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The Independent  
Student Newspaper since 1947

# VARSITY

## ‘They should have told me to go to the police’

Students have been ‘actively discouraged’ from reporting sexual assault allegations to the police by the University

Full investigation  
Page 12

**Gwenno Robinson**

Colleges have “actively discouraged” students from reporting serious sexual assault allegations to the police, a *Varsity* investigation has found. One victim approached her college for support, to find they were “adamant” to avoid police involvement.

Victims of sexual assaults feel they were applauded for choosing the supposedly “kinder” process of reporting through the University’s disciplinary board instead of taking their cases to the police. Another student who was a

victim of stalking is certain that the stalking would have “stopped much sooner” had she approached the police earlier.

Students who wish to report incidents of sexual assault can do so through the University’s Office of Student Conduct, Complaints and Appeals (OSCCA), through either a formal or informal procedure, or alternatively through their college. Cases reported through the informal process take around 1-2 months to process.

One victim who spoke to *Varsity* revealed that her perpetrator delayed the process for several months, citing exams as the reason, despite them both being

on the same course. The student waited eight months until a settlement was finally agreed upon and experienced suicidal thoughts as a result of the delay. The victim feels that her college misrepresented OSCCA as an equivalent process to a police investigation.

OSCCA states that legal representation is “not normally necessary or appropriate” in their proceedings, apart from in “exceptional circumstances” where a student can seek a legal representative “at their own cost”, provided they receive permission from the Student Discipline Office.

Defence lawyers have worked covert-

ly with students during the proceedings of conduct boards, regardless of whether permission is granted.

The investigation raises new questions about the growing role of universities in dealing with cases of sexual assault. Rose Stephenson, director of policy and advocacy at the Higher Education Policy Institute, has warned of the “huge variation” between universities in how they deal with cases of sexual misconduct: “If universities were investigating murder, we’d all think that was totally inappropriate. Yet we’re doing it for rape.”

**Read the full investigation on page 12**

## Clare students denied college accom during mandatory internships

**Priya Watkinson**

Students at Clare College are being routinely denied access to college accommodation outside of term time, *Varsity* has learned.

Engineering students, who have to partake in mandatory six-week work experience to complete their degrees, have been particularly affected.

Clare has boasted a “strong summer” of summer school and conference revenue, while students have criticised the College for “prioritising [its] business side”.

Clare has told students to look for accommodation on Airbnb rather than in college during the holidays, with one student having been turned away from its dining hall by security.

Clare’s hosting of prestigious conferences and summer schools, which book rooms months in advance, are understood to be the main reasons for the lack of accommodation.

Ghunho Min, a third-year Engineering student at Clare, told *Varsity* they were surprised at the lack of any provisions: “At first they said they rented every single room, and I just didn’t believe that, and then I emailed again saying surely you have one spare room, and they said no.”

In an email to the College seen by *Varsity*, Min stressed that he had “no alternative accommodations available in the UK”. In response, the College directed the student to SpareRoom and Airbnb, where the rent was “over 10k for three months”, the student claims.

Haley Huang, also a third-year Engineer at Clare, told *Varsity* that students are forced to find accommodation elsewhere: “At least four of us stayed at Caius for the entire summer, pretty sure more stayed at different colleges.”

Huang said that many feel financially pressured to stay in Cambridge over the summer: “For a lot of students, it’s easiest to get jobs in Cambridge.”

Min, who stayed at Caius over the summer, attempted to enter college but was turned away by external security: “I just wanted to pass through

*Continued on page 2 ►*

▲TOMOS ALWYN DAVIES



## V Week 1

"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)

### Editorial

Hello, and welcome back. A Varsity investigation has found that the University has been "actively discouraging" victims of sexual assault to pursue their cases with the police, instead pointing them towards its in-house conduct board, OSCCA. While it is advertised as a "kinder" process, Gwenno Robinson's investigation (page 12) shows its major shortfalls.

While on the outside the University can parade its shiny, and supposedly streamlined, complaints process, in reality every step of OSCCA is riddled with problems. Many students don't know what it is. Those who do worry it gives more power to their alleged perpetrators than to the victims. As soon as you wipe away the paint, the rot of the university's disregard starts to show.

The theme of the University prioritising its outside image over the well-being of its students runs through this week's edition. Clare College left engineers with mandatory internships effectively homeless by forcing them out of college to facilitate big corporate bookings. Clare's solution was to point student to rooms costing £10,000. At the same time, the University has been accused of making up their climate policy as they go along.

There are, however, some areas where the university is willing to step in. Especially when it comes to hardship funding, as Hugh Jones says on page 15, Cambridge students are far luckier than our peers in other institutions. Though the road to accessing these funds is difficult, with thousands of hoops to jump through, there is still a pot of gold at the end of the road. The Cranes' fund, earmarked for 'poor scholars' in times of illness, has risen by 850% in the past four years, helping 547 students with medical costs in the last year alone.

An investigation into the availability of extra funding for privately educated students at Trinity College shows that there remain flaws with hardship funding at a college level. Where the University's hardship funding helps students who need it the most, there remain colleges where you can seemingly receive financial assistance based on your privileged education.

The availability and volume of central university hardship funding should be a model for how the rest of the University approaches helping its students. Our stories this week show that despite everything we can be proud of this University for, there are still dark failures leaving this University as a "broken dream" for some.

Michael Hennessey & Daniel Hilton  
Editors-in-chief, Lent 2024

# Clare urged students on mandatory internships to look for rooms on Airbnb

Continued from page 1

Old Court to go to the buttery for dinner, but I couldn't do that [...] the entirety of Old Court and Memorial Court was ARM everywhere."

ARM, a Cambridge-based chip designer, was hosted by Clare over the summer. The company supplies the biggest names in tech and in 2020 signed a three-year deal with the US Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA), the agency that aims to expand the technological capabilities of the US military.

Min also drew attention to the summer schools hosted by Clare: "Prioritising summer schools over us - that's unbearable for me, they last much longer than conferences, two weeks to a month. It's a bloody university and

they prioritise these rich kids."

Another Clare student said: "I reached out to the accommodation office a few times and was told no on several occasions even when stressing that I was unable to find accommodation for my internship. In the end, I managed to find accommodation through a mutual friend."

Asked what they thought of Clare's conference business, the student said: "I think Clare is verging on prioritising the business side of college over looking after their students which is worrying [...] I think it's important to remember I was offered accommodation from several other colleges that weren't Clare."

Min echoed these concerns: "I don't think any incoming students would know this issue, and then not knowing that they just apply to Clare. They're eventually going to face this issue, and

they're going to hate this college."

According to the minutes of the Clare College 2022 Finance Committee, revenue for the financial year ending June 2023 was estimated to be in excess of £3 million, a result of a "strong summer" from hosting conferences and summer schools.

The College emphasises, however, that this income is "not sufficient to cover the costs of College life".

A Clare College spokesperson said: "Clare offers a number of accommodation licences, in line with other Colleges. We try to support students staying over the summer for an internship."

"Due to major building works in College for essential repairs, restoration and refurbishment some rooms are not currently available. However, the College has some provision for internship students for summer 2024," they said.

# Uni 'making up' climate strategy 'as they go along', say academics

## IN THE PAPER

### News



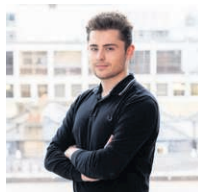
**Chaos in the Alps**  
Injured student skiers were left in cold after 'crush' to board coach (PAGE 4)

### Theatre



**The ETG returns**  
We sit down with the ETG's Jacob and Kez to talk Shakespeare and innovative adaptation (PAGE 26)

### Interviews



**Joe Seddon**  
The Zero Gravity founder's fight to transform UK higher education and beyond (PAGES 10-11)

**Felix Armstrong**  
Senior News Editor

Academics have accused the University of Cambridge of "making it up as [they] go along" regarding their climate policy, as staff are currently voting on proposals for a new pro-vice-chancellor (PVC) for sustainability.

With polls open on the motion for a sixth PVC, students and staff have published various statements, known as flysheets, both supporting and attacking the University's green agenda.

The motion for a sustainability PVC was first put forward in October and, having initially been approved by the vice-chancellor, was pushed to a vote in Regent House, the democratic body made up of Cambridge academics, following criticism of the plans.

The original proposal called for "consolidated leadership" of a "reset in approach" following the Topping report, which found that the University's research links to the fossil fuel industry posed "high reputational risk" to the institution.

