for battle. This is a stratified sample of India's population, mostly students returning to the UK for the start of a new term. It's a flight I've taken many times now.

When I reflect on my time at *Varsity* and Cambridge more broadly,

race has not been a defining feature of my experience. I've never been yelled at in the street, never faced a racial slur, never been barred from a room because of the colour of my skin. I've had an easy time of it. Still, for many of us, our presence here comes with silent connotations – our inherited histories are always present, hanging in the air, at once amplified and diminished. Political and socioeconomic subtext rupture into conversation in ways that restrict communication: there are words that carry a different meaning here, and questions that yield different answers.

The moment of 1947 independence, for instance, is seared into Indian public consciousness. It's viewed as a frontier of sorts, partitioning the arc of India's history into what came after and what it knew before. Since Independence, before Independence, during Independence – the reference is understood in conversation and in literature without context or prologue. In England, naturally, this is of little relevance. In my first year, I found India's independence mentioned in some lecture notes, at the very bottom of the page, like an interesting aside. It happened, the notes say, as a result of agitation by indigenous political elements.

Many of these 'political elements' were deeply anglicised – and, in many cases, had links to Cambridge. In the

decades leading up to the 20th century, Indian students at Cambridge, who were drawn primarily from the political and commercial elite, were increasingly involved in the independence movement. They included Jawaharlal Nehru, who would go on to become India's first Prime Minister; Sarojini Naidu, a poet and the first female President of the

Indian National Congress; and Subhash Chandra Bose, a nationalist leader who was arrested no less than eleven times during the independence struggle.

The matter was of such concern to the government that, in 1909, Whitehall's India Office wrote to the Master of Downing College about 'the situation', asking the College to limit the intake of Indian students from six or seven to one or two per year. "I should not venture to press the matter upon you in this way," read the letter, "if the subject were not of

often lift an eyebrow when they hear where I spent my adolescent years, with follow-up questions that are measured, cautious, careful not to offend.

Over the past two years, a few incidents have made me wonder if I would have been treated differently if not for the colour of my skin. In some cases, the answer is probably yes – but I don't lose sleep over it. It does bother me, though, when I hear a friend joking about British colonisation or making an off-hand comment about unequal soci-

eties and third-world development. It's in these moments that I'm jolted into the realisation of just how much distance lies between these two worlds. Signing up to false stereotypes, perpetuating myths of either the west or the east, or making comments in ignorance can be harmful. This is true on all sides.

Our beliefs are shaped by the spaces we inhabit and the people we come into contact with. In his essay *Imaginary Homelands*, Salman Rushdie writes: "To forget that there is a world beyond the community to which we belong, to confine ourselves within narrowly defined cultural frontiers, would be to go voluntarily into [a] form of internal exile." For all that we might agonise over our own identities and ideas, our worldview is limited by the small fraction of the world that we've seen – and there is much to be said for looking beyond our communities to experience perspectives that differ from our own.

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Our inherited histories are always present, hanging in the air

real importance from the point of view of Indian Government." (The Master, to his credit, refused.)

In travelling across the world, we cover more than a mere geographical distance – in many ways, inhabiting a new country is an act of recasting one's own sensibilities, of catering to another vision of the world. And what do we owe to the places we leave behind? In this country, my English accent bears only the faintest trace of India, such that people

If Peterhouse is a charity, then so are private schools

Starmer is right to back private schools' charity status, argues **Hugh Jones**

This week, I learned that Oxford Brookes University was shutting its music and maths departments due to "increased financial challenges." I was in College at the time, standing just outside my Grade I-listed, heavily-subsidised room. Most third year students in the UK would be battling slumlords in the private sector, but this is Cambridge so the normal rules don't apply. I was still wearing my gown as I read the news, having just returned from pillaging Magdalene's stock of cheese and port at yet another college-funded shindig.

I didn't give much thought to the discrepancy between Cambridge and Brookes at the time. I only made the connection the next day while reading the *New Statesman's* coverage of the ongoing debate over private schools' charitable status.

The piece saw the author visiting a number of private school open days, which prompted the reflection: "It was hard, sitting in the wood-panelled halls with their oil paintings of alumni and state-of-the-art sound systems, to think of the primary school fighting closure near me in east London."

Wood-panelled halls and oil paintings of alumni – sound familiar?

I had better confess my agenda now. I went to a private school (sorry), and I am a member of the Conservative party (really, really sorry). I think that private schools should be VAT-exempt largely because they represent a combination of aspiration and tradition which is catnip to anyone sheltering conservative sympathies.

I had, however, given up hope of convincing anyone outside of Surrey to agree with me on this. The optics of Keir Starmer taking money from private schools, with their air-conditioned shooting ranges and gold-plated hockey pitches, and giving it to state schools made of crumbling concrete are just too good. The social justice of it all almost moves even my dead, Thatcherite heart.

The issue for Oxbridge students is that once you accept the principle that charitable status should be wielded by the government as a tool to reduce inequality, things start to look a bit dicey for our colleges. In Cambridge, Peterhouse, with its 477 students, has an endowment worth more than double that of Durham University – with 22,000 enrolled. In Oxford, New College keeps a Swiss chalet for student use, while down the road Brookes is sacking good maths and music professors because it can't afford to keep paying them.

Oxford and Cambridge get away with this because they are meritocratic. This is a lot less reasonable than it sounds. Durham is also a good, academically selective university – but none of its colleges have swimming pools. Are we to accept that Oxbridge

rejects are literally worth less than their peers who did better at interview?

Oxbridge colleges spend endowments cumulatively worth billions of pounds on subsidising formal dinners and European holidays for their students, and never have their charitable status questioned. At least when private schools help the most fortunate, they make them pay for the privilege. Oxbridge students get a better, more expensive education than their peers, not because it's a good investment, but because our higher education sector is driven by obscene inequality.

Needless to say, I am not proposing that Starmer come for Oxbridge. Quite the opposite. I've dragged Cambridge into this to point out that private schools aren't the only charities which pursue a debatable good in an arguably perverse way.

The premise behind private schools is that giving students a better education is always a public good, because even if only a minority benefit directly, others will benefit indirectly. It is essentially educational trickle-down economics.

This might well make your blood boil. Fair enough. But is it so different from Oxbridge colleges, which operate on the principle that if you take the brightest students in any given year, coddle them domestically, and push them academically, then you will produce an intellectual elite who can go forth and enrich the nation through their great deeds? It's trickle-down all over again, only with a veneer of meritocracy.

At this point, you might be thinking, "alright, collectivise Trinity". The problem is that neither of these principles are inherently unsound. Charities exist to serve the public good, and both private schools and Oxbridge colleges can reasonably argue that they do. That this comes at the cost of rather a lot of elitism is neither here nor there.

The question thus becomes how strictly you want to police what counts as a public good? You might be happy for Starmer to smite Eton and King's, but would you feel the same if Sunak came for those pesky refugee charities which keep blocking the Rwanda policy? Charities are funded by individuals trying to advance causes they believe in. Such causes need not be popular – if they did then polls suggest we'd be shutting down the Vegan Society and the LGBT Foundation.

Ultimately, in a free country, the government shouldn't decide what counts as a good cause. This is why Keir Starmer has decided not to strip private schools of their charitable status after all – though he still wants them to pay VAT. He would do better to just leave them alone. Denying privileges to private schools alone, simply because you don't like what they stand for, sets a grim precedent indeed.



NICHOLAS HARTMANN

Interviews

'I still have faith in our crazy country': leading American feminist Brenda Feigen

Ella McCartney speaks to second-wave feminist Brenda Feigen about her involvement in the Equal Rights Amendment, furthering reproductive rights and US politics today

With the rise of second wave feminism in 1960s and 70s America, legal inequalities, sexuality, and reproductive rights became the focus of the women's movement. As a Harvard educated lawyer and one of the leading feminist figures of this time, Brenda Feigen's work encompassed all of these priorities. From bringing the first sex discrimination cases to the US Supreme Court with Ruth Bader Ginsburg, to founding the first American national feminist magazine with Gloria Steinem, Brenda Feigen was a key driver of this fight for gender equality.

In Feigen's class at Harvard Law School in the late 1960s, where only 6% were women, she recalls: "it was amazing that I survived, because it was the most sexist place - you cannot even imagine." At Harvard, women were banned from using the squash courts, all students were addressed as "gentlemen," and professors created designated Ladies' Days, "where, for example, in criminal law the professor would call on women to talk about how much penetration constitutes rape." Feigen characterises her experiences at Harvard as "the very beginning" of her lifelong commitment to the women's movement.

Having married during her time at Harvard in 1968 at the Harvard Club in New York, Feigen remembers that on the library door "there was a sign saying 'No Ladies Allowed'." She proudly tells me that five years later "I was one of the lawyers to bring a class action lawsuit against the Harvard Club in 1973, and we won - they couldn't carry on only being men."

However, when starting to find work as a lawyer there was clear discrimination against women: "One of the firms told me they had already hired their one woman

for the year. Another wouldn't consider me because they were thinking about my husband."

After graduating from Harvard in 1969, Feigen became the National Legislative Vice President of the National Organization for Women (NOW); she outlines their two big priorities at the time: "abortion and the Equal Rights Amendment." However, keen to "help women at the grassroots level," Feigen teamed up with Gloria Steinem to found the Women's Action Alliance and Ms.

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There was a sign saying 'No Ladies Allowed'

magazine, the first national feminist magazine in America, in 1971.

Shortly after the announcement of Ms. Magazine, Feigen left to join then Professor Ruth Bader Ginsburg as co-director of the newly forming Women's Rights Project in the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU). She describes their work together as "an amazing combination of our skills because Ruth was such an extraordinary scholar of the Constitution and of Supreme Court cases [...] and I was very much involved in the women's movement." Together they took the first sex discrimination cases to the Supreme Court level in the USA.

In 1974, Feigen left the Women's Rights Project in order to focus on gathering support for the Equal Rights Amend-

ment (ERA). The ERA was first unsuccessfully presented to Congress in 1923, but in the 1970s "it was just in the air that that amendment should be revived." Feigen took a very public role in this campaign: "I was the one on the stages of different universities and on different screens." The most infamous objector to the ERA was Phyllis Schlafly, who Feigen describes as "horrific" and "very, very disturbing." The ERA was only ratified by 35 states by its extended deadline in 1982, just shy of the necessary 38 that would have enabled it to become an amendment to the Constitution.

In the last decade there has been a new wave of support for the adoption of the ERA, with Nevada ratifying the amendment in 2017, Illinois in 2018, and Virginia following in 2020. Feigen attributes this renewed interest to "a surge in feminism," partially due to the #MeToo movement and the election of President Donald Trump in 2016. Feigen admits that despite wanting the ERA "symbolically and politically [...] I feel that we'd have to start over again."

Aside from her work at the time campaigning for the ERA, Feigen also founded the Women's Reproductive Rights Project in 1974 at the ACLU, after the right to reproductive choice had been recognised the year before through Roe v. Wade. She narrates an example of one of the many harrowing cases she worked on: "I was in my office when a young Black woman was escorted in [...] she had a little piece of paper in her hand, and she asked me if I could tell her what it said [...] it turns out she had been sterilised without her knowledge or consent in the state of North Carolina [...] one day the hospital board

people, along with the state people, came to her mother's door and said if you don't agree to this, we will throw your family off welfare. The mother could not read or write, she put an X on a line and that apparently constituted consent."

Turning to discuss her views on the overturning of Roe v. Wade in June 2022, Feigen expresses how "everybody was just gobsmacked by that - it was just horrible." Adamantly she states, "I just want to make my own position clear: there should be zero restrictions on women to get abortions however pregnant they are - it's up to the woman and her doctor." She is keen to remind people, "who are making these laws? It's men and they just want to continue to control women wherever they can do it."

The stuffing of the Supreme Court with far-right judges under Trump, has resulted in Feigen advising people to not "bring your case to the Supreme Court if you can help it, leave it at the lower federal court level." At the prospect of Trump returning to office, Feigen remarks "I cannot think of anything worse [...] he belongs in jail." However, she asserts that "I still have faith in our crazy country." She cites the January 2017 Women's March of 5.2 million people worldwide, taking place the day after Trump's inauguration as President, as a great source of hope. "All different issues came together in that march, and they were there lovingly with each other not fighting about priorities. To me, that sort of symbolises what we're striving for today [...] to get all of these different issues together in one thing I'm calling feminism."