One flysheet slammed the proposals, drawing attention to the supposed expenses of the new role, before criticising the "startling U-turn" which led to the ballot.

The statement, signed by 25 members of Regent House, accuses the University Council of being "unwilling to respond to well-founded criticism of the proposal", referring to the 50 signatures collected to force the vice-chancellor to put the motion to a ballot.

The petition concludes: "The lack of substantive detail about the proposal,

the unwillingness to respond to criticism of it, and the drip-feed announcements from the Council about the Topping Study, all suggest 'making it up as you go along' rather than a considered plan."

Other flysheets have been published in strong support of the new role, however. One statement urges the University to "be a leader in the debate and actions around climate and environmental sustainability".

Cambridge must "recognise its leadership responsibilities" by "delivering change within the Energy Transition," rather than "being led" on climate action, say these 29 academics.

Another flysheet, signed by SU sub-battical officers, JCR presidents, and students, states that the University must demonstrate its "commitment to driving forward its work of climate action".

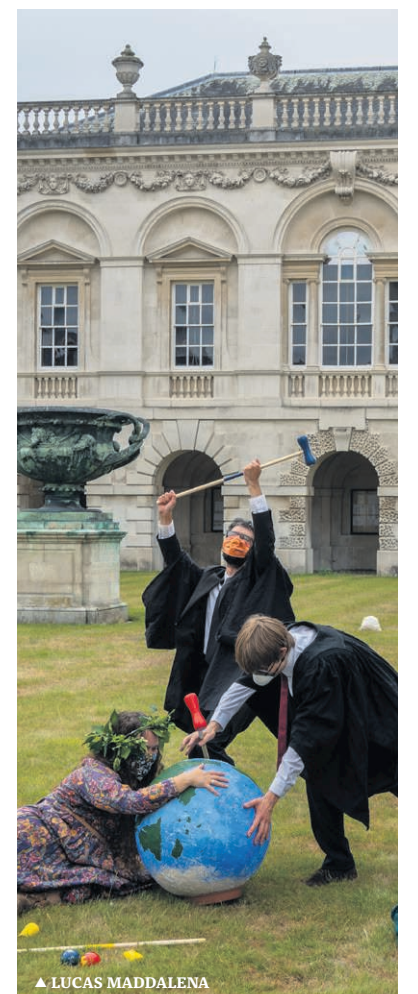
"This is a positive step, but alone is not enough. It must take place in the context of a broad array of swift actions by the University to address its role in the climate crisis, and respond to the need for climate action now," the signatories say.

The 41 student signatories of the flysheet also said: "The approval of this Grace would demonstrate the University's commitment to climate action, and allow for more accountable, consolidated leadership on this urgent issue."

The ballot opened on Monday (15/01) and will close on the 24th, with the result being published on the 31st.

A University spokesperson said: "The University Council is committed to environmental sustainability and wishes to progress as quickly as possible with implementing the recommendations from the Topping Study."

"We look forward to discussing this revised proposal further with members of the Regent House and to the outcome of the ballot," they said.



▲ LUCAS MADDALENA

# Comment



## Cambridge students don't realise how lucky they are

Hugh Jones argues that many critiques of the university administration are overblown.....Page 15



## Social smoking isn't about image - it's about community

Smokers don't care about how cool they look, but about bonding with their friends, argues Faye Harrison.....Page 14



# Revealed: Secretive Trinity funds gave £17k to elite-schooled students

Patrick Dolan  
 Deputy News Editor

Secretive funds at Trinity college have shelled out tens of thousands of pounds over the last few years to students from elite schools including Westminster and St Paul's, *Varsity* can reveal.

Trinity, Cambridge's richest college, has given £13,840 in prizes and £3,436 in grants since 2018 through these types of funds. Of this amount, £1,950 was awarded for travel costs. This means that a total of £17,276 has been awarded exclusively to students from specific private schools.

Documents seen by *Varsity* show that past donations from wealthy alumni, including some from as far back as the 17th century, were granted to the college on the condition that funds were only given to certain students.

One such fund from 1696 is still being used to give large financial awards to students educated at St Paul's, a London-based private school with annual tuition fees of over £29k, which received 22 offers to study at Cambridge in the 2022 cohort. Another from 1690 is dedicated to students from Westminster, which charges £37k a year.

A more recent donation from the 1930s has even more specific conditions, giving preference to Norfolk-born Paulines studying Classics.

On top of financially rewarding academic success, *Varsity* has found that the exclusive funds are also used to finance hardship and travel for privately-educated students.

The funds include a provision stating that any tutor can request grants for hardship, travel, or research on behalf of students primarily intended to benefit from these special funds. The Council has the discretion to charge such grants to the respective special fund.

These funds, typically established through donations from former alumni, are generally bound by the specific wishes of the benefactors, restricting the college from allocating the funds to anyone else, with one fund reaching an investment value of £16,068,580.

In some cases, however, funds are

open to redistribution. After addressing specific obligations, surplus income from the fund may be redirected to the Student Support Fund.

Trinity also has a longstanding association with Westminster, one of the schools, since its reestablishment in 1650.

Data acquired via Freedom of Information requests reveals that Trinity College admitted 22 students from the school within a single year, marking the most substantial intake by any Oxbridge college for a specific school over the past three years. The college's Master also serves as an automatic governor of the school.

The funds extend beyond Westminster and St Paul's, however, with college statutes referring to "awards to students educated at certain schools". These include other private schools such as Hurstpierpoint College, Shrewsbury School and the Perse School for Boys and for Girls.

Data seen by *Varsity* can confirm a comprehensive financial history of Trinity's elitist funds.

The Philpott Exhibition (Queen Mary's College, Basingstoke and Hurstpierpoint College, or any of the schools in the Woodard Foundation) holds the highest investment value among the funds, reaching £2,884,087 as of June 2023. On the contrary, The Samwaies Fund (Westminster) maintains the lowest value at £89,897.

In the last academic year, The Samwaies Fund awarded £2,160 in prizes. The Perry Fund (St Paul's) also allocated £1,200 in prizes, as well as £1,950 in grants. Although the McGill Bequest (for Norfolk-born Classicists from St Paul's) has not granted any prizes since 2019-2020, it notably contributed around £13,078 to the Student Support Fund in the previous academic year.

The Philpott Exhibition distributed a modest sum of £240 in prizes during the last academic year, which stands in stark contrast to when it paid out £2,150 in prizes in 2020-2021.

Some prizes at John's, Cambridge's second richest college, also remain funded by historic donations to the

College from certain schools, such as Westminster and Shrewsbury. However, the College does confer prizes ranging from £400 to £500 to every scholar (students achieving a first) regardless of their background.

Some of these funds leak into College-wide grants, meaning funds to be used for general educational purposes are made with money from these elite schools, *Varsity* has also found.

One student who attended a state comprehensive school received two prizes in their first year for a high trips ranking within first class (£600) and a subsequent prize in their second year for another first (£400).

The student told *Varsity*: "Being from a working-class background, I kind of treasure any opportunity to get a little extra cash during the academic year, so

this was a nice boost for Michaelmas."

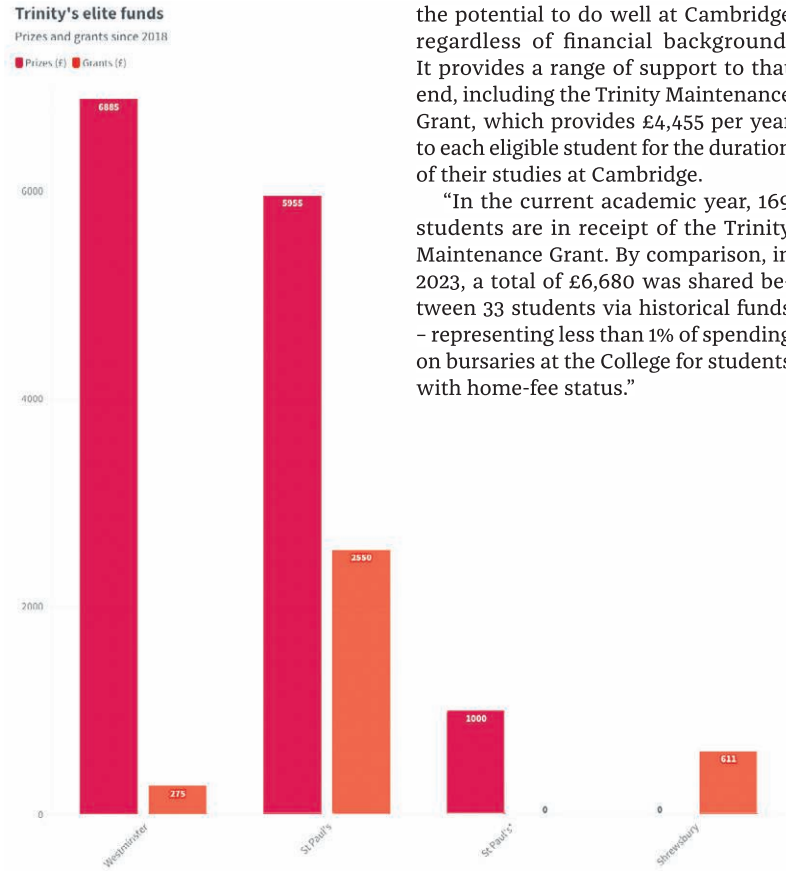
However, when informed that some prizes are funded by elite schools, they labelled it "disheartening to hear".

"Having the college award it from their own funds meant it felt like the school background didn't matter anymore. There's a lot of inequality amongst the student body because of background, but I at least thought this was one of the things equalised amongst us - I guess not."

A spokesperson for St John's College said: "St John's College does not offer any grants, funds or scholarships solely or exclusively for students who attended independent schools. The same prizes are awarded to all students at St John's who achieve first class, or equivalent, results."

Trinity said that it is "committed to enabling and welcoming students with the potential to do well at Cambridge regardless of financial background. It provides a range of support to that end, including the Trinity Maintenance Grant, which provides £4,455 per year to each eligible student for the duration of their studies at Cambridge.

"In the current academic year, 169 students are in receipt of the Trinity Maintenance Grant. By comparison, in 2023, a total of £6,680 was shared between 33 students via historical funds - representing less than 1% of spending on bursaries at the College for students with home-fee status."



## Comment - 'It's rewarding privilege with privilege'

Katie Heggs

I really do wish the concept of the two richest colleges in Cambridge giving the ex-students of elite private schools grants, *for being* the ex-students of elite private schools came as more of a surprise to me. Instead, it falls under the title of "the type of anecdote I tell people when they seem freaked out that I attend Cambridge but I want to seem normal". It's a bit like when your gran slips you a £10 note and tells you "not to spend it all at once", but if your gran owned 50% of Tesco. Or when I tell people in my local pub that no one here has a skin fade. It is absolutely unbelievable to a large part of the population, and frankly a bit weird, but within the confines of the Cambridge bubble, it is something

that we somehow all come to accept.

Regardless of the immediately ridiculous nature of rewarding privilege with privilege, I encourage everyone to apply a teensy bit of critical thinking in hashing out this topic across the table in the pub. Not everyone who went to private school wears a schoffel, holidays in the Maldives, or does "shoeys" in Pitt Club with Hugo and Jonty. In fact, not everyone who attended schools like St Paul's or Westminster comes from a particularly privileged background. A quick Google search reveals that St Paul's offers 30 full academic scholarships a year, giving a golden opportunity to bright, often working class kids. You can't really argue with that.

My point here is a bit more nuanced

than private school = 'Elon Musk rich'. The students rewarded by Trinity and St John's might well need the money - hell, they might well be on the Cambridge bursary. What they definitely don't need, however, is special treatment. This is because the true privilege of public school lies in a different realm: the cultural leg up that is markedly not afforded to the rest of the population, and puts an arrival into Oxbridge into autopilot.

What is the right college to apply to? Which fork do you use? What is port? These are all quite normal questions for "normal" students to ask before going to Cambridge. I can tell you what 'hot knives' are, what the best flavour vape is and how to not offend a Scouser, and after three years of study I can also tell

you that this is *decidedly* not the kind of knowledge that gets you 'in' with the 'in crowd'.

For state school students, many of Cambridge's institutions have to be navigated blindly. Which begs the question - where on Earth is the endowment for those who attended 'The School of Hard Knocks'? Maybe Trinity and John's could use the endowment money for the kind of lessons they give Anne Hathaway in 'The Princess Diaries', where she balances books on her head and learns how to drink tea. Because, when all is considered, what is the point of the glass ceiling if every time you smash it, someone installs double glazing?

## University watch

### Patrick Dolan rounds up student news from around the country

#### Oxford labelled 'patronising' for part-time job tweet

Oxford University has faced criticism for providing career advice suggesting students pursue part-time jobs, despite such work being banned. The post on X read: "Part-time jobs can be an excellent way to gain work experience while studying", providing opportunities to "develop your transferable skills and build your professional network." The post has been criticised for being "ironic" and "patronising" due to the University's official policy which, like Cambridge, restricts term-time employment for students.

#### Durham broadens support for £700 grant

Durham University has expanded the Durham Grant, now providing £700 support to students with household incomes between £47,201 and £62,343 and those who receive a means-tested maintenance loan in England in the 2024/25 academic year. The university also aims to alleviate financial burdens by investing in free breakfast clubs and sales of surplus food from university catering. The move has welcomed positive reactions from students, but still insist that this must be the start of increased support and not the end of it.

#### Thunberg statue returns to Winchester

The £24,000 statue of environmental activist Greta Thunberg, installed at the University of Winchester in 2021, has been reinstated after removal for plinth repairs. Initially criticised as a "vanity project" by some students, it now resides in the West Downs Centre courtyard garden. The University, however, defends the statue, claiming it as the world's first life-sized sculpture of the Swedish campaigner.

#### York to accept some overseas students with lower grades

The University of York has told staff to adopt a "more flexible approach" in admitting international students with lower-than-expected grades, reflecting the financial challenges faced by UK higher education. Although the university retains its commitment to maintaining typical entry requirements, it will now consider undergraduate applicants with equivalent grades of B or C at A-level and postgraduate applicants with a 2:2. The university has put extra resources in place for new students with grades lower than their offer.



## News

# Chaos in the Alps

Eleanor Mann & Felix Armstrong  
Senior News Editors

Injured students on this year's Varsity Ski Trip were left stranded in minus temperatures following a "crush" as Oxbridge skiers attempted to board limited bus services, despite being guaranteed seats by reps.

Following the ski trip's Mega Apres event on the 7th of December, injured students were left with no other transport options than to force their way onto coaches amid "crowds of drunk Oxbridge students".

Following the Mega Apres event, two Cambridge students with injuries to their shoulder and knee asked a representative of NUCO, the travel company organising the trip, for the best transport option back to their accommodation, but were told that only coaches were available.

The students asked another NUCO rep for help boarding the bus, to avoid the "crowds of drunk Oxbridge students" trying to get on, but were only told where the door was likely to be - advice which proved to be "futile," they told Varsity.

The students were told by NUCO that every student would have a seat on the bus, and that there was no possibility of injured skiers being given early boarding, another student said.

Once the 11:30 pm coach arrived, one injured student was prevented from boarding the bus by a "massive crush of people," whose shouts of pain were only met by "swearing and more pushing," they said.

"I had to shout at others to stop them crushing my shoulder," another student, who had injured their shoulder skiing, recalled.

Despite being told that every skier would get a seat, the 12:30 am bus was also "completely full" with seated and standing passengers when it left the stop.

The student left at the bus stop was told to "calm down" by a NUCO rep when they expressed their frustration, and advised to wait for the next coach in -3 degrees. The NUCO rep then left the bus stop, leaving a small group of students. It was not until 1 am that the students managed to get on a bus back.

The student said they felt "completely helpless and angry at how inconsiderate the NUCO reps and [their] peers had been, [...] not just for me but for others trying to get onto the bus who were injured or struggling."

"I understand that it was a particularly busy time, but the lack of empathy for others hurt and made the whole affair feel extremely disorganised," they said.

NUCO and the Varsity Ski Trip Committee were contacted for comment.

# Ai Weiwei: 'West doesn't have freedom of speech'

Arwen Godingen  
Deputy News Editor

Ai Weiwei, the renowned Chinese artist and political activist, said at an event at St John's this Wednesday (17/01) that "freedom of speech is under sanction globally - especially in the West, the US and Europe".

The artist compared the state of free speech today to "70 years ago in the Nazi Times, and 60 years ago during China's Cultural Revolution". He added: "That's what is happening here today."