In 1978, Feigen ran for the Democratic nomination in the 26th Dis-

trict of the New York State Senate, only narrowly losing despite spending only \$38,000 compared to her competitors \$500,000. Feigen is passionate about women getting involved in politics, believing that "the more women there are, the better it is [...] with numbers comes power." However, even Vice President Kamala Harris, the most powerful female politician in America, "hasn't been used enough", according to Feigen, "and that seems to happen a lot with women in politics - they get ignored." She is hopeful that female representation will increase and that the campaign for women's issues will continue: "you never ever used to hear everybody call herself a feminist and now everybody is [...] and that's fantastic!"

A lesson that Feigen wants all future women to learn is that "the more I have asserted myself over these many years, the further I have gone in life." She concludes: "we women have to assert ourselves and make ourselves at least half of the voices that we're hearing and following and listening to."

Timeline

1923	Equal Rights Amendment first presented to Congress
1969	Feigen graduates from Harvard Law School
1970	Testimonies on the Equal Rights Amendment
1971	Feigen and Gloria Steinem co-found Women's Action Alliance and Ms. Magazine
1972	Feigen becomes co-director of Women's Rights Project with Ruth Bader Ginsburg
1973	Roe v. Wade
1974	Feigen founds Women's Reproductive Rights Project
1978	Feigen runs for New York State Senate
1982	Extended deadline for ERA passes, three states short of ratification
2017	Women's March the day after Trump's inauguration
2017	Nevada ratifies ERA
2018	Illinois ratifies ERA
2020	Virginia ratifies ERA
2022	Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organisation overturns Roe v. Wade



▲ BRENDA FEIGEN

Interviews

‘How to Fail’ at Cambridge: Elizabeth Day on what we can learn when things go wrong

Abby Reyes talks to ‘How to Fail’ podcast host and Queens’ alumna Elizabeth Day about success and failure at Cambridge, and how failing is an opportunity to learn about yourself

From Greta Thunberg to Rick Astley, Elizabeth Day has made it her life’s work to broadcast the failures of beloved public figures. More precisely, and in her own words, her award-winning podcast *How to Fail* “spins the conventional interview on its head [...] deliberately seeking to understand what obstacles people have overcome and what they’ve learnt along the way.”

When Elizabeth started her podcast in 2018, she wanted to challenge the “era of curated perfection online, where it was vanishingly rare to



▲ JENNY SMITH

see a real person on Instagram.” She recalls that the podcast market was far less saturated five years ago, and that “there was a space to talk about things that had gone wrong, rather than purely focusing on the external success everyone else seemed to be having.”

She’s talked to Bernie Sanders about his failure to make his high school basketball team, *Love Island*’s Ovie Soko about being expelled from school, and the iconic Miriam Margolyes’ failure to “marry a nice Jewish doctor.” But she’s also been incredibly candid about her own so-called failures, such as experiencing fertility issues and going through divorce. “When we share our vulnerability, that is the source of all true connection, and connection for me is the most human and the most beautiful feeling.”

Elizabeth Day came to Queens’ College in 1991 and left with a double first in History, but, most importantly, her main activity was writing for *Varsity*. She has unequivocally fond memories of Cambridge, including her time in Queens’ ‘Betty Ford’ women’s drinking society, and

spraining her ankle during a lacrosse game in Cripps Court, “having imbibed too many vodka jellies... I was wearing high heeled boots, don’t ask why...”

Her favourite part of Cambridge life was the history degree. A self-professed “massive geek,” she relished “being surrounded by books and thousands of years of learning,” and the academics who gave time to her “relatively stupid ideas.” Ents officer, President of the History Society, student journalism – Elizabeth could be one of those terrifyingly put-together ‘Sidge girlies’. But her self-awareness is palpable: “I was lucky, and I know that’s not everyone’s experience of Cambridge.” And she speaks of her own ‘failures’ while up at Cambridge: an unsuccessful bid to be a thesp, being far too scared of falling short of perfection, and of course the lacrosse and vodka jellies incident. Our failures are relative and subjective, but that doesn’t make them any less meaningful or worthy of learning from.

The notions of failure and success are extremely salient for students at this university, and many have experienced what I call the ‘Cambridge paradox’, being objectively successful but continuing to be plagued by a sense of failure.

Elizabeth has a theory as to why Cambridge students are so preoccupied by imposter syndrome: “you’ve worked re-

ally hard, been put under pressure, and therefore dealt with stress and anxiety, and if you are intelligent in the way I believe Cambridge values – you’re curious

“**Failing does not have to be life determining, and failure is not final**

and you ask questions of the world and you’re contextualising your experience of it” – curiosity is not bliss.

Her driving philosophy is this: “failing doesn’t have to be life-determining, and failure is not final. Failure is an opportunity to learn what to do differently next time.” And she manages to put a positive spin on everything, without minimisation. There’s power in speaking to yourself kindly – something anyone with a good therapist will know. By the end of our interview, she’s corrected me several times: you’re not highly strung, you’re hard-working and think deeply about the world; you’re not “too much,” you have the capacity to share and be vulnerable. Talking to Elizabeth is therapeutic

and there are pieces of advice we can all learn from: vulnerability is “the antidote to failure – sharing our experiences, and recognising that we are not alone.”

This philosophy is what enables her to share so much of herself with the world. “I’ve spoken very openly about my fertility journey. It’s very emotional. I knew that other women and men felt alone in this process, but selfishly, it was cathartic for me.” Being labelled as “brave” and “courageous” does not sit comfortably with Elizabeth: “I just think it comes naturally to me. If you were to sit next to me at dinner, I’d only be too willing to tell you everything, and I’d want to find out all about you too.”

Day has a reassuring message for Cambridge students: “I promise you that you are doing brilliantly. If you are going through dark times, it will pass, and have faith that you will learn something meaningful from it once it has passed.” Most importantly, “University might not be the happiest time of your life, but that doesn’t mean your happiest days aren’t ahead of you [...] Don’t be scared of ageing. I feel more myself at 44 than I ever did at 19.”

“Ooh! And drink as much as you can in the college bars!” But perhaps not in high heeled boots with a mind to playing lacrosse – that is indeed, ‘How to Fail’.

Hacker T. Dog and ‘the flukiest job in show business’

Heidi Atkins sits down with Phil Fletcher, the puppet master behind Britain's favourite dog

Hacker T. Dog needs no introduction. He’s the dog who graced our CBBC screens daily, the animal behind “we’re just innocent men,” a champion of Sue Barker, meat paste and milky brews. For most of us, Mr. T. Dog was an enormous part of our childhoods but the man who has been under the desk, animating the dog the whole time, is a bit of an unsung hero. I sat down with Phil Fletcher, the puppeteer behind Hacker, to get to know how the iconic character came to our TV screens.

“When I was a little kid, I must have been about four, my Mum and Dad bought me a little emu puppet and I never took it off my hand,” Phil tells me, “I’ve done it ever since.” At nine, Phil was making puppets out of paper and, at eleven after some fiddling with a sewing machine, he made his first “proper puppet,” a character called Josh – “I still use Josh’s character to this very day.” After forming a band of characters, Phil began performing, starting at kids parties and school shows. “I’ve been making money from puppeteering since I was eleven, that’s thirty-five years doing this. I had no ambition to do anything else other than be a puppeteer.”

Phil never “aspired to do telly” and was happy working the cabaret puppet show he did for years. “Telly was just too niche so I thought I’d never get into it. I just tried to be the best I possibly could at the live stuff.” CBBC became a reality for Phil after a producer rang him and asked him to come and interview: “it was literally out of the blue. I was in bed, watching *Columbo* and eating custard out of a bowl so I went for the audition and

“**My whole career has been a blag**

then I got the job.”

The rise of Hacker T. Dog is far from the typical trajectory of a TV star, so much so that Phil describes his career as “the flukiest job in showbusiness.” Hacker was intended to be a temporary stand-in character: “it was meant to be a four month gig with me and Ian Stirling. We got thrown together and thrown on the telly. I thought - brilliant - I’ll do this four month gig and then go back to cabaret, it’ll be a good thing to whack on the CV.” But the job carried on: “it still hasn’t

ended yet, that was fifteen years ago. It’s the longest four month job in history.”

Unlike the rest of Phil’s puppets, Hacker is not one he made himself. “He was in a show called *Scoop* and he didn’t talk, he had no personality or anything.” The character communicated through barks and growls but, two months after starting performing, Phil was sent to Wimbledon to interview Sue Barker. “We had three minutes with her so no time to prepare. I just thought, ‘oh, bugger it’, Hacker will just start talking in English from now on.” His gamble worked, and from then on Hacker was the chatty dog that graced our screens and Phil was given full control over how Hacker acted. “The best thing about Hacker is that he’s real. He’s from Wigan - I’m from Wigan. He drinks milky brew, he’s an angry little git and I’m an angry little git. The only whimsical thing about him is that he’s a dog, other than that he’s a real bloke.”

The onscreen friendship between Hacker and Ian Stirling became a cornerstone of the presenting job, but this friendship didn’t just stop there. Ian and Phil lived together for about two and a half years; “our friendship was yet another fluke, we could have hated each other.” In their London flat, they spent their days “drinking and watching Alan Partridge, sometimes fannying around

and making puppet characters in the middle of the night after a few bevs. The relationship on screen of Ian and Hacker being really good friends was completely real. We’re still good mates today.”

Phil operates on improvisation, doing whatever he thinks will get the biggest laughs. “I never write anything, I’ve never written anything in my life - it’s always been ad-lib. Scripts get written at CBBC but I just ignore them and ad-lib around them and Hacker them up.” I ask Phil if this has ever gotten him into any trouble he responds “maybe. I don’t really listen or

pay their opinion any mind though, I’m Hacker.”

A puppeteer since four, a performer since 11 and an icon of the silver screen for the last decade and a half, Phil Fletcher’s career is the stuff of dreams. But I was taken aback by just how much seemed to come to him by chance. A call out of nowhere from the BBC, a split second decision that made a dog talk, and a decades long friendship with Ian Stirling all came, as Phil says, as a “fluke.” “My whole career has been a blag,” he tells me. And, god, what a hell of a blag it has been.



▲ PHIL FLETCHER

Science

A swan dive into the Cambridge birdwatching scene

Joe Parham illustrates why you should step beyond the lecture theatre and venture into the avian world

From supervisions on the Byzantine Empire to lectures on the discovery of cell cycle regulation, Cambridge offers an opportunity to indulge in rich intellectual stimulation. However, outside the confines of our colleges and lecture theatres (or in my case, the laboratory) lies one of the best places in the UK to explore birdlife – Cambridgeshire.

Situated in the south-east of England, surrounded by the Fens, with the Norfolk coast to the east and

plenty of local nature reserves, Cambridge offers an escape from the pressures of academic life through explorations into the natural world.

Birds are pretty amazing. Almost all species found in the UK are at least somewhat migratory. Classic examples such as swallows and swifts will be synonymous with the term “migration” to many, but even some of our most familiar species migrate to and from the UK in huge numbers.

Autumn and winter are two of the best seasons for birdwatching in the city, as many species that have migrated here for the colder months stop off in green areas to feed and recover from long voyages. Robins, blackbirds and goldcrests flood into the UK in autumn, along with classic winter migrants like redwings, fieldfares and bramblings – all of these species can be seen just a short walk from the city centre. An evening walk in November or early Decem-

ber is sure to produce the “tseep” calls of migrating redwings, flying overhead in the darkness.

A break between lectures is a prime occasion to spend some time in nature. If you need a brief escape, woodlands

“Doctors have been known to prescribe bird-watching

such as Paradise LNR and Grantchester Meadows can provide ample opportunity to see some vibrant species. Kingfishers are common, often seen fishing (as one might expect!) along the river, while bullfinches dot the bushes with colour. The more trained ear can even pick out the calls of the migrant lesser redpoll and siskin as they move between the alders – even an amateur knowledge of these bird calls can heighten your birdwatching experience!

If you have more time on your hands, there are plenty of sites further afield which harbour more significant numbers of a diverse range of species. Returning wildfowl come back in autumn, so a visit

to any large body of water will produce flocks of recently arrived ducks that have come here to spend the winter. The RSPB Fen Drayton Lakes (a 30-minute bus ride from central Cambridge) harbour important wintering populations of pochard, gadwall, and goldeneye, in addition to scarce breeding birds such as bitterns, cattle egrets, and bearded tits.

A high point, such as Castle Mound, can be a great place to enjoy visible migration, or “vis-mig”. If conditions are favourable, a morning spent on a hill can produce hundreds to thousands of migrating birds dancing over your head. Species such as the skylark, meadow pipit, and an array of finches can make for a very enjoyable morning.

Winter is also a great time to uncover rare or scarce birds – some migrate here in small numbers while some are distant treasures, blown off course by strong winds or hav-

ing migrated the wrong way. I recently stumbled upon a yellow-browed warbler, a small but beautiful migrant from Siberia, calling in the trees at Coe Fen.