Ai continued: "When [the] West thinks we have freedom of expression I say that it's the biggest lie. You don't have freedom of expression." He added: "I don't think the West has freedom of speech."

At the event organised by the Fitzwilliam Museum Society and Social Canvas, Ai was to discuss the role of art and creativity in social activism. He also discussed freedom of speech, the rise of AI, and the Israel-Palestine War.

On the role of technology in his art, Ai explained that the internet helps him express his opinions in a way he could never have done before due to the censorship of conventional media in China. The artist's own political activism began



on the internet in 2005.

The artist maintained that the "internet has liberated the freedom of expression" in the sense that education is no longer confined to universities and their "brand of education". He was less optimistic, however, about the state of global free speech, stating: "Freedom of speech is under sanction globally, especially in the West, the US and Europe."

"I think it's pretty devastating", he continued, "I never could imagine someone, because they said something,

[being] dismissed from being head of university, or editor of a magazine, or lead to cancelled exhibitions."

In response, he developed his *Ai vs AI* project: "If you don't have freedom of speech, at least you have freedom to ask questions, so I decided to ask questions to AI and let it answer".

When asked about what role institutions should play in protecting freedom of expression, such as Cambridge, he explained that "universities are responsible for protecting different opinions."

He considered "universities as a location that should encourage ideas beyond what is happening at the moment."

Ai was also asked about the impact of AI on the future of humanity. He explained that he has "not much excitement for AI". He fears what impact the immediacy of AI will have for individuals who take years to specialise in knowledge.

"AI will make a lot of people lose their jobs, including professors like you," he told Assistant Professor Kareem Estefan.

Ai also discussed his recently postponed show *Hyperallergic* following the start of the Israel-Palestine War. He explained that as an artist: "We really have to make a lot of noise by any means necessary to defend human dignity."

Ai Weiwei was contacted for comment.



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If suitable candidates present themselves, the Trustees intend to make awards to students about to graduate, or who are recent graduates, from either the University of Cambridge or ARU who intend to undertake approved training in journalism for 2024/2025.

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For further information and how to apply visit: [www.varsity.co.uk/trust](http://www.varsity.co.uk/trust)



# Language Faculty to overhaul tripos amid falling applications

Megan Wilson  
News Correspondent

The Modern and Medieval Languages (MMLL) Faculty intends to launch new joint triposes, combining Modern Languages with Linguistics or Film, in an overhaul forced by falling applications.

The Faculty has suffered a 40% drop in applications to the Modern and Medieval Languages Tripos across four years, between 2019 and 2023.

The Faculty hopes that the joint Tripos in Modern Languages and Linguistics will launch in the next two years.

A joint degree in Modern Languages and Film is also in development, with the Faculty “actively exploring other possible combinations of subjects” to attract student applications.

The MMLL Faculty cited several factors for declining applications, including: “Government education policy, especially at KS3 and KS4, stretching back two decades, the decline in numbers of students studying languages at both GCSE and A-level (or equivalent), Brexit, and the cost-of-living crisis (which impacts our four-year degree particularly).”

Professors John David Rhodes and Ianthi Tsimpli, Co-Chairs of the MMLL Faculty, told *Varsity*: “The Faculty of Modern and Medieval Languages and Linguistics accepts that the landscape



for applications to study languages at university-level has in the last several years changed dramatically.”

This shift has taken place “at Cambridge, at our peer institutions, across the HE sector and more broadly in other English-speaking countries,” the professors said.

The Faculty highlighted their work to make language learning more accessible, including their ‘Think Like a Linguist’ programme, a new languages outreach initiative, as well as the recent appointment of an outreach coordinator, Emilia Wilton-Godberfforde.

The Faculty is also seeking to extend provision for all their languages to be studied from scratch. Currently, French is only offered to students who have already studied to an A-level or equivalent

standard.

These changes are set to take place “in the context of a broader institutional review of provision in the Humanities”.

The academics also pointed to the role played by Professor Charles Forsdick, the British Academy’s Lead Fellow for Languages. “Charles’ presence here means that MMLL at Cambridge is central to promoting languages in the UK,” the Faculty said.

Professor Charles Forsdick spoke to *Varsity* about his and his colleagues’ work “rethinking modern languages for the twenty-first century,” both regarding the “diversification” of the Cambridge curriculum and “improving the national picture” through widening participation, and policy work across primary, secondary and higher education.

He highlighted the popularity and success of the History and Modern Languages Tripos, first offered to students in 2017, and the positives in the current Tripos flexibility as well as in the “exciting” new Tripos proposals.

Professor Forsdick noted that while the study of languages in the UK is undergoing a “period of turbulence” and a process of rapid change, the decrease in applications to the Tripos “is not to be seen in isolation” and, in the light of a range of initiatives in Cambridge and elsewhere, he remains optimistic about the future of languages.

# University staff fooled by phishing scams

Olivia Newbery  
News Correspondent

Staff and PhD students have been reimbursed by their faculties after falling for scam emails with urgent requests to purchase vouchers worth up to £500.

The phishing emails appear to be from Heads of Department and are directly addressed to the recipient.

The emails claim that the Heads of Departments are heading into meetings with “limited communication access” to prevent recipients from asking for further clarification.

The vouchers are requested under the pretext of rewarding members of staff, including the recipient. iTunes, Amazon and Apple gift vouchers are among those that the scammers are requesting.

Tamsin O’Connell, Head of the Department of Archaeology, told *Varsity* that her department has had to reimburse members of staff that have been taken in by the scam.

Speaking about the magnitude of the issue, she told *Varsity*: “Part of the reason why this is successful is because people are ashamed”.

“They don’t say anything about it and so then they don’t raise the profile,” O’Connell said.

Scammers are likely retrieving the

information of the people they are targeting from the department websites.

The McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research, for example, has many affiliated persons at other institutions and universities who have also been targeted by the website.

The phishing scam has most recently been brought to the attention of staff in the Cambridge Apple store. Workers refused to sell £500 worth of vouchers to one staff member until they rang their Head of Department directly and realised the fraudulent nature of the original email.

The University has cyber awareness training for staff members, but this is not compulsory. In response to recent scams, Heads of Departments are continuing to strongly encourage staff to complete the training. Alongside staff, PhD students and early career researchers have been targeted by phishing scams.

O’Connell noted that this scam “particularly exploits [the] power imbalance” between researchers and their higher-ups, as “someone might not feel able to question” their Head of Department.

She stressed that PhD students were particularly vulnerable in being less willing to question a request from their seniors. As PhDs change more regularly than academic members of staff, departments have said that they will continue to raise awareness.

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Arts Show

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WED 31 JAN - SAT 3 FEB



# News

## Around town



**Patrick Dolan**  
Deputy News Editor

### Robot Wars

Two delivery robots faced a “stalemate” on a Cambridge street corner, captured in a photo shared on Facebook. The robots were traveling in opposite directions on Brooks Road when they encountered each other. The amusing incident, not the first for these robots in Cambridge, attracted over 1,400 reactions and comments from amused residents. The Starship robots, part of a pilot scheme in partnership with the Co-op, were introduced in November 2022 as part of a food delivery initiative.

### Boiler blues

A Cambridge Chinese takeaway which was hit with a zero-star food hygiene rating, has called the timing of the inspection ‘really unlucky’. The takeaway, ‘Four Seasons’, was inspected in November when their boiler was broken, resulting in the lack of hot water and hindering proper cleaning. The inspection findings highlighted the need for boiler repairs, a thorough cleaning of the premises, replacement of mouldy chopping boards, removal of cobwebs, and decluttering of various areas. The restaurant claims that necessary improvements have been made since the inspection, with the boiler being fixed the day after the evaluation.

### Council debt crisis

Cambridgeshire councils are carrying a combined debt of £1.3 billion, the *Cambs Times* reports. Cambridgeshire County Council has the highest debt among the seven councils in this area, amounting to £475.4 million. Cambridge City Council, with a debt of £213.6 million, clarified that their financial figures do not accurately depict their current financial status, claiming these figures originated from the period when the council retained ownership of its council housing stock.

### Darwin down

Work has begun to demolish 88 new-built homes on Darwin Green., reports the *Cambridge Independent*. The homes, some fully and some partially-built, were confirmed unoccupied. The works are estimated to cost the developers millions of pounds.