Birdwatching is not only about the excitement of seeing a beautiful or rare species: the mental health benefits of birding have been well documented in recent years. Studies have shown that seeing and hearing birds can have a significant impact on boosting mental wellness, so much so that doctors in Shetland have been known to prescribe birdwatching to patients to help alleviate symptoms of poor mental health.

I’ve always found a walk in nature to be especially calming – sampling the delicate winter colours and invigorating fresh air may just be the perfect way to escape the rigours of Cambridge academic life. If you find yourself with spare time over the next few weeks, I would highly encourage you to head out and see what you can find, you may well be surprised by what beauty lies beyond your doorstep.

PHOTOS BY
JOE PARHAM



A ‘Pivotal’ moment for the move towards flying cars

Marie-Madeleine Fuerbeth details Pivotal's plan for the roll-out of their ‘flying car’, the Helix

In the past century, we have come so far that flying to the other side of the world is accessible to many of us. But this is flying commercial – it makes us think of sleeping masks and back pain, not the grandeur of ascendency Saint-Exupéry described in his tales. But hey, maybe the dream of you and a pair of wings soaring over the horizons is closer than expected. In 2024, Pivotal, a California-based company backed by Google’s Larry Page, plans to introduce its game-changing one-passenger electric aviation vehicle (EAV). And you won’t even need a pilot’s licence to fly it.

Pivotal announced the 2024 launch of their new EAV dubbed the Helix in early October this year. CEO Ken Karlin not only promises “personal aerial freedom” but also production at scale, therefore making it accessible to all aviation enthusiasts who are willing to pay. The Helix, boasting a futuristic and sleek design through carbon composite materials and a vinyl finish, will

be available for purchase at \$190,000. Utilising the technique of electric propulsion, this six-rotor aircraft takes off and lands vertically with fixed tandem wings.

However, Pivotal is just one player in the rapidly growing industry of electric vertical take-off and landing vehicles (eVTOL). In recent years, the eVTOL industry has seen significant progress in technology and manufacturing thanks to substantial investments from funds like Cathie Wood’s ARK and strategic partnerships with companies like Uber. According to different reports, the market for eVTOLs will grow with a compound annual growth rate of between 20% and 50% in the following years, reaching a market cap of over 30 trillion in 2030 – McKinsey confidently predicts they will outcompete traditional airlines by 2030.

The market is currently dominated by American companies Archer Aviation and Joby Aviation, Ehang, a Chinese company, and Lilium, the only European company. Joby Aviation is planning to launch a ride-sharing service in New York

by 2025 that will transport a pilot and four passengers per vehicle from Manhattan to JFK and Newark airport. Interestingly, several start-ups are receiving financial and technical support from car manufacturers, including Toyota, Hyundai and Porsche. Both Boeing and Airbus are also currently developing their own models of eVTOL aircrafts.

Without doubt, personal electric flight is becoming a reality, but accessibility depends on revising and adapting current aviation regulations. In July 2023, the US Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) released ‘Innovate28’, a comprehensive plan detailing how to manage airspace, establish certification specifications, and develop new infrastructure necessary for the scale of urban aviation until 2028. Until then, eVTOLs will have to fly on established routes controlled by Air Traffic Control. For Pivotal especially, regulations could pose a significant obstacle to widespread consumer adoption. In order to eliminate the need for air control and pilot licensing, the Helix

must be a class G vehicle, meaning ultralight as defined in Federal Aviation Regulation Part 103. This confers overall performance limitations. The weight of the battery is directly tied to its capacity, however, to maintain its ultralight classification, the battery weight must be minimised to the fullest extent. This has resulted in a mere range of 20 miles, which pales in comparison to Joby and Lilium’s target ranges of 150 miles. The distance from Cambridge to London is around 50 miles. So you couldn’t even take your Helix on a quick trip to the city. Even the passenger’s weight is restricted to a maximum of 100kg. Perhaps Pivotal is depending on a dramatic change in the current regulatory environment. Nonetheless, it’s a fact that ultralight vehicles have yet to be taken into account in regulatory initiatives such as ‘Innovate28’.

Now that eVTOLs, including the Helix, have advanced from the prototype stage to become commercially available vehicles, we can begin to speculate on how our cityscapes will change in the near

future. We can paint a rather idyllic picture as metropolitan centres around the world will benefit from the prospect of fewer cars – recreational zones will be able to expand, less inner-city noise, and a marked improvement in air quality. Generally, a rather utopian scenario. The creation of sufficient take-off spaces (so-called vertiports) and charging stations would require unfavourable green space sacrifice but a worthy sacrifice for such a utopia.

Cambridge probably isn’t the number one priority for the roll-out of eVTOLs, but smaller communities are just as affected by debilitating traffic jams and the need for carbon-neutral transportation. Options like the Helix are affordable and deploying them to Park & Ride centres could drive a hugely beneficial change in our urban environment. Forget the expansion of e-scooters – why not give us flying cars and allow us to enjoy some more Saint-Exupéry-esque adventures?



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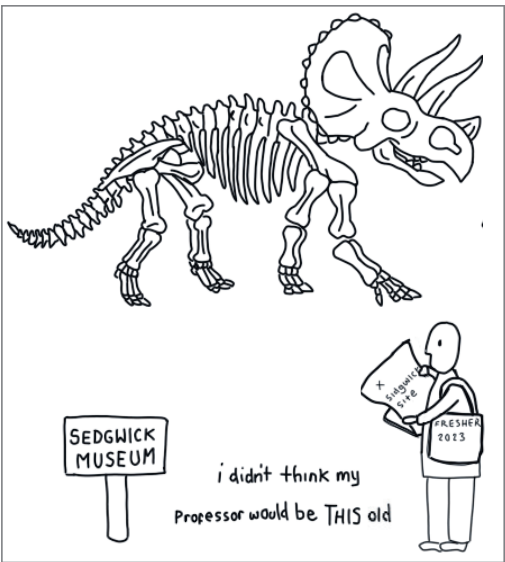
The Smoking Area



Cambridge Nightclimbers



▲ ROSIE PETTIFER



VINTAGE VARSITY

By Joshua Shortman & Paddy Davies Jones

The challenge in describing the allure of night climbing lies not in discovering the motives, but rather in narrowing them down. Perhaps the most reductionist view is that of Ronald Turnball (hill-walker and writer): put a group of adventurous youths in an environment consisting of buildings, and they are bound to climb them. It's a view backed up by *Varsity*, when in 1958 an intrepid reporter asked an anonymous organiser for comment on the Bond Mini found hanging under the Bridge of Sighs. They helpfully explained their motive: "we wanted to see whether we could hang a car under a bridge."

Perhaps the most famous statement of this philosophy comes from George Mallory, when asked by a reporter why he'd climbed Everest (because it's there). And philosophy isn't an over-statement - read the books (seriously, do) and you'll discover equal parts diagrams and poetry. Geoffry Winthrop-Young, who sent Mallory his application to the Cambridge Climbing Club, also wrote the first *Roof Climber's Guide to Trinity* (1930), and is a recognised poet. The tradition continues into *The Night Climbers of Cambridge* (1937), which concludes, "the climber is as a man standing on the edge of an abyss ... he cannot but visualise what would happen if he stepped forward, and realises with a shock of what very small significance it would be."

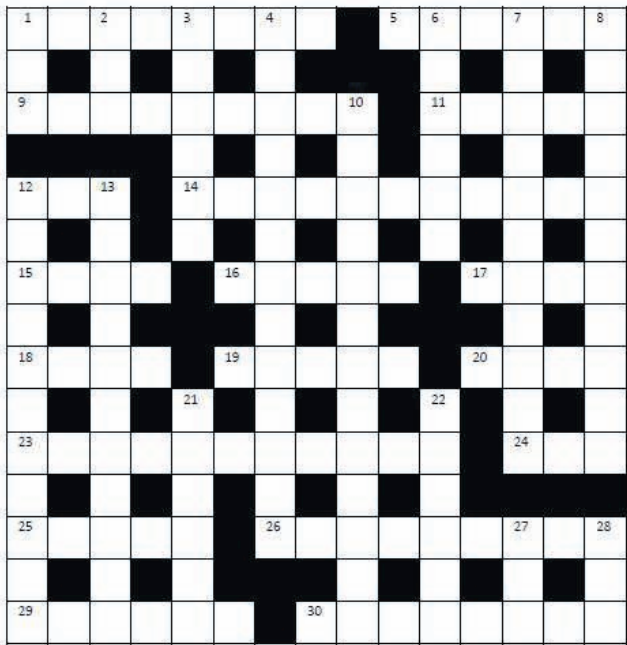
Reading old *Varsity* however, another answer appears: people do it for press. It's hard to find

a year where nocturnally aspirational activities don't crop up in print. It's a paradox in some ways, for such a secretive activity - but its very secrecy makes it food for the press. And climbers aren't unaware of this potential; the original aim of this article was to discuss the politics of night climbers, as it appeared in *Varsity's* photographs and articles. Beyond 'radical', however, this proved impossible.

Unfortunately for night climbers, the author of *The Night Climbers of Cambridge*, was a failed Mosleyite candidate - his other published works include *Return to Responsibility: A New Concept of the Case for Fascism in the Post-War World* (1958). He is, however, outweighed by pacifists; even in Symington's time, a banner went up between the spires of King's Chapel to "Save Ethiopia"(a protest at the fascist / Italian invasion under Mussolini). Nares Craig (a published communist and pacifist) also climbed in the 30s, and was rusticated along with a fellow climber for attempting to hoist an effigy of George VI on King's Chapel - a way of "mocking the whole pantomime of royalty." This doesn't make the press - but using King's spires as an aerial headline continues to this day: "Slava Ukraini" went up in 2022, a more nationalist version of the 60's "Peace in Vietnam" and "Ban the Bomb". And even when the headlines aren't involved, *Varsity* is; some of the best photographs are from the 60's, taken by John Bulmer - who smuggled flashbulbs to take his photographs from the *Varsity* offices late at night.

Games & puzzles by Bombe & Marble

Varsity Crossword



Quick

Across

- 1 Underground tomb (8)
- 5 See 21d
- 9 A millionth of a kilo (9)
- 11 What joins your head to your legs? (5)
- 12 Short name for the holiday after Ramadan (3)
- 14 A red fruit with hundreds of seeds inside (11)
- 15 Mi ... es su ... (4)
- 16 Once more (5)

- 17 Metal used to galvanise (4)
- 18 See 2d
- 19 City where 1a can be found (5)
- 20 A big cat (4)
- 23 A collection of islands (11)
- 24 A state of matter (3)
- 25 This goes on a cake (5)
- 26 These, in the form of 24a, causes climate change (9)
- 29 Assassins in Japan (6)
- 30 Suggest (8)

Down

- 1 This river is dirty (3)
- 2, 18a Middle Eastern city with the

- biggest Pride parade in Asia (3,4)
- 3 Chips, to Americans (6)
- 4 The first to see Jesus's empty tomb; namesake of a college (4,9)
- 6 Religious habit (6)
- 7 Making something common and accepted (11)
- 8 Teenagers (11)
- 10 The action of zooming in (13)
- 12 This! (11)
- 13 A top grade for a master's (11)
- 21, 5a A term for a common language (6,6)
- 22 A little tree (6)
- 27 Eggs (3)
- 28 Many threaten to do this to Varsity (3)

Cryptic

Across

- 1 Did without Fresher love, repulsed in facetime (8)
- 5 "Painful Excercise" said physicist (6)
- 9 Mixing Acid: intro to Litmus Test
- 11 Understand annoying person has extra time (3,2)
- 12 Openly homosexual found in Provo, Utah (3)
- 14 'Useful' Caius office cock-up (11)
- 15 Talk with the fat (4)
- 16 4 x 5 result (5)
- 17 A place for fun and games: life isn't, it is often said (4)
- 18 Used by rowers, love area starts to rash sorely? (4)
- 19 Unable to change: what John's is missing leads to sound of disapproval (5)
- 20 All black bird (4)

- 23 Put off, writer spiel to get worse (11)
- 24 Stimulate gamete (3)
- 25 Peruvian canteen doesn't have Tango (5)
- 26 Make noteworthy mark (9)
- 29 Mix up: losing it's head, copper surrounds US city (6)
- 30 Confusing mare, BNOC to give male love! (8)

Down

- 1 Agency reveals first signs of Father Bridgemas' intoxication (3)
- 2 Angry bird when side by side with Cardinal (3)
- 3 Evil heart from Sidgwick Education (6)
- 4 Pop-ups: "Fact 1 shocked me", based in opinions (13)
- 6 Second of Flags put up before point by leaders of Gonville and Caius. Why? - we hear it's what they'll be remembered by (6)
- 7 Remove private care from oiliest Nana: gone potty (11)
- 8 Figure scrolling through websites is an extreme sport (4,7)
- 10 Tool to swap vinyls, Bolt for example? (6,7)
- 12 'Mingling with Nuts' innuendo: periodically call upon to be happy (2,5,4)
- 13 By principles alone, Fashion Chloe's attire without a second (11)
- 21 Dry mineral taken before intensive care (6)
- 22 Beta Male, after losing time to degree, puts on 50, just relax (2,4)
- 27 Popular New Pub (3)
- 28 We hear you farm girl? (3)

Sudoku

Easy

						5		
	9	4	7			3		
					9	2	7	
2				5				
9			8	2		7	6	
	7				4	8		
6	2							
		5				6		
	8	7			5			

Medium

						5		
		2			9			
			1					2
	7	9	5					8
	4		9	8				
2								5
6				7				
4	5					6		
	8	1	2	5			4	

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.