# International students left in fear amid new immigration laws

**Arwen Godingen**  
Deputy News Editor

Cambridge students and staff have condemned new immigration laws that will create barriers for the international student community to study and stay in the UK.

One student described the situation as unfair, saying they “chose to study here based on the old rules but now they are changing,” whilst a lecturer called the measures “short-sighted and arrogant”.

The new laws will include barriers that prevent students from bringing their dependents to the UK, as well as making it harder for them to obtain a work visa.

Two sets of new laws will come into effect in 2024. The first has been in force since January 1 (01/24), and another set of laws is set to come into effect by the spring.

The January 1 laws include a measure in which students will no longer be allowed to bring their partner or children on dependent visas, unless they are in a PhD program or a postgraduate research programme.

The new laws will predominantly impact international postgraduate students by preventing them from bringing their families with them to the UK unless studying in a research program.

This has led to controversy, with people fearing that families might be separated.

James Cleverly, the Home Secretary, recently announced new changes to legal migration rules. He declared that the Migration Advisory Committee will review the Graduate Visa, a “two-year unsponsored work permit for overseas graduates of British universities”.

Before the changes, graduating students were allowed to apply for a Graduate Visa, which allowed them to find work in the UK even if they were unsponsored. Once it expired, they were allowed to switch to a different visa, such as a Skilled Worker Visa.

Now, with the new rule changes, the Skilled Worker Visa’s requirements have also changed, with the baseline minimum salary to be sponsored increasing from £26,200 to £38,700.

These changes must first be approved by Parliament before they come into effect. By convention, there should be at least 21 days before these new measures will be enforced.

One student told *Varsity*: “I chose to study here based on the old rules but now they are changing. It’s hard enough to go through your studies without the added job search pressure, especially in this market.”

They added: “I can’t help but be scared for my future. I feel like all of this has derailed my plans.”

One student commented on Camfess, an anonymous Facebook forum: “Anyone else scared by the new visa rules or is it just me who may have to change my



entire life plan”.

Prime Minister Rishi Sunak celebrated the new laws: “From today, the majority of foreign university students cannot bring family members to the UK. In 2024, we’re already delivering for the British people.”

Cambridge MP Daniel Zeichner has highlighted the impact these new laws will have on research institutions such as the University. He said: “The steep fall in international student applications is a crisis waiting to happen for our universities and the research and development sector.”

“It’s disappointing that the Minister [of State for Science, Research and In-

novation, Andrew Griffith] seems unable to grasp the seriousness of the situation. While it is important to tackle skill shortages at home, a lack of proper impact assessment for the Government’s immigration policies could lead to very serious unintended consequences for universities and research in the UK.”

Cambridge University lecturer Sir Richard Evans responded: “This is so short-sighted and arrogant. It affects, above all, international graduate students in their mid to late 20s, many with families. Research-intensive universities depend heavily on them for income since they can charge economic fees for them, unlike for undergraduates.”

## Free speech on campus ‘very difficult’, says VC

**Tommy Castellani**  
Deputy News Editor

The vice-chancellor has admitted that it has become “very difficult” for people to speak freely at universities, compared to her time spent as a student.

In an interview with the Naked Scientist podcast, vice-chancellor Deborah Prentice explained the need to safeguard freedom of speech on university campuses and discussed her initiatives to improve the current situation.

Dr Prentice said she can “remember being able to talk much more freely than I see people able to talk now”.

She explained: “The pandemic made it a lot worse” because “people no longer had ways that they could express themselves to each other and have an authentic kind of exchange with reactions that they could observe and respond to.”

“It was getting bad already, with the polarisation that has arisen,” she added

According to Dr Prentice: “There are many things that lead people to self-censor. And I think that the challenges around, not knowing who you’re talking to, not knowing if it’s going to get a positive reception lead people to hesitate to express themselves, to censor their own views, to look for cues about what kinds of opinions will be

acceptable.”

In an attempt to combat self-censorship on campus, Dr Prentice has introduced free-speech ‘dialogues’.

The dialogues aim to “provide a public forum for the exchange of conflicting and possibly controversial views,” the vice-chancellor explained in her first annual address.

The first dialogue was held in November and saw three speakers engage in conversation, with each offering a different perspective on legalising euthanasia in the UK.

Prentice told the podcast that “one of my initial projects here at Cambridge is to look for ways to create spaces to give people experience listening to diverse views.”

“It’s not something that people come now to university with a lot of experience doing,” she added.

The vice-chancellor also discussed her plans for Cambridge. Though she said that the University is “doing brilliantly,” Dr Prentice also remarked: “It’s a huge institution that has come through the pandemic and difficult financial circumstances in the sector and in the country. So yeah, we have some work to do.”

The vice-chancellor said that there are “opportunities” for the University to grow its “innovation ecosystem,” such as the climate crisis.

## Gonville & Caius Master announces retirement

**Eleanor Mann**  
Senior News Editor

Professor Pippa Rogerson announced her retirement as Master of Gonville & Caius on Wednesday (17/01).

After a 7-year stint in the role, the Professor said she is looking forward to resuming full-time teaching and research in private international law.

In October 2022, she was one of several Cambridge dons who criticised the scheduled visit to Caius by Dr Helen Joyce, a former *Economist* finance and critic of the transgender rights movement.

Prof Rogerson, alongside senior tutor of Caius, Andrew Spencer, sent an email to students of the College declaring they could not “stay neutral” and would be boycotting the talk, saying Dr Joyce’s views on transgender people were “offensive, insulting, and hateful to members of our community”.

Prof Rogerson then wrote to alumni stating that free speech was “fundamental” after the college’s donors considered pulling funding in response.

The event sparked a free speech row which would continue to haunt the college, with Prof Rogerson being accused of blocking an academic from promoting an event with Professor Arif Ahmed, the Government’s free speech tsar, in November of the same year (11/22).

Upon succeeding the chemist Sir Alan Ferscht as Master in 2018, Prof Rogerson declared her intent to “hand the college on in better shape than I received it”. Despite enduring culture wars, Rogerson remained an important figure for many as the College’s first female Master in its 670-year history.

Professor Peter Robinson, the President of the College, stated in an email to students that the college “hope[s] to identify Professor Rogerson’s successor by the summer”.

“She guided the College through the Covid-19 pandemic and, more recently, led the acquisition of new property forming the largest expansion of the College’s site in central Cambridge since mediaeval times. She has also served more widely in the University, including chairing the search committee for the new vice-chancellor,” Professor Robinson said.

One Caius second year said of Master Rogerson: “Pippa was a lovely Master. She’s had to handle a lot, but I think Caius’ reputation has bounced back significantly during her tenure. I’ve always felt that she has cared more about her student’s experiences in college compared to other masters.”

Professor Rogerson will step down at the end of the 2024-25 academic year.



# Cambridge on thin ice in world sustainability rankings

**Ella McCartney**  
Investigations Editor

The University of Cambridge has fallen 105 places in twelve months in global university sustainability rankings, to 124th place.

The 2024 rankings, released in December, show a dramatic fall from Cambridge's 2023 position of 19th. It is also significantly lower than their overall QS world rankings, in which Cambridge ranks second in the world, only falling behind MIT.

However, QS announced earlier this year that a university's sustainability score will now be worth 5% of their overall world ranking, causing fears that this could affect Cambridge's international prestige.

A spokesperson for a student campaign group described the result as "dismal" and representative of the University's "dithering and delay" on climate change.

QS has altered their methodology between these two years, as in their 2023 rankings only environmental impact and social impact were taken into account, whereas in 2024 governance was newly introduced as a distinct category.

For 2024, environmental impact and social impact are worth 45% each of the overall sustainability score, and governance is weighted at 10%. Cambridge's overall score across these categories is

79.2 out of 100.

Cambridge's lowest score of these three categories is for governance at 37.9. This category includes sub-categories such as ethics culture, student representation in governance, and transparent financial reporting.

## 19th

Cambridge's position in the 2023 rankings

## 124th

Cambridge's position in the 2024 rankings

For environmental impact, Cambridge's score was 77.2. The main sub-categories were environmental sustainability, environmental education, and environmental research. Out of these, Cambridge had a relatively low score of 62.7 for environmental sustainability which calls into question the University's climate change and net zero commitments, emissions efficiency, and policy on climate strategy.

However, Cambridge's scores for envi-

ronmental education and environmental research were much higher at 82.6 and 82.9 respectively.

Cambridge's highest score across the three main categories was for social impact at 88.7. Equality was the sub-category with the lowest score at 79.3, which includes student and faculty gender ratios, disability support, and their equality, diversity and inclusion policy.

Conversely, Cambridge particularly excelled in the sub-category of employment and opportunities, scoring 99.8/100.

People & Planet, the largest student climate and environmental justice network in the UK, also released their 2023/4 UK-wide sustainability rankings in December, ranking Cambridge joint 72nd with the University of Leicestershire out of 151 spots.

Cambridge has risen in rank from 84th the previous year, but has still been classed as a 2:2 category university.

A spokesperson for Cambridge Climate Justice (CCJ), a student led activist campaigning for climate justice, spoke to Varsity about why Cambridge ranks so low for sustainability,

despite being one of the wealthiest universities in the world.

They commented: "It's no surprise that Cambridge University's sustainability performance is so dismal when it's been kicking the can down the road on its love affair with Big Oil. From votes on votes to working groups taking months to decide nothing, there is a pattern of dithering and delay, all while fossil fuel money diverts attention to harmful distractions like carbon capture and storage."

They continued to express their scepticism on Cambridge's ability to meet their 2048 net-zero carbon target: "The University's climate targets already fall short of what is required, and it's hard to imagine it will be able to achieve them when its senior leadership can't even agree on replacing polluters' dirty money."

Universities' sustainability strategies are likely to become increasingly scrutinised by prospective applicants. A 2023 QS International Student Survey released in September revealed that international applicants are "actively seeking" information on universities' environmental sustainability.

Over 40% of current Cambridge students are international, with international student ratio also being a factor in

many university rankings. Consequently, Cambridge's weak sustainability standing could also indirectly impact this in the future.

The CCJ spokesperson also discussed the damage this does to Cambridge's global prestige: "Students, academics and the community alike know that you cannot be a world leader in academic research while simultaneously being a world leader in corporate greenwashing."

They proposed immediate changes that Cambridge must make, which "have been made clear, even by the University's own commissioned report. They should get a move on, finish the job and implement a Fossil Free Research policy immediately."

A University spokesperson said: "The University of Cambridge was one of the first universities to adopt Science-Based Targets for sustainable goals, including its ambitions to be net zero by 2048 and have a net zero endowment fund by 2038."

"Our commitment to sustainability means that there are initiatives, projects and research right across our University. The current strategy was developed from a survey of what was important to our students and staff. The University has already begun work to develop an updated strategy, which includes the proposal of a new Pro-Vice-Chancellor with responsibility for sustainability who can lead on this strategy," they continued.



▲ HANNAH MAWARDI

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# News

## Big brain, small chair

Ex-*Varsity* editor-in-chief, Amol Rajan, has been given a smaller chair on University Challenge because he “looks like a villain,” *the Telegraph* reports. After succeeding Jeremy Paxman as host of the hit BBC quiz show this summer, Rajan was met with comments saying he “needed a booster seat” and that he “looked like a child”. “Everyone said I looked like the bag guy from Inspector Gadget,” Rajan said. The BBC has decided to give him a smaller chair for the next series. The journalist and TV presenter studied English at Downing College.

## VC to give glass ceiling talk

Vice-chancellor Deborah Prentice is to feature in a discussion on professional women breaking the glass ceiling. Dr Prentice will be the latest to appear in the ‘Give me inspiration!’ series of conversations, which are led by Dame Athene Donald, the master of Churchill College. The vice-chancellor will discuss the regrets, setbacks, and opportunities that she met on her path to Cambridge. Dr Prentice was appointed in July 2023, having served as the provost of Princeton University since 2017. The event will take place on 31 January.

## Girton alum abdicates

Queen Margrethe II of Denmark has quit the throne, 64 years after matriculating at Cambridge. The monarch studied prehistoric archaeology at Girton between 1960 and 1961, and is an Honorary Fellow of the College. Queen Margrethe was Europe's last female monarch, and has become Denmark's first to cut short their reign in 900 years. The monarch cited health difficulties as the reason behind her decision. The Cantabrigian has been succeeded by her eldest son, Frederik X, who formally took the throne on Monday (15/01).

## Murder on the dancefloor

On Wednesday (17/01), Mash hosted a “Saltburn Special” club night featuring Jacob Elordi cutouts, complimentary blood shots, free (runny) eggs and pizza, and the film's soundtrack. Attendees were encouraged to dress to impress in “y2k drip”, and were given free entry and shots if dressed as a character from the film. Saltburn-themed parties in Oxford have faced criticism lately for seeming pretentious and, in the view of some, entirely missing the point of the film. The film, released in November, has since become a cultural sensation.

## Wild about diversity

The ornithologist, campaigner, and Cambridge student Maya-Rose Craig was among the leading environmentalists hosted by Homerton College at a dinner on Tuesday (16/01). The College event was held to celebrate the release of the Wildlife Trust's diversity report, which focuses on the necessity for representation in their campaigns. “We need everyone to feel that they can be themselves, that diversity is welcome and celebrated, and that all of us feel empowered to play our part in shaping a better future where nature matters,” wrote Craig Bennet, the trust's Chief Executive and Homerton Fellow. Maya-Rose Craig, known professionally as Birdgirl, holds an honorary doctorate from Bristol and had her autobiography published last year.



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## Students attack Braverman Union visit

Students have criticised the Union's decision to host former Home Secretary and Queens' alum, Suella Braverman, in a speaker event this term. One took to Camfess to say: “How dare you even invite someone who's not only incited so much hate, while doing so little for the government but has also been so anti-protest, anti-free speech, such as her?” Another commented: “The Union actively courting someone who attacks students. Nice look there.” When pressed on the decision to host Braverman, Union President Nick Davis told *Varsity*: “We're glad to present a dynamic and exciting term card with leading political figures who members can engage with and challenge.” A date for the former CUCA chair's visit has yet to be set.

## Head of (pro)State

King Charles III will be treated at hospital next week for an enlarged prostate, Buckingham Palace has announced. The Trinity alum's condition is benign, but the King will take time off his public engagements whilst he recuperates. The King reportedly wanted to share details of his diagnosis to encourage other men to get checked. Treatments in hospital are usually only recommended for moderate to severe cases, as Buckingham Palace announced the King will be undergoing a “corrective procedure”. What this procedure is has not been revealed, but it is serious enough that the King had to cancel plans to meet cabinet secretaries and foreign dignitaries in Scotland on Thursday.

## Tackle inequality before net zero, say researchers

A recent report from Cambridge and Oxford researchers argues that to reach net zero, inequality will have to be tackled first. They point out that the promotion of climate-friendly behaviours will be far more successful in societies where people have the financial and physical means, and time, to make greener changes. Dr Charlotte Kukowski, a post-doctoral researcher at Cambridge, said: “It's increasingly acknowledged that there's inequality in terms of who causes climate change and who suffers the consequences, but there's far less attention being paid to the effect of inequality in changing behaviours to reduce carbon emissions.”



# University health fund awards increase by 850% in four years

**Patrick Dolan**  
Deputy News Editor

Awards from the University’s physical and mental health fund have increased by 850% in four years, a *Varsity* investigation can reveal.

In the 2018/19 academic year, the fund awarded just over £64,000 in individual student awards, and £344,371 in 2021/22. In the 2022/23 academic year, the fund allotted £609,788 to students, *Varsity* Freedom of Information requests have uncovered. This marks an increase of 853% over four years.

The Cranes’ Charity fund provides financial aid through reimbursement to students facing physical or mental health treatment costs not readily available through the NHS or the University.

The rise in awards is matched by an increasing number of applications to the fund. 85 applications were received in 2018/19, with 94% of these accepted. Three years later in 2021/22, the number of applications rose to 378 and again to 645 in 2022/23, with 84.8% of these being accepted. This total rise in applications stands at a 659% increase.

## What is the Cranes' Fund?

The Cranes’ Charity fund offers financial support to students for expenses related to physical or mental health treatments that may not be covered by the NHS or the University. The charity was founded through a substantial contribution by John Crane, a philanthropic apothecary from Cambridge born in the 16th century, and aimed to aid ‘poore scholars’ during times of illness. While John Crane’s will mentions bequests to the towns of Wisbech and Cambridge, the current regulations for the fund, for which the University serves as the trustee, do not specify funds allocated for distribution beyond the University.