Ask Aunty Maddy: Mistletoe and Crime



What should I buy for my mother's boyfriend for Christmas? She says he's a gentle lover – but does he deserve anything from me?

Catalogue of sex tips. Bam. Easy. You want to know why? Prong one of this approach: her beau is so insulted that your relationship to him is forever scarred by this gesture of goodwill, rendering the need for any future Christmas presents a moot point entirely. Prong two: her lover may no longer be so gentle. While you may not like the mental image of a woman in her mid-50s being ridden like a buxom young mare by a viagra-crazed cowboy, you are going to have to put up with it if you want her to turn a blind eye to all the mysterious new purchases you'll be making on her credit card. Either way, you'll be saving money in the long run – you could even splash out on a new pair of earplugs so you're not kept up at night by the sounds that would make your poor old dad cry into his eighth bowl of instant mac and cheese from the squalor of his bachelor pad. Forget your mother's sex life, you need your beauty sleep – you've got a degree to be getting on with! You'll be the *summa cum laude* to her *sigma cum...* lord! Or at least he soon will be, having lovingly read through your gift to him. The guide doesn't even have to be good. Get him a shit one you can find on the back of the shelf in the 'literature' section of TK Maxx so he knows just how unbothered you truly are. How do I know exactly where to find them, you ask? Well, as you know, any good literature student has a working knowledge of the classics...

Is it acceptable to get my grandma drunk on Christmas Day?

Well, that depends entirely on your purpose. If you're thinking that, in her drunken merriment, the old bird will suddenly stomp up half your in-

heritance as a holiday gift for being "such a good grandson/daughter/kid/moocher-in-chief", you may as well believe that Santa lets Rudolph and all the other future McDoubles run free range for the other 11 months of the year (you can't fool me, I've seen the PETA dispatches, mate). Come on, what else is there for an old lady to do during her retirement than piss away *your* ~~love~~ to the easy life down at the bingo hall and a mad lads' cruise to Shagaluf back in '05? You'd always foolishly assumed that photograph of her and Peter Andre in matching tankinis was your dad's poor photoshop attempt to help her get over your dead grandad, but now, all the puzzle pieces are slowly falling into place. She's probably so bored out of her mind most days that it's a complete rarity she's *not* roaring drunk before lunchtime rolls around, whether or not a roast turkey is there to soak up a morning of uninhibited boozing. Still, I wouldn't waste the free alcohol – chances are the Christmas Day food coma will immobilise her for a few hours, the perfect amount of time to swoop in and ransack her house for hidden treasures – pre-inheritance tax!

Help! I'm in my overdraft, how should I prioritise Christmas shopping?

It's funny. It's sooooo funny. Little did the poor sweet child that asked this question know it, but I'm currently in this exact situation. 'Don't dish it out if you can't take it,' the #haters

often say of my advice. This time, I'm going method. In fact, almost to the number. Take a look for yourself! It's not all bad though: recently, a bunch of fraudsters tried to pass transactions worth hundreds of pounds through my account, which failed when the balance was inevitably too low. Can't steal if there's nothing there, suckers! But away with sad anecdotes from my own miserable existence. As for genuine advice, last time I checked I don't think I'm allowed to condone theft outright in our university's official student publication (fear not, one day we'll prevail over such damning plagues of censorship), so I'll dish out my favourite money-saving tips and tricks. Example

1: any-

thing can be a delicious and hearty meal if you just *believe*. I'm chiefly referring to the 22p tins of spaghetti hoops in Mainsbury's and the bag of spinach that's been collecting mould (or as I like to call it, *flavour*) at the back of the fridge since about Week Two. But, this can also include the ten or so chocolate digestives and five slices of banana bread you steal from

each of the various welfare teas peppered conveniently throughout the week across the subject faculty libraries. Depending on individual resourcefulness and the strength of your

immune system, some of these can even be half-eaten! Example 2: lighten the load. Actively seek to make enemies of your current friends, and bam! Suddenly, fewer Christmas presents tanking

your all-ready dismal credit score! And to my secret Santa, if you're reading this, go fuck yourself.

◀ MIRANDA EVANS



Capturing Cambridge: Martin Bond's debut photobook

Eva Weinstein reflects on A Cambridge Diary's first coffee-table book 'Town & Gown'

In 2010, Martin Bond began noticing things. Not noticing in the overt sense of the word, but really *perceiving* and paying attention to objects, people, and performances of the everyday. Beginning with a casual snapshot of a decorator spilling a can of paint, Bond captured the transient look of dismay that crossed his face and became “hooked” on preserving ephemeral moments.

Before publishing his first photobook ‘Town & Gown’, Bond began posting these images on Facebook, in a project named ‘A Cambridge Diary’. The ‘diary’ became an informal record of the intricacies of Cambridge life – its landscapes, characters, and interactions. The project originally focused on the city outside the university, attempting to reveal a different slant to Cambridge beyond the shiny prospectus photos of ivy-clad walls. However, Bond soon discovered that it was impossible to avoid the allure of grandiose buildings and majestic bridges and, inevitably, university life wound its way into his images. Bond still aims to showcase the more mundane practices of the city’s characters: the coffee-sipping scholars, street musicians and market vendors. He captures the unremarkable practices of the everyday, and in doing so, he transforms them into remarkable and noteworthy pieces of artwork.

Cambridge is a city that looks best on a sunny day: leafy trees against cloudless skies and sandstone walls bathed in light. But it is not a city of unblemished skies, and, as any golden-hour-enjoyer will tell you, it’s more challenging to capture the

charm of a drizzly evening. On the 4th of January in 2014, Martin Bond took a photograph of a couple wandering down Green Street, arms linked, closely huddled to share an umbrella that covers neither of their heads fully. It’s a relatable image – the intimate yet universal experience of traipsing home in the rain, too focused on reaching a destination to notice the silhouettes of so many others around us. The accompanying description offers a brief insight into the photo – the figures are a 90-year-old woman and her daughter, making their way to a photography studio on Green Street. Beyond the gloom, the glow of street lamps warms the pavements and rain falls with gentle insistence.

“
If Cambridge is beautiful in the sun, then it's magical in the fog

This photograph is one of 365 carefully curated images in Bond’s new book, ‘Town & Gown’, one for each day of the year. The book tells a unique tale of the diverse and multifaceted life of Cambridge inside and outside the university walls. Taking its title from the city’s cliché role as a home to two

distinct communities – the local town population and the university-affiliated residents – the book strips the city of its labels. Students, townsfolk, and tourists are simply presented as real people, going about their daily lives in Cambridge. In the foreword, Bond includes an ode to the influence of the university and the town on one another, seeing them not as two separate entities, but as a symbiosis that shapes the city’s unique character and buzzing atmosphere.

The photos are diverse, candid realities, from breath-catching scenes of fiery skies to endearing images of streetwise animals. Bond’s book records the seasons passing and weather shifting: if Cambridge is beautiful in the sun, then it is magical in the fog. In April, a swan takes flight over the river – the photograph captures the second it skims across water, like a pebble strewn across an open ocean. The camera becomes a silent observer, capturing the camaraderie, shared glances and unspoken connections that gives the city its soul.

As a Cambridge student, it is all too easy to get swept up in the hecticness of our daily lives – essays, supervisions and college traditions create a dense bubble that envelops and shutters us from the city’s vitality. ‘Town & Gown’ pierces these bubbles, allowing us to peer into moments that are intimate, vulnerable, joyous, and beautiful. It presents a multi-coloured panorama of Cambridge life, and gently reminds us of the value in paying attention to our surroundings.



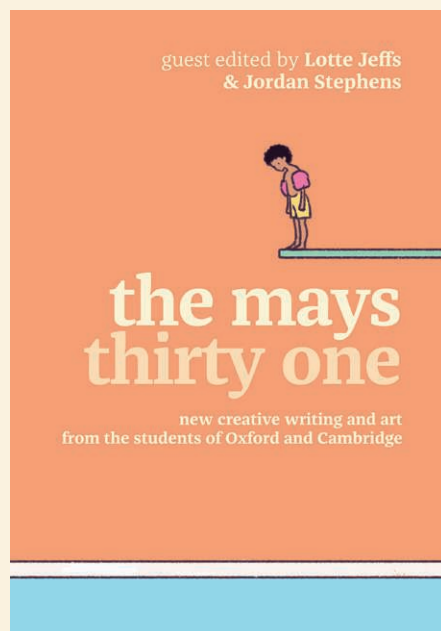
▲ MARTIN BOND

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Arts

Times chief art critic and author Laura Freeman on Kettle's Yard founder Jim Ede

Isabel Dempsey & Eva Weinstein discover how researching and writing her book *Ways of Life: Jim Ede and the Kettle's Yard Artists* has shaped her own way of life too

“Sorry, it’s a 15 minute wait.” Stuck outside Michaelhouse, waiting for it to transform from church to café as it does each Sunday, we are both firmly reminded of the dual identity of place – the capability of a room to be many different things to many different people. As we prepare to meet Laura Freeman, author of *Ways of Life: Jim Ede and the Kettle's Yard Artists*, such a realisation seems rather fitting. After all, Kettle's Yard was not just a gallery: it was a home. And art to Jim Ede was more than just art, but a “way of life” too.

Having spent the last few years researching Kettle's Yard's founder, Jim Ede, for her biography, Laura's subject matter appears to have transformed her own “way of life” too. With the “eight lever arch folders” and

roughly 72 page timeline she has collected on Jim, she has become strangely acquainted with this man she had never met in the flesh. So deeply acquainted in fact that in the height of lockdown madness, she even accidentally slipped into calling her very own husband “Jim.” Good thing we were conducting this interview, and not Freud.

In this act of intertwining, she tells us that it was important for her to abide by Richard Cohen's idea of following “in the footsteps of your subject.” While Ede is most well-known for his legacy at Kettle's Yard, his last great act of creation, the curator led a full, travel-filled life before he settled down in Cambridge. With trips everywhere from Cambridge and Hampstead, to Tangier and America, Laura insists that tracing him in this way “really does make an incredible difference.” For someone like Jim “for whom houses are so unbeliev-

stones, Laura transforms Jim into a character, and an artwork, treating the subject like a close friend. Having immersed herself so deeply in his life and research, the book interweaving art and life together, we wondered if she was wary of inserting herself or her perceptions of Jim into the narrative. As Laura points out, “it’s always a delicate balance.” Fittingly returning to the world of art, she draws an analogy to portraiture: “think about Napoleon, the number of portraits that are made of him all by different artists, they’re all so slightly different. It’s the same man. To a certain extent, the author is always going to



shared experience. His belief in the democratisation of art has left a lasting impact on Kettle's Yard, if not the walls of many undergraduate student rooms to this day. Laura admires that Kettle's Yard is not as “hostile” as so many galleries – “I love the fact there is no pinecone on a chair. You can always sit down,” or as one student did, “do your dissertation at the table upstairs.”

Laura emphasises Jim's belief that “art really is for everyone.” She describes him as a “brilliant talker about art,” demystifying the art world through accessible language: “you read his lecture, there is no

Jim has taught me a “greater appreciation for small moments of beauty”

ably important,” connecting him to the material spaces he inhabited became important too.

This Ede as artist, curator, and avant-garde interior designer, is important to the very shape of the book, each chapter beginning with a piece of artwork from Kettle's Yard. In the biography, Laura talks of how Jim wrestled with the form his own book would take. However, she quickly reassures us she never faced the same struggle, as it was only natural for the book to reflect the careful curation of objects around the house: “I knew I wanted to have an object from Kettle's Yard at the head of every chapter, because it’s such a visual place.” This structure reflects Jim's talent for seamlessly integrating artworks, furniture, and objects to create a living work of art.

Opening the book with a photo of Kettle's Yard pebbles and a description of Jim himself as one of these “imperfect”

shape the way a portrait comes across.”

However, we were curious how Laura had discovered the tools to paint Jim in the first place. From which images was she copying this man? The book pieces together over 80 interviews with Jim's friends, family and students who studied at Cambridge. Referencing an interview with Jim's 96-year-old daughter, Laura explains that “she was brilliant and candid in a way that you know only a daughter can be.” Chatting with the people who shaped his life, Laura became intimately familiar with Jim: “practically, I could tell you what Jim was doing on any day of the week in any year.” But the book isn't just a biography of Jim Ede, and Jim isn't the only character whose story Laura shares. It is a meticulously curated account of the artists that surrounded him – Barbara Hepworth, David Jones, Henry Moore and Ben Nicholson amongst others. “I think they were totally essential to his life. I think they shaped his way of looking at the world.” She tells us about his archive in the attic that made up a large bulk of her research, explaining how she sifted through Jim's correspondence with close friends: “There's an amazing letter that Jim writes to Ben Nicholson when Winifred Nicholson died,” she continues, “Jim says, ‘between you, you transform my life,’ and I think we've all had a friend who you meet and they kind of do that for you.”

Jim's ability to transform lives seems to have transcended beyond his close and personal friends. The book opens with a semi-fictional account of an undergraduate visiting Kettle's Yard for the first time. The passage describes how Jim encouraged students to borrow pieces from his collection to decorate their walls – a testament to his belief in the transformative power of art, not just as decoration, but as a source of conversation, contemplation, and

jargon, there's not one technical term.” As an art historian and critic herself, Laura explains that “one of my major bug-bears is you go to galleries and there are exhibition captions that are incomprehensible. I mean I find them incomprehensible – I did a bloody degree in this. I do this for a living!”

As our hot chocolates empty and our interview draws to a close, Laura tells us about the profound impact that writing the book has had on her own life. She admires how for Jim, works of art could be found all around us – a feather, a pebble, a seedhead. Laura explains that this philosophy has changed her approach to interior design, telling us of the seedheads and tractor rings she displays on her windowsill, joking that she likes “to pretend they are like Richard Poussette's brass rings at Kettle's Yard.” However, on a deeper level she is acutely aware of the idea that “you can't write a biography without them invading you.” While alive, Jim imbued his way of life into the lives of many others – from teaching a science student to see microscope slides as a painting, to gifting a feather to a depressed student with the message that like the ruffled feather her life too could be smoothed. And yet even in death, in the legacy of Kettle's Yard and the stories of those who knew him, Jim's “way of life” has continued to shape people. Having spent so much time with Jim's ghost, Laura tells us how writing biography “does change you.” From seedheads to light (“light afternoons”, “sun setting in the west”, “low light slanting in a room creating prisms”), Laura feels that Jim has taught her a “greater appreciation for small moments of beauty” – a sentiment that maybe we can all learn from Jim and bring into our own ways of life too.



▲ EVA WEINSTEIN

Oh no they didn't (quite pull it off) ★★☆☆☆

Alice Mainwood finds this year's CUADC/Footlights panto to be a mixed bag

Panto is always going to be a very different feel to almost anything else we see in Cambridge theatre – or Cambridge comedy. I'm glad that the ADC continues to reserve such a long run each year for theatre that feels like childhood, in the form of the CUADC/Footlights Pantomime. And when I left the ADC after opening night on Wednesday, I really did feel like the cast and crew of *Dick Whittington and His Cat* had achieved that. It wasn't perfect, but it was pretty great for an amateur pantomime.

The plot follows Dick as (Isabel Beresford-Cole) he leaves Cambridge for London, finding a job as a kitchen assistant in the house of his celebrity crush, London Mayor candidate Julie Fitzwarren (Alice Roberts). Admittedly, there's not much more to the plot than that. The show is two and a half hours of funny actors and slapstick, but certainly not plot.

The script relies heavily on the classics: anti-Oxford and London jokes, plenty of phallic puns (as we might expect in *Dick Whittington*), and some uncomfortable moments of audience participation. That's not an easy thing to get right at the best of times, but when

it's a 20-year-old student on stage flirting with a mid-60s audience member, it must really be quite a lot harder. Twanky (played by Lizzy Ri-

ley) did an incredible job, earning some pretty big laughs and deservedly so.

Another stand out performance was found in Dick Whittington's cat, played by Louis Hadfield. From his first entrance, his one-liners consistently landed well, and whilst the script was tarnished with a few jokes that couldn't quite convince the au-

dience beyond a modest chuckle, Louis was able to save the moment with a convincing fourth wall break. When we consider that his other Camdram credits are three Shakespeare productions, this is certainly a change of tune, and he took to it well. He also made for a good comic duo alongside Mint (Ava Fitzhugh).

The show is two and a half hours of funny actors and slapstick, but certainly not plot

Likewise, Dick's love interest, Dom (Harrison Gee), could rescue a tricky punchline with a quick comeback, and we were all grateful for it. The dog (James Allen) and Doomsday (Matthew Weatherhead), a mockery of climate doomers, were both weighed down by a script that

lent too heavily on their singular punchlines (for the dog, a laboured puppeteer, and for Doomsday, simply constantly saying "the end is nigh"), but both cast members are talented comedians, and were able to resolve their characters' flaws.

Far and away the best performer, though, was Joseph Lucas, who plays the pantomime's villain, Nigel Oliver. He was slightly Mr Bean-esque, but he was choreographed and staged perfectly, and no one could help but laugh. The script could have granted him a little more of an evil edge; the only aspect of

the true pantomime form that was missing was a completely wicked pantomime antagonist.

The set leaves rather a lot to be desired; for what is likely to be one of the ADC's biggest budget shows of the year, it would have been nice if the stage was dressed with more than two painted boxes which were rotated to reveal a new painted side for each different setting. The set is efficient though, even if it's not as visually impressive as we might have hoped for.

Similarly, the costuming doesn't quite hit the mark. It was a little jarring to see several members of the cast dressed in their jeans, college puffers and uni lanyards. I get the vision – we're meant to feel like we're in Cambridge – but it just looked a little lacklustre.

The rest of the production, however, was really quite impressive. The lighting design by Angua Cha, Stan Hunt and Yiran Li was majestic, as was the live band. The musical production team is huge, and the work and dedication they put into composing, rehearsing and conducting the live band are really obvious, as was the cast's singing talent, especially from Isabel as Dick. It's a pity that some of the songs were so uninspiring, and so repetitive. The exception is the jazz number, which is paired with excellent choreography, and is what I heard much of the audience talking about as we filed out of the auditorium.

Ultimately, not many shows can convince me to sit in the ADC Theatre for two and a half hours. This pantomime couldn't convince everyone to – a couple sitting on the same row as me did opt not to return after the interval. For me, though, when you sign up for panto, especially an amateur panto, you should be aware of what you're getting yourself in for.

It is a bit tacky, and it is a bit cringy. But it's also quite heart-warming, and a refreshing step away from the typical clichés of

“It is a bit tacky, and it is a bit cringy. But it's also quite heart-warming

Cambridge theatre. What stands out above all else, is how hard the production team and cast have clearly worked on this play. It is rough around the edges; there were a few missed cues, quite a few shabby punchlines, and the humour is at times painfully on the nose. But it's feel-good theatre, and

I'd recommend you give it a visit. Not for the plot, and not really for the script, but to see some genuinely joyful, well-directed, well-produced, and well-executed comedy.



▲AMY RIORDAN

Fashion

Cambridge designers return to the runway

Clementine Lussiana talks all things fashion show with Jude Jones

A cap sporting the word PARIS is pulled low over Jude's face as he tells me that his favourite item of clothing is "his little hat collection." I am not surprised. "I love novelty headgear," he admits, "and just having fun with it."

As President of this year's Cambridge University Charity Fashion Show (CUCFS), Jude's love for having fun with what he wears is conducive to the light-hearted playfulness he wants to bring to the annual student-run show. He first got involved with the show in his second year as a model, an experience he describes as "liberating." "I never really saw

this can be an overwhelmingly positive experience for everyone involved."

Though the theme is yet to be announced (expect to find it out at the start of Lent Term), a number of stylistic influences can give us a clue what to expect. "I loved going to rock and indie music gigs and just absorbing what people were wearing," Jude tells me, citing his upbringing near Manchester and Liverpool, which he describes as "the two big metropolises I would go to when I wanted to do something." He credits these cities for introducing him to a world of indie and rock music hubs frequented by eclectic, interestingly dressed people, which in turn spurred his interest in fashion. "It was something I really wanted to draw inspiration from for the show, looking at how that rich musical tradition birthed the punk and disorderly influences that have permeated fashion."

Jude hopes to return to the importance of the everyday in the fashion industry, which can get lost amidst a bigger-is-better style mentality often seen on high fashion catwalks. The aim is for the show to be more in line with the zeitgeist of contemporary fashion, much of which centres around street wear and blurs the line between high and low fashion, - "two fluid concepts," Jude points out. While he wants "big, amazing outfits", the show will strive to include "the realities of the fashion industry at the moment which is street style."

Modelling castings have had over 100 sign ups, but this is a show that has the potential to extend beyond the student body. The goal is to reach out to faculty members after castings and ask them to participate in the student run show with the aim of helping raise money for charity. "I'm a massive fan of age diverse casting," he explains. "Involving faculty members would be a great way to bring some variety to the show, while giving it a fun sense of novelty. People would be able to say, 'my supervisor is walking in the fashion show'."

Creative direction: Yen Min Ting, Jude Jones, Shania McNally
Fashion direction: Hannah Drayton, Arif Shahrudin
Photography: Adam Choudhury, Tomos Davies
Designers: Lydia Gao, Sophie Wheeler
Makeup: Erin Tan, Shania McNally
Models: Kailan Hanson, Charlotte James-Hodson, Sam Asher Misan, Vivienne Wang

“
People would be able to say, 'my supervisor is walking in the fashion show'

myself as a model beforehand," he tells me, "but I found something very freeing about walking the runway and feeling model-esque." An opportunity to participate in a creative student collaboration while simultaneously raising money for a good cause, his decision to go for President arose from a desire to bring the enjoyment he got out of the experience to other people in Cambridge.

This year's charity is Beat Eating Disorders. "This is a charity that works directly with eating disorders, something that is such a big crisis in Cambridge within the student body." He pauses. "I think crisis is definitely the right word." Jude tells me that beyond the importance of addressing eating disorders within the student body, this felt like a crucial issue to highlight when working in fashion, "an industry that has a very historic and deep-rooted relationship with body image issues."

The decision to choose a charity that works with mental health is no hollow commitment; this year, for the first time, CUCFS will be hiring a welfare team, a decision born from Jude's previous experience in modelling. "I know it can feel vulnerable," he says, "and I want people to feel supported so that





Film & TV

A trip to The Eagle with Mark Kermode

Isaac Jackson chats to the UK's foremost film critic about *The Exorcist*, contemporary horror, and memory and dreams in cinema

The *Exorcist* was designed to play in cinemas – that's absolutely its natural home." So says former chief film critic for *The Observer* (and well-established *Exorcist* super-fan) Mark Kermode, as we chat over a glass of wine at the Eagle on a stormy November evening. Talk about pathetic fallacy – after all, Kermode is in Cambridge to introduce a 50th anniversary screening of William Friedkin's seminal (and equally tempestuous) horror film at the Arts Picturehouse, co-organised with Cambridge Film and Screen.

His relationship with *The Exorcist* might go back decades, despite its notoriously turbulent release history ("the video was still banned here as late as 1998" he tells me, "I knew the film off by heart with Swedish subtitles!") – but, for many younger cinema-goers, myself included, this is likely to be their first opportunity to watch the film on a big screen. "It's just a completely different experience," Mark says, "I think the main difference is the way it *sounds* in a cinema; *The Exorcist* has always been a film that relied on its soundtrack. And there's obviously something wonderful about seeing it with an audience too."

There are apparently no limits to Kermode's encyclopaedic knowledge of *The Exorcist*. In a matter of minutes, I'm offered an impressively detailed history lesson on the film's long cultural life, from its complicated production process right through to its controversial censorship by the BBFC in the latter decades of the 20th century. "Not because it was a bad movie... the

problem is it's a very good movie and there was felt, at the time, to be pretty good evidence that it could be deeply disturbing for younger viewers."