The increase in demand for the fund comes as more students are declaring mental health diagnoses. Last month, *Varsity* revealed that the number of students disclosing ADHD in 2022/23 had almost doubled from the previous year to 872.

**£64,000**  
Awards from the Crane's fund in 2018/19

**£344,371**  
Awards from the Crane's fund in 2021/22

**£609,788**  
Awards from the Crane's fund in 2022/23

Students may apply for up to a maximum of £1,800 per academic year. In 2022-2023, 108 students received the full amount of £1800 in a single application and 36 received £1800 over two or more applications.

Students can access financial assistance for recommended specialist mental health treatment, medical treatment, associated travel costs covered, and support for Autism and ADHD diagnostic assessments with specific documentation.

The fund is financed by investments in the Cambridge University Endowment Fund and, as of December 2023, holds a spendable value of £1,395,098.

The total gross income to the Student

Medical Fund has increased in recent years in alignment with rising applications. In 2018/19, the fund accumulated just over £115,000 in funds, which then increased to £127,424 in the subsequent academic year and finally to £138,536 in 2022/23.

The Fund also provides funding for specific elements of the University’s Student Support Services. In 2022/23, the Fund provided £82,374 to the University Counselling Service to fund a range of services.

*Varsity* can also reveal the distribution of the funds between colleges. In 2018/19, Wolfson students made the highest amount of approved applications (8), with Emmanuel and John’s students both recording 7 approved applications.

In the last academic year, Girton and Newnham led with the highest number of approved applications at 37 each. 63 applications were withdrawn, marking a substantial increase from the 4 withdrawn in 2018/19.

One student described their largely positive experience of the fund, which included a “straightforward” process with their application being approved in the same month it was made.

However, the student told *Varsity* that the system could be improved by paying funds directly to students, rather than through their colleges.

Another student told *Varsity* that their tutor’s handling of the application caused them “extra stress,” as they were “unfamiliar with the fund” and its “bureaucracy”.

The student also said that “one of the main weaknesses of the fund is that there is no system for helping people find therapists,” as the first professional they were allocated was “not qualified” to help them.

*The University of Cambridge has been contacted for comment.*

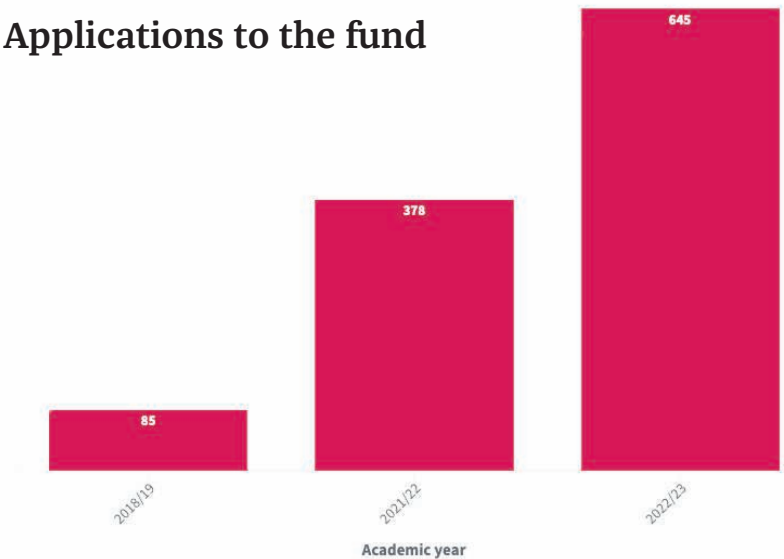
## Colleges with the most claims to the fund, 2022/23

Girton - 37	Lucy Cavendish - 34
Newnham - 37	Pembroke - 32
Wolfson - 35	Homerton - 31

## Colleges with the fewest claims to the fund, 2022/23

Trinity - <3	Clare Hall - 7
Peterhouse - 5	Emmanuel - 10
Corpus Christi - 5	St John's - 11

## Applications to the fund



# Student engineering society under fire for Huawei partnership

**Tommy Castellani**  
Deputy News Editor

The Cambridge University Engineering Society (CUES) has faced criticism for its partnership with Chinese telecoms manufacturer Huawei.

CUES counts Huawei as one of its ten high-profile sponsors and hosted the US-sanctioned company at its careers fair in October 2023.

The student-run society organised a site visit to Huawei’s Cambridge research centre in March 2022, the month when the University stopped accepting all new funding and research from Huawei.

The site visit featured a presenta-

tion from a former Cambridge student and current Huawei employee entitled: “From Cambridge graduate to Huawei Employee”.

Huawei’s events are advertised through the CUES mailing list and Instagram and Facebook pages.

Huawei is still tied to the University through CAPE, a research partnership it participates in between the University and a handful of corporations in the photonics and electronics industry.

Dr Wei Zhang, a director at Huawei, delivered a CAPE lecture in February last year.

The tech giant has been embroiled in controversy because of its close relationship with the Chinese state.

Back in 2020, the UK government decided to strip Huawei from Britain’s 5G infrastructure over concerns about national security.

The US Department of State imposed sanctions on Huawei earlier that year citing human rights abuses.

The company is said to be involved in the surveillance of Uighur Muslims in Xinjiang, China, using their technology to help local police and government tighten their security infrastructure.

Engineering undergraduate and CUES member, Archie McCann, told *Varsity*: “Huawei is a company directly contributing to the Uighur genocide by manufacturing the tech used for their mass surveillance. To see Huawei promoted

by, and sponsoring, the Cambridge University Engineering Society is just wrong.”

“I hope it is out of ignorance, rather than intentional reputational laundering of a genocidal company,” he added.

Another Engineering student said: “Although I am disappointed to see CUES being sponsored by Huawei, what we have to worry about more is the honeymoon between the Cambridge Engineering Department and the US-sanctioned Chinese company, which can be exemplified by CAPE.”

“While the department is cutting ties with fossil fuel companies for ESG reasons, collaborating with Huawei seems inconsistent,” they said.

The University was criticised in Oc-

tober by Tory MPs for having accepted millions in research funding and donations from Huawei.

A University spokesperson said: “The University paused all new research and funding from Huawei in March 2022. CAPE has no continued collaboration with Huawei. No new projects have started since 2021, and all projects have now run their course”.

“We have a robust system for reviewing strategic relationships and donations. All of our collaborations have been assessed against UK Government Export Controls and we collaborate regularly with the UK Government’s Research Collaboration Advice Team,” they continued.

*Huawei was contacted for comment.*



## Interviews

# Joe Seddon's fight to transform UK higher education and beyond

**Sophie Denny** speaks to Zero Gravity founder about his time at Oxford and the current state of UK higher education

Oxford graduate Joe Seddon founded Zero Gravity from his childhood bedroom in Morley with the remaining £200 from his maintenance loan, aiming to “take people on that long term journey into uni, into work and into life”. Since then, the organisation has gone from strength to strength, supporting over 8,000 students into university, including more than 800 into Oxbridge.

Seddon was inspired to found the platform, which pairs students with mentors studying their subject at university, following his experience reading PPE at Oxford. He says: “I felt completely out of my depth” while applying, before realising he couldn’t be alone in this. Indeed, had it not been for an interviewer on BBC Radio Leeds asking whether he would apply to Oxbridge following his GCSEs, he may never have applied: “I was completely flummoxed by the question because it had never even crossed my mind.”

He recalls being “blown away by the grandeur” of Oxford during his interview, and feeling overwhelmed at his interview. After not performing his best in his first interviews, Seddon went to a pub for a Diet Coke (still being underage) to “chill out”, not realising there was a 10pm curfew at the college. “I was so embarrassed,” he says, “I didn’t want to be the interviewee ringing the college porter asking to be let back in after ten o’clock.” Luckily, he was able to sleep in the room of a school friend, but Seddon remarks that this “just shows you the mentality of a nervous 17-year-old who doesn’t really know what they’re doing. And maybe if it wasn’t for my friends

who got me out of that socially awkward situation, I probably would never have got a place.”

The unknowns didn’t end there. His first term was “a baptism of fire”, being set two 3,000 word essays on the first day of Freshers’ Week. “I thought it was a joke at first. In my mind, Freshers’ Week was the week where you got settled in, went out, got pissed and maybe made some friends and maybe made some bad decisions.” Alongside navigating academic challenges, Seddon grappled with “the guilt of moving away from home”. Coming from an area “where even the concept of going to university was a fairly fresh, new thing for the vast majority”, the move to Oxford entailed a shift in identity, not just location. We often speak of imposter syndrome, but “social mobility guilt” is a further challenge lots of students from under-represented backgrounds face.