The only thing that seems able to curtail Mark's enthusiasm is the occasional interruption to our

“Any film that's about memory is also, in a way, about cinema itself

conversation from fellow pub-goers; at least three people approach us with some variation of "are you that Mark Kermode off the telly?" – although I'm pleased to see that they're never met with anything less than an entirely gracious response. He's a good deal less agreeable, though, when we turn to the subject of *The Exorcist: Believer*, a film which swiftly came and went from UK cinemas earlier this year to overwhelmingly negative reviews from critics and audiences alike.

It strikes me that this new film is just one in a series of recent (largely fruitless) attempts to reboot classic horror franchises (I'm looking at you, David Gordon Green *Halloween* films), but Mark rightly points out that there's nothing wrong, at least, with the principle. "People remake horror

movies all the time – look at the great monster cycles, those stories are endlessly retold. There's no reason why you can't remake anything, but generally you should only do it if you've got something really interesting to do with the original."

I wonder, then, if Kermode would apply this same notion of inspired reinvention to that well-trodden genre of the biopic – or, indeed, whether he agrees with director Asif Kapadia's suggestion to me that, when exploring the lives of departed celebrity icons, the documentary form should reign supreme instead. "I don't agree with Asif, no. I think he's a brilliant documentarian, but I've also seen plenty of terrible documentaries that don't get under the skin of their subjects at all, and just end up being hagiographies." He also professes to being a fan of somewhat less radically experimental endeavours, including Austin Butler's turn as Elvis Presley and Anthony Hopkins' "wounded bear" portrayal of Richard Nixon. "Performances like those aren't good because they're necessarily 'perfect' imitations – they work because they capture something of the *spirit* of their subjects."

It's interesting to notice potential through-lines in those films that most attract Kermode's coveted praise. His favourites of the past few years, from *Petite Maman* and *Aftersun* to this year's *Past Lives*, all share an acute interest, in one way or another, with notions of childhood and memory, a sense of the past literally return-

ing to haunt the present. "I'll be honest, I think it's a coincidence," he says, "there's no question that autobiography plays a part in why you love some movies – when I was reviewing *Petite Maman*, that particular film at that particular moment meant a lot to me because of the subject matter."

But, having said that, he doesn't completely write off the idea of there being some kind of underlying connection: "I think one of the reasons that the medium of cinema is powerful is that it reproduces the medium of memory – we knew what films looked like before anyone invented moving pictures! It's like that thing David Lynch has always said: we live inside a dream and film is a perfect expression of that. And those films that you're talking about, they all tap into that idea – any film that's about memory is also, in a way, about cinema itself." "God, that's a very broad and sweeping generalisation!" he laughs soon after – but, even in that disarmingly self-effacing manner of a critic who, underneath his imposing reputation, remains, plainly and simply, a dyed-in-the-wool movie buff you can easily chat over a pint with... well, I'm not sure Kermode hasn't hit the nail right on the head.

What's on...

Dream Scenario

A *Being John Malkovich* for the age of TikTok, this dark comedy stars Nicolas Cage as a hapless university professor who suddenly becomes an overnight sensation when millions of strangers start seeing him in their dreams. It's difficult to tell whether this eventually ends up completely exhausting its concept or just isn't quite brave enough to take it to its boldest conclusion. But what a brilliant concept it is – one the film handles, particularly in its first half, with a sharply judged balance between absurd levity and a palpable sense of menace. Cage is having a ball, and so will you!

The Killer

Sometimes you just need a bit of pulpy goodness, and that's exactly what Fincher's latest film *The Killer* is. The film tells the story of an actually rather shoddy assassin, played wonderfully by Michael Fassbender, as he seeks revenge on a group of hitmen for hurting his girlfriend. Sound familiar? Well, yes, Fincher's hardly reinvented the wheel here and, in fact nothing out of this particular flick is original; the sound design is straight from *Birdman*, the dialogue ripped from Schrader and the plot, well it's just *John Wick*. That doesn't stop *The Killer* from being a fun film though. It's entertaining, well-shot, fantastically acted and, as the term draws to a close, how much do you want to take a chance on something new anyway? Better the devil you know, I say.

Bottoms

Emma Seligman's much-awaited high school comedy-cum-lesbian bloodbath is high camp. When best friends PJ and Josie fail spectacularly to woo their cheerleader crushes, the two form an all-girls self-defence club to avoid expulsion, and to hopefully lose

their virginity in the process. However, as the (flamboyantly Alpha male) football team gets jealous, and a looming sports game spells murder on the horizon, the girls must put their combat skills to the test to save the school from its own testosterone. It's *Fight Club* meets *Heathers* meets *But I'm A Cheerleader* with all the casual brutality of *Kick Ass*. Just the sort of campy goodness you need to spice up the end of term.

The Hunger Games: The Ballad of Songbirds & Snakes

Bloodshed, scheming and a brutal Capitol: *The Hunger Games* returns eight years after Jennifer Lawrence last graced the big screen as "The Girl on Fire." Set 64 years before Katniss' first Games, the film centres around a young President Snow in his final year at school in the Capitol, tasked with mentoring the female tribute from District Twelve, Lucy Gray Baird, in the 10th Annual Hunger Games. Sticking strongly to the book of the same title, Suzanne Collins' prequel cleverly weaves its way into *The Hunger Games* universe without feeling forced or like a quick money-making reboot. Francis Lawrence discreetly places references throughout that add a certain completeness to the film and its place in *The Hunger Games* franchise. It's thrilling, bloody, and enhances the character of Coriolanus Snow.

Saltburn

The latest from *Promising Young Woman* director Emerald Fennell is a

gothic black comedy straight out of the *Brideshead Revisited* and *Talented Mr Ripley* 'aren't rich people just crazy' tradition. It's a case of all flash, no bang – a film that feels like it's trying to go viral on TikTok, more interested in acts of wanton provocation than in provoking any consequential questions about its subject. It's consistently entertaining – but also hard to ignore the fact that every character who isn't a walking one-liner remains a total cipher, all narrative twists and turns rely on authority figures being clinically (and probably criminally) stupid. That, ironically like most of the characters themselves, means the whole thing amounts to little more than a deceivingly good-looking mess.

Behind the scenes at World Cinema Society

Nikolas Boyd-Carpenter chats to the minds behind one of Cambridge's fastest growing societies

Cambridge is overrun with societies. The 2024 prospectus claims the University hosts over 700 of them, and I'm sure I'm not the only one who can recall the excitement of Freshers' Fair giving way to the realisation that there I would never have enough time to take up caving or join a jazz orchestra. Cambridge World Cinema Society (CWCS) is, however, a group to keep an eye on. Founded only a few years ago, it has picked up devotees rapidly, and is fast becoming one of the most popular film societies among the student body.

Its formula is simple: each week, on a Wednesday or Thursday evening, the society screens a film on a big screen (usually in Fitzwilliam College, though Christ's often plays host too), charging a minimal price to show unusual movies, sometimes with an introduction from the society or, on occasion, from an academic. The one rule? The main language of the chosen film must be something other than English. The result is a consistently varied and insightful selection of international cinema.

Meeting committee members Fergus Selsdon-Games and Aristide Chryssoulis, I'm struck by

just how passionate they are about the role of the society in Cambridge. "It's all about the audience," Fergus tells me – the society aims to "get people together and talking," and certainly takes into account an "educational element" to their work. Fergus identifies an interesting paradox: "the contemporary scene is totally depreciated for young filmmakers in the UK," but at the same time, "totally new tools have become available for watching other films. Much of the stuff in cinemas today is either prestige dramas or blockbuster movies, and so there's a gap that needs to be filled." CWCS, therefore, is using the opportunities afforded by new streaming services and digital restoration techniques to expose young people to a series of exhilaratingly different films.

I myself have enjoyed a number of trips to CWCS screenings, but nothing compares to my first visit, where I watched *Funeral Parade of Roses*, a stunning and surreal Japanese retelling of the myth of Oedipus. I remember a certain sense of wonder, of realising possibilities in cinema I had never been aware of before. As such, I'm eager to ask for more recommendations – Fergus highlights the directors Tsai Ming-liang (a dream guest for

the society) and Radu Jude. A fellow Greek, I'm glad to hear Aristide celebrate the works of Yorgos Lanthimos and Theodoros Angelopoulos, though so far the society has held off from screening the latter's films, concerned about how audiences will react to their long running times and slow pace. "There's always a bit of give and take," says Fergus. "We've tried to puncture the toxic 'film bro' stereotype. If a film is boring, we're prepared to admit it!"

The society's committee works by consensus to select films, always aiming for a variety of genres and nations, and rarely selecting particularly well-known works. Rather than release a termcard, they choose to announce each film on a weekly basis, taking real care over their choices; as Fergus puts it, "we don't want to feel hemmed in." This can be a double-edged sword, of course – Aristide quips that he spends "way too much time" on it, while Fergus tells me that he takes it "very personally," paying close attention to the audience's response. "If they cry, you're winning," he jokes.

The society's holy grail is "a permanent home," an aspiration not helped by colleges becoming less amenable to hosting screenings as the group has

grown. Fergus laughs about "the market forces that crush cultural expression time and again," but there is a serious point to be raised: why won't colleges support a society that encapsulates Cambridge at its best – open, international, curious and culturally engaged? The Anglophone world often suffers from a frustrating parochialism when it comes to international media. In a nation that has cast itself off from Europe, with one of the lowest rates of multilingualism across the continent, Byron's "tight little island" lives up to its name, insulating itself from other cultures. CWCS attempts to act as an antidote to such narrow-mindedness. Both in exposing its general audience to other cultures and allowing international students an opportunity to celebrate their own identities, it is stirring up greater interest in world cinema in Cambridge and, most importantly of all, bringing people together. Aristide wants to end by thanking the society's audiences: "it would be nothing if people didn't show up. We're very grateful."

▼HANNAH MAWARDI



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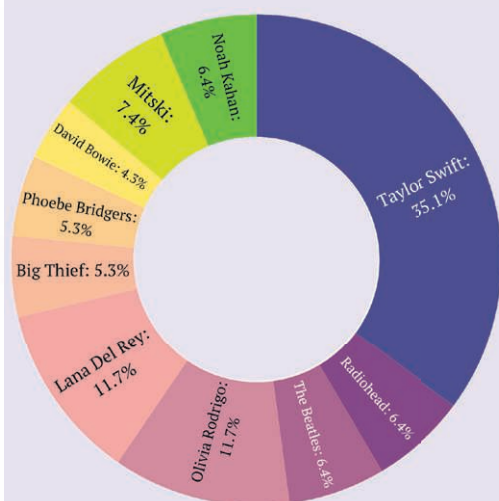


Music

Cambridge Wrapped

Tianyu Liu finds out which tracks hit the right notes

Most played artists



1 Taylor Swift: Swifties, I heard that you recently lobbied to welcome Mother Taylor to Brazil by projecting onto Christ the Redeemer. I'm a little scared of your willpower and organisation. Unsurprisingly, 2023 was Taylor's year. Big up CUTSAS.

2 Olivia Rodrigo: Aw, someone is trying to experience the high-school romance that they missed out on for being a teacher's pet and avoiding social interactions before uni. Loved GUTS.

3 Lana Del Rey: Lana's melancholic melodies are the perfect companion for misty, introspective walks by the River Cam, pondering the meaning of life, love and your last lecture. Try not to fall in and drown while '...Ocean Blvd' is playing.

4 Mitski: Is this because of TikTok or do you just need a motherly voice to help you cry it all out?

5 Noah Kahan: Noah who? Oh right, the one you listen to when you're trying to impress your indie friends. "You've probably never heard of him..."

6 The Beatles: Because nothing screams "I have an eclectic taste in music" like adding The Beatles to your playlist. Ground-breaking.

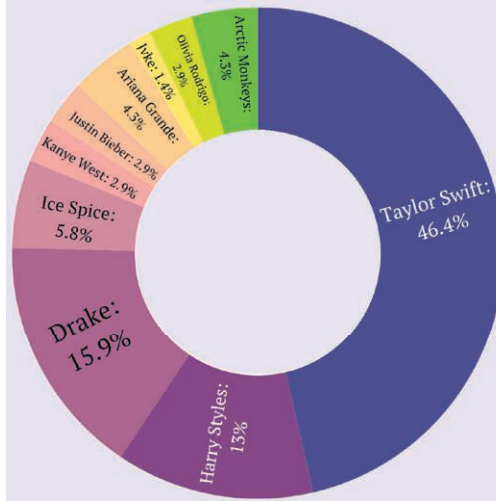
7 Radiohead: Are you also constantly shifting between making fun of Radiohead fans and being one? We've all been there.

8 Phoebe Bridgers: Phoebe's songs are like an emotional weighted blanket for the soul, perfect for questioning your life choices, your degree, and what happened after you downed that bottle of wine last formal. Also, smashing a guitar is apparently a relatable student budget activity now.

9 Big Thief: Listening to Big Thief is like wearing a vintage coat that you claim you bought at a thrift shop but actually ordered online for triple the price. It's all about maintaining that effortlessly cool, slightly obscure persona amidst a sea of mainstream peers.

10 David Bowie: Bowie is the embodiment of every Cambridge student trying to find themselves. One day you're Ziggy Stardust, the next you're Screaming Lord Byron. Nevertheless, I know you're all waiting to stumble upon a "who are you listening to right now" TikTok and be the crush of everyone in the comment section.

Most overrated



1 Taylor Swift: Taylor tops the list again, toggling between treasured and tiresome. She's the musical equivalent of a required reading list – essential for some, eye-roll-inducing for others.

2 Drake: Duh. Please stop hyping up *For All the Dogs*.

3 Harry Styles: Does anyone listen to anything from Harry except 'As it Was' from 2023? Overrated? More like forgotten.

4 Ice Spice: Two-hit wonder? Probably.

5 Arctic Monkeys: It's the recurring theme of a previously 'indie' band becoming too popular for their original fans. Still, Arctic Monkeys are one of the only 'live bands' still on the charts, overrated or not.

6 Ariana Grande: Who didn't like *Yours Truly* (Tenth Anniversary Edition) in 2023? Personally, I think Ariana is just in her reflective era instead of her hitting-the-top-note-a-human-ear-can-hear era.

7 Olivia Rodrigo: Once you get popular, you are bound to receive hate. Many have complained that Olivia is too 'pop'. It's debatable whether she deserves six Grammys this year.

8 Justin Bieber: Does anyone even rate him nowadays?

9 Kanye West: Not sure if overrated is the right word. Perhaps insane fits better.

10 Jvke: I think Jvke is actually alright, apart from maybe his kindergarten-level lyrics, questionable live performances, and how much he milks out of his songs on TikTok.

“Taylor tops the list again, toggling between treasured and tiresome

As much as I had fun mocking the Cantabs crowd with the utmost sarcasm, these lists do accurately reflect the music scene this year. Here's a list of honourable mentions that didn't make it on the list:

Most played artist:

- Florence and the Machine
- Sam Fender
- Lady Gaga
- Tyler, the Creator
- The 1975
- ABBA
- Hozier
- The Smiths
- Sabrina Carpenter
- Bob Dylan

Most overrated artist:

- Wet Leg
- Ed Sheeran
- Troye Sivan
- BTS
- Adele
- The Weeknd
- Calvin Harris
- Oasis
- Declan Mckenna
- Miley Cyrus

Overall, the Cambridge-student crowd is still obsessed with pop, with a hint of indie. A couple of names that I was surprised to not see on the lists are SZA, The Weeknd, and ABBA (remember it is still Cambridge over here). I hope when looking at your Spotify/Apple Music wrapped, you can feel better about yourself because anything is better than this, right?



TIANYU LIU

Q&A with Tom Robinson

David Quinn quizzes the Cambridge-born punk rocker and LGBTQ+ activist

What was it like growing up in 1950s Cambridge?

The Cambridge I remember was one of people on bicycles, students wearing gowns, steam trains, austerity and our annual treat being a trip to the pantomime at the Arts Theatre.

Do you have any memories of watching bands in Cambridge?

When I was 15, I saw a package tour at The Regal Cinema. I went in as a massive Manfred Mann fan and came out completely awed by the Yardbirds.

Tell me the story behind your 1978 song 'Glad to Be Gay'.

Falling in love with another boy at school was a catastrophe. Imagining I was the only "homo" in the whole school, the whole town, the whole country, I had a nervous breakdown and tried to kill myself. I was lucky to end up in a therapeutic community for disturbed adolescents called Finchden Manor, which saved my life. When Bowie came out as bisexual in the early 70s, he provided the role model I was missing. I swore that, if I ever achieved a successful musical career, I would try to pass on the amazing gift that Bowie had given queer kids of my generation.

What was it like performing as part of Rock Against Racism? (RAR)

The movement was formed in 1976 after a disgraceful speech by Eric Clapton, which supported the anti-immigration MP Enoch Powell. Initially, it was a grassroots movement organising small-scale gigs. So, the first large-scale carnival against the Nazis in 1978 was the culmination of much hard work from its dedicated founders. They hoped we might attract 20,000 people and booked a PA system for that number. In the event, 80,000 turned up and the sound was woefully inadequate. But the atmosphere was electrifying.

Do you think we need another RAR?

It's easy to take an unduly romantic view of what RAR achieved, important though it was. Only a year later, the country voted Margaret Thatcher into power with a thumping majority. It's possible that RAR and the Anti-Nazi League helped make sure the National Front was soundly defeated in that election. But it might equally have been because Maggie and the Tories effectively stole their clothes.

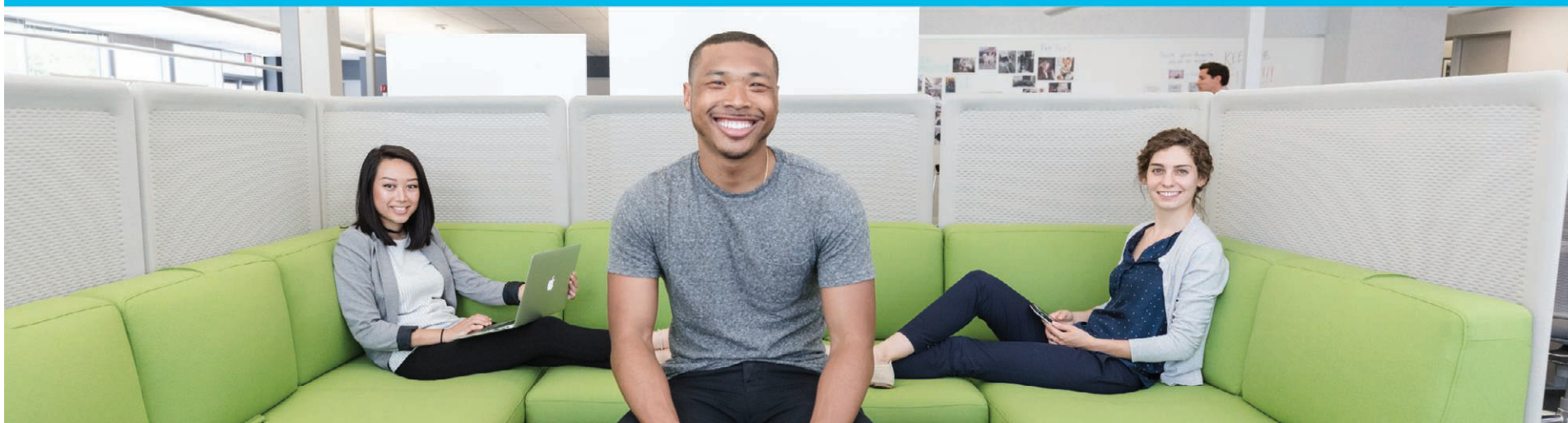
As the host of a BBC Radio 6 show for upcoming bands, how important are schemes like BBC Introducing?

Before the 90s, the only route onto Radio 1 without a label or manager was to send a cassette to John Peel. His contribution to the diversity of UK music is incalculable. When he died in 2004, it was like the ladder had been pulled up. BBC Introducing was evolved to try to use local radio to plug the gap left by John Peel. To this day, it allows artists to upload their music to the BBC without needing insider contacts or a record plugger. I'm so proud to be part of BBC Introducing because interesting musicians can get heard on the airwaves with no money needing to change hands.



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Music

The Ilfords at The Six Six Bar

Samuel Raine-Jenkins thinks that these Newcastle rockers could be the next big thing

When I stepped into The Six Six Bar last Thursday, I had no idea what to expect from the Ilfords. Although the gig was part of the ongoing Cambridge Jazz Festival, the band describe themselves as a combination of Foals, Arctic Monkeys and Queens of the

Stone Age. Just as I was wondering how they had managed to sneak themselves into the festival, the group started playing and it immediately became clear. While hardly fitting the theme of the event, the Ilfords were a fantastic live act – and I shouldn't have been surprised. The group have received Radio X playtime and had a song recognised as "Track of the Week" by the BBC.

A band like The Ilfords is a rare thing to come by these days

A band like the Ilfords is a rare thing to come by these days: a group of lads, who met when they were teens, playing the music they love with raw passion, ferocious energy and no filter. The chemistry between its four members

was palpable and it was clear that they had years of experience behind them. This was evident from their control of the audience, which enlivened what could have been a sterile crowd, and their tight musicianship, which enabled them to power through the occasional slip-up since each member always knew what the others were doing.

Their music lends itself to live shows and the members know it

He took what could have been a challenging environment for a rock band – a jazz festival – and truly made it his own. Screaming the lyrics with passion and ending the show with a dramatic stage

dive followed by a comic walk to the bar, it was his stage presence that made the performance so memorable.

For rock music lovers like myself, it is always exciting to discover an act with as much promise as the Ilfords. The band shine in the studio. However, they are best experienced live. This is a rare phenomenon in an era when songs are polished down to their last detail and overproduced to oblivion. Their music lends itself to live shows and the members know it, clearly enjoying playing their instruments and smiling throughout.

The peak of the performance was something I can't imagine is typical of their shows. In honour of the Jazz Festival, they brought a saxophonist on stage. While this caught the audience by surprise, the band easily adapted to

the change of style. This flexibility is another reason to expect a promising future for the band.

Would I recommend seeing the Ilfords? Absolutely. It's not easy to find a rock band with this much energy and passion in 2023. In an age when most popular bands are clean-cut, polished and overproduced, the Ilfords are a breath of fresh air. Their recognition by the BBC and Radio X suggests that the future can only bring big things for the band. Catch them in an intimate venue while you can because their breakthrough is on the horizon.



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Is it time for Cambridge and Oxford to leave Lord's?

As Rugby's Varsity Match moves away from Twickenham after over a hundred years, **Will McLaughlin** and **Alex Davies** debate whether it's time for Oxbridge to finally move out of The Home of Cricket?

Will: Oxford captain Christopher Wordsworth had already played Cambridge captain Herbert Jenner in the Eton vs Harrow Lord's match in 1822. "Bertie old boy," Wordsworth probably said in 1827, "I awfully enjoyed that cricketing lark a few years ago, and I've been itching to dust off the old willow ever since. Why not bring your boys to Lord's?" Jenner agreed, and with that now 200-year-old exchange, 'The University Match' was born. It has run annually ever since, and recently the MCC (Marylebone Cricket Club) confirmed that it will continue until 2027.

This year, a comprehensive investigation by the Independent Commission for Equity in Cricket (ICEC) found that

and exclusionary culture exists at all levels of cricket." While Cambridge and Oxford cricket squads are not exclusionary by design, the fact remains that they are heavily private-school dominated, and a symbol of the country's elite. In the England and Wales Cricketing Board (ECB)'s strategy document, they pledge "to broaden cricket's loyal base to make the game more representative of our modern and diverse society." But by placing Cambridge and Oxford on the greatest cricket pitch in England every year, the MCC is painting a clear picture of the people who they think cricket is for.

"How about giving some kids a chance to play at Lord's who go to state schools?", suggested former Lancashire seamer Kyle Hogg as an alternative.

Lord's match as a final for a state secondary school competition would not only give the students the experience of a lifetime, but could also be a symbol of cricket's future. It would show that cricket is not a sport which celebrates only those who don silly gowns and sip rosé in large decorated halls, but anyone who has the ability for it.

And with the Rugby Varsity Match moving away from Twickenham after 100 years of history, there is a precedent. Stephen Fry, last year's president of the MCC, is also asking for change. "I'm not being all woke and wet-blankety," he said after his proposal to scrap the Varsity cricket match. "It's about opening it up to more schools."

We have absolutely no claim to Lord's. Tradition alone has kept us at the crease of the greatest cricketing arena in England almost up to our double-century. It's an impressive innings, but with cricket's aspiration to create an accepting, diverse game, we should have been out a long time ago. The annual Oxbridge Lord's games are now a test for English cricket. Does the MCC continue to ally the game with its elitist, classist past? Or can they move with cricket's evolving vision, showing children across England that cricket is for them too, and giving opportunities to players not because of where they go to school, but for skill and hard work?

Alex: English cricket has an image problem. Despite the work of the ECB in recent

years to open up the game to a wider audience through schemes such as All Stars Cricket and The Hundred, it still has a long way to go. If you went into an average British state school and asked the students what they thought of cricket, you would be met with contempt from the majority; "boring, posh sport" would still be the general response.

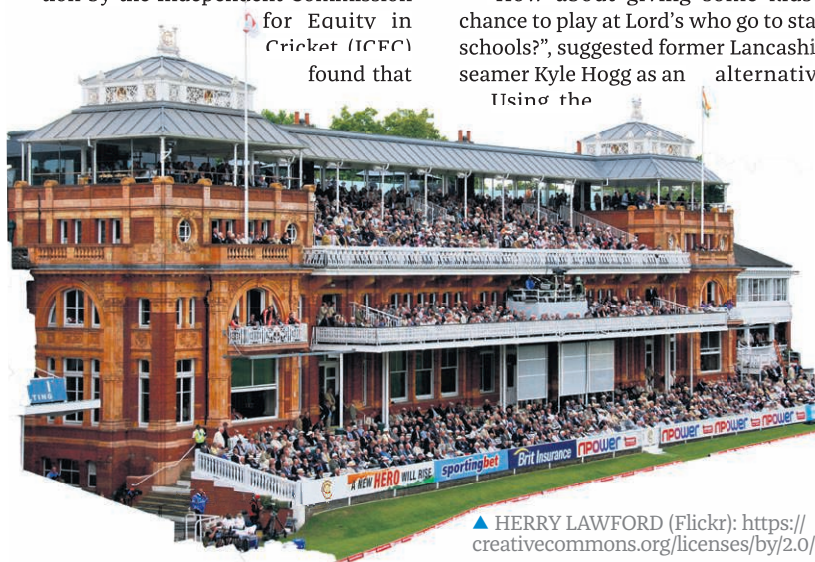
Stephen Fry seems desperate to help the sport shed its own elitist skin by using Oxford and Cambridge as an unnecessary scapegoat. The universities are still viewed as elitist by much of the public, so by banishing them from Lord's, Fry is attempting to push cricket's image into the 21st century. However, in the last academic year the number of privately educated students at Cambridge has fallen to just 27%. At Oxford it was at 32%, but had fallen by 8% in the last four years. The state-school proportions at Oxbridge are now higher than the likes of Exeter, Edinburgh, Durham, UCL and Imperial. Clearly it is a work in progress, but the universities of today are not the same public school extensions they were two centuries ago.

In the Cambridge men's team that played at Lord's last year, nine out of the eleven were privately educated. It may seem that this contradicts my argument, but state-schooled students had the same opportunity to try out for the team. The reason for their low representation is either because they weren't interested in the sport or because they weren't good enough. Why? Because the

sport has as yet failed to properly expose itself to all levels of society. Fry has nobly proposed a state-school tournament with the final being held at Lord's and although this is a progressive idea which would increase interest and opportunity within the sport, why must this come at the expense of the Oxbridge game?

To play at the Home of Cricket is a privilege difficult to match. Instead of a policy of exclusion, the MCC and ECB should be attempting to increase such opportunities if they truly want to increase diversity within the sport. Why does Oxbridge have to be pushed out for state schools to be allowed in? The argument from Lord's would be that the calendar does not permit an increase in the number of matches played there, but former England captain David Gower has pointed out that the number of scheduled days of play is laughable: "years ago there were 92 days scheduled and now there is more amenable turf and the ground drains easily." It simply doesn't have to be one or the other.

Cricket needs to work harder to fix its own image instead of shifting the blame onto institutions whose progress currently outstrips it. Getting rid of the Varsity Match may give Fry the plaudits he obviously seeks, but it will do nothing to address the true problem the sport is faced with. Why should Oxbridge cricketers be punished because certain administrators want to put their short-term image over long-term progress?



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Cam-erican football!

Alex Berry records her first impressions of American football at Cambridge as the Pythons take on ARU Siege

I can't say I ever imagined that the first American football match I'd watch would be in a muddy field somewhere in the north of Cambridge on a drizzly Sunday afternoon. Trying to maintain some feeling in my feet and hear anything above the sound of the wind was undeniably different to the images in my head of American college games with full grandstands and roaring crowds.

The game I attended was a big one: Cambridge Pythons versus ARU Siege, a Cambridge derby. This BUCS clash was an important game for both teams, with Siege searching for a win over the Pythons for the first time in their history. Both teams came out firing from the first whistle with high energy all around, however ARU quickly wrangled control of the game and started to build up their score against a Cambridge side. Their final touchdown of the first half came with only 12 seconds left on the clock, leaving Siege 21-0 up going into the break.

Something that genuinely caught me off guard was the warm up that the players go through at halftime. It's obvious to anyone watching just how much of a stop-start game American football is, but it puts it into perspective that even the players who've been on the pitch have to undergo such an extensive warm up. It makes complete sense when you consider that many

players aren't even on the pitch for the majority of the match with the separation of the offence and defence. It's definitely a unique sport in that sense, and one that I think would frustrate me to play, being unable to impact an entire half of the game, although you can't deny the benefits to the atmosphere of the game that the extra support from the sidelines enlists.

The person who actually kept the most warm was probably the paramedic who was periodically making quick dashes across the pitch to attend to different injuries on each bench. Obviously I knew there was heavy hitting involved with American football, but I thought the extensive safety equipment worn in comparison to something like rugby might have more of an positive effect on the number of injuries. I could see a variety of tenderly held shoulders, knees and wrists throughout, and that's not even considering the possible concussions. Thankfully it appeared that nothing too serious occurred in this match, but I can certainly see how it would.

The tactics of the game is one of the aspects I find most interesting, as it requires many more exhaustively well-rehearsed set plays than many other sports. I don't think I've ever seen so many clipboards on the side of a sports game, but my favourite addition was definitely the whiteboard that had been lugged along. How well drilled the Py-

thons were was perfectly demonstrated when shouts of "if you're green, you're on" had a group of players donning their helmets and jogging back onto the pitch without a second thought while others looked on completely unphased. Although I already knew this from the very small snippets of NFL I've seen, the amount of communication between the coaches and players during the game was still quite shocking, with the start of each 'down' seeing the implementation of a new strategy as instructed by the coaches.

Unfortunately for the Pythons, the game ended in disappointment. With a final score of 27-0 making it a win for Siege, the Pythons' game could probably be summed up by one Cambridge player tackling another within the dying minutes of the game. The Pythons put up an admirable display of defence in the second half, forcing many errors from ARU and stalling them at almost every opportunity, but ultimately a series of incomplete passes and fumbles meant the offence never really got their footing in the game.

Despite the unfortunate result on the day, I was pleasantly surprised by just how much I enjoyed the game, despite how stop-start it is, but I don't think it'll ever compare to the better version of football.

Captain's Corner

Alex Berry talks running, shooting, riding, swimming and fencing with modern pentathlon captain Rudi Bruijn-Yard

Why pentathlon?

I love the diversity of different sports and the mixture of physicality and skill required.

How easy is it for beginners to pick up?

Very easy. We teach you everything you need to know at the club and it is a lot of fun from the beginning. To become more experienced takes time.

Favourite event?

Fencing or horse riding, close competition.

Least favourite event?

Running.

If you had to add an event, what would it be?

Skiing (very unrealistic).

Any pre-match or race rituals?

Listening to music, typically something to get the blood flowing like Lucky Daye.

What is your best sporting moment?

Winning Varsity as captain of the modern pentathlon team.

Who should we look out for this year?

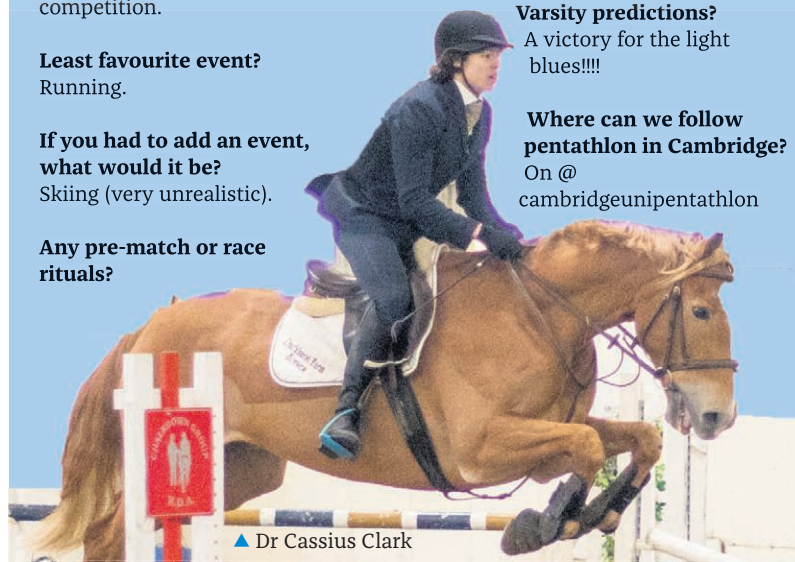
Myself, Tads and all of the newbies we've taken under our wing - it's going to be a huge year for the team.

Varsity predictions?

A victory for the light blues!!!!

Where can we follow pentathlon in Cambridge?

On @cambridgeunipentathlon



▲ Dr Cassius Clark

Sport

Horsing around with modern pentathlon

pg. 31



Cam-erican football!

pg. 31



Cambridge give Warwick the blues



▲ DIK NG

Alex Berry

Cambridge

2

Warwick

0

The women's football Blues took a dominant victory over Warwick to reach the next stage of the cup on Wednesday (22/11). The Blues oozed confidence and composure throughout the match, leaving Warwick's possession next to zero as a result. The 2-0 scoreline doesn't quite reflect how impressive the Blues side was, with their opposition barely getting a look in, and many more chances just edging wide.

From the first whistle the Blues were challenging Warwick, fighting for every ball and pressing high. Composure in defence meant the Blues could calmly play the ball out from the back, while quickly

looking to either of the wings for a quick press forwards. The first big chance of the game came from Cambridge's Zoe Richardson, whose shot was heading for goal before a lucky goal line clearance from Warwick sent it wide.

Warwick began to settle into the game after a flurry of opening attacks from Cambridge, putting in some dangerous balls forwards. A threatening attack down the left wing was shortly followed by a free kick for Warwick 15 yards from the edge of the box. The Blues supporters on the sideline were left holding their breath as a deflection from Alexia Dengler sent the shot inches over the crossbar. Goalkeeper Emilia Keavney was put to the test as Warwick continued their attacks, but some calmly caught balls and well timed sweeps prevented them from even getting a shot off.

After a flurry of Warwick attacks, it

was time for the Blues to have their go, with Izzy Winnifrith sending a shot just wide of the post after a well-worked attack down the left wing. Winnifrith was underterred by the miss, winning the ball back in a perfectly-timed tackle only a few minutes later to facilitate a shot from Jasmine Wright that also floated wide. Chances were flying back and forth at this point, with Warwick putting another ball into the side netting and Winnifrith sending a header just clear of the crossbar.

In the dying minutes of the first half, a corner for Cambridge allowed Katie Starling to capitalise on some scrappy defending and bury the ball in the back of the net, making it 1-0 to the Blues. Cambridge were now brimming with confidence, aiming to grab a second goal as the whistle blew for half-time.

This newfound energy was noticeable again from the first whistle in the second half, with the Blues quickly pushing for-

ward to send a well-placed cross past the front of the Warwick goal that just missed Cambridge heads. The Blues were now playing with more freedom than the first half, using the width of the pitch and sending more long balls in behind the defence. Fran Mangelles capitalised on one of these long passes to slot the ball into the bottom right of Warwick's net, but was unfortunately deemed offside and the goal disallowed. Mangelles was undeterred by this, her power shot from the edge of the box unluckily deflected off the crossbar only a couple of minutes later.

Dengler, having put in a solid defensive shift throughout the match, continued to stop any Warwick attacks in their tracks, easily picking the ball from their strikers feet and making a phenomenal run halfway down the pitch that led to a close chance by Eva Shaw, which ended up in the side net-

ting. Ella O'Connell also fancied a go at goal, her powerful free kick being just about caught by the Warwick keeper to deny the Blues yet again.

The Blues were not done quite yet though, another goal in the late stages of the game coming courtesy of Wright, who placed the ball in the bottom right hand corner of the net from a well placed assist by Abbie Hastie, who danced around defenders into the box before lining the perfect cross to Wright. Warwick's frustration was beginning to show, with free kicks being awarded left, right and centre to the Blues, who continued to threaten right until the final whistle.

Cambridge's dominant performance sends them through to the next round of the cup and continues their strong run of form in the season so far, leaving things looking positive for another Light Blue win in the Varsity matches this year.