It is well-known that many PPE students are “wannabe politicians” – three of the last four prime ministers are Oxford PPE graduates – but Seddon quickly “became quite cynical about the ability of politics to solve big social issues”. Trickle-down social change was not going to work, so he decided to take “a more entrepreneurial route”.

This decision, turning down corporate job offers, was initially met with scepticism: “I don’t think my mum was best pleased with me, in all honesty, and my friends thought I was a little bit crazy.” He acquiesces that she “understands it now”, before joking that people in Yorkshire thought an entrepreneur “was an innuendo for unemployment”. We laugh, but Seddon points out that building a

startup is not a widespread pursuit outside of London, which made it harder for him at the start.

## “Students have been thrown under the bus by government policy

“I think I probably would have given up, but it was that deep passion for the mission which kept me going” he says. This passion is clear as we discuss the current state of UK higher education. Although he is pleased that progress has been made, with the ratio of state to private school students at Oxbridge having shifted from 50-50 to 70-30 since he started at Oxford, “we’ve got a lot more work to do”. Other institutions besides Oxbridge, such as Durham, Edinburgh and Exeter, are highly unrepresentative; they “need to get their act together” and work towards widening participation.

Financial pressures on students are mounting with the ongoing cost of living crisis, especially for those who “can’t rely on the bank of mum and dad”. Seddon is emphatic in his outrage: “Almost every single government entitlement has been uprated in line with

inflation ... apart from the student maintenance loan, which has decreased in real terms, and I think students have been thrown under the bus by government policy.” Zero Gravity has distributed £1.5 million in scholarships to low-income students to help them complete their degrees while focusing on their long-term career prospects, but there is still

“a long way to go” to close this financial gap.

Seddon has received numerous awards, yet he remains humble, initially believing the letter notifying him that he was on the King’s Birthday Honours List was “an unpaid utility bill”.

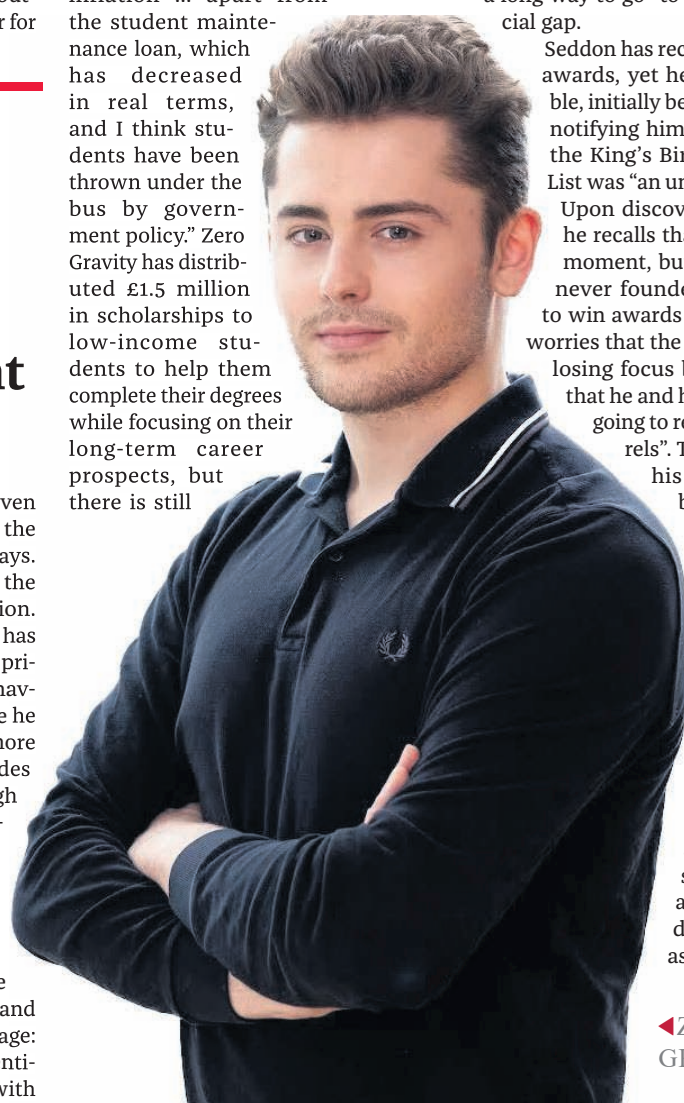
Upon discovering the truth, he recalls that “it was a nice moment, but to be honest, I never founded Zero Gravity to win awards or honours.” He worries that the charity sector is losing focus but emphasises that he and his team are “not going to rest on [their] laurels”. This is clear from his five-year am-

bition to make

Zero Gravity “not just a UK phenomenon, but something that operates across the globe”.

He wants to expose UK students to international opportunities and encourage social mobility around the world, defying borders as well as gravity.

◀ ZERO GRAVITY



# Life after the bubble bursts

Youtubers PaigeY and Elena Handtrack reflect back on their time in the bubble and the connection they found by making their ‘online diaries’ with **Amelie Bromnick**

There’s no shame in admitting that prior to university applications, we all binged Youtube ‘Day in the Lives’ and ‘Cambridge Q&As’ before making that all important decision. Graduate vloggers PaigeY and Elena Handtrack attest to how much watching these videos helped to give them a glimpse at what student life would be, and when filming for their own channels they loved being able to connect to those who were studying alongside them. Elena laughs as she tells me that she was part of Paige’s “international audience”, and watching her videos definitely influenced her decision to apply to Cambridge. Now having ex-

perienced the reality of life inside the “bubble”, they think of their “online diar[ies]” as something they can look back on fondly from the outside world.

Paige recalls that despite there being so much to do in “the Cambridge bubble”, she still “stumbled” into “casual vlogging”, and carrying her camera around became “second nature”. She later states that committing to her channel was one of the best things she did at Cambridge, and she continues to film her life since graduating, studying for actuarial exams

while working in the “corporate world”. Now back in Germany, Elena admits that she is very shy by nature and often felt ex-

tremely embarrassed walking down the streets of Cambridge talking to a camera, but really “nobody cares because everybody’s busy”. It is clear that for both, vlogging enabled them to document their lives inside the bubble and stay connected to those outside of it.

The phenomena of the Cambridge bubble is something Elena says she was very aware of before applying. Having studied abroad in Germany, and since completed her master’s degree there, she appreciates how different the work-life balance was, with reading lists that actually felt “completable” and time to take breaks – even weekend trips! She says that while we all “come out stronger at the end”, the freedom to breathe and catch up was something missed in Cambridge. Paige too attests to the “busy, fast-paced lifestyle” she had to adjust to at university, recalling that she would “for[get] what was going on outside” and get “wrapped up in the moment”; it’s impossible not to get immersed.

Elena is grateful for the freedom

graduating has given her to prioritise her health, something often neglected in the bubble. After completing her master’s degree in Law, she has been in recovery from a surgery on her spine that measures “recovery time in months not weeks”, something she never would have allowed herself to do during such fast-paced Cambridge term times. Nevertheless, she definitely seems to have kept busy, telling me that she’s written a book that will be published at the end of March. Although entering the working world is never smooth, Elena is keen to mention how lucky we are to have the University Careers Service (whose emails many of us admittedly ignore), a resource that like many, including the University Counselling Service, we should never feel “ashamed” to make use of. Connections are everything, and building a “network”, she says, can also help with that transition.

As our chat comes to a close, the pair are both keen to offer their wisdom, now having gained perspective from outside

the bubble. Elena stresses how important it is to “take care of your mental health”, and even though it may feel that there’s no time, there’s always someone to talk to who can help you “get that break”. Meanwhile, Paige reassures me that you have to “trust the process”. Even as they often struggled worrying “one step ahead”, everything would usually work out and she’d realise that she “didn’t need to stress”. She says that setbacks are “not the end of the world” and there’s always something you can do to “bring it back round”. Looking to the end of uni, Paige recalls the best advice she was given was to “lean into the next chapter” and be “open-minded” that the next steps can be fun too. It’s inevitable that the bubble will burst for all of us and we will be thrust back into the world outside Cambridge; it’s the people like Paige and Elena who make these “online diaries” that can ease the transition and remind us to enjoy the ride.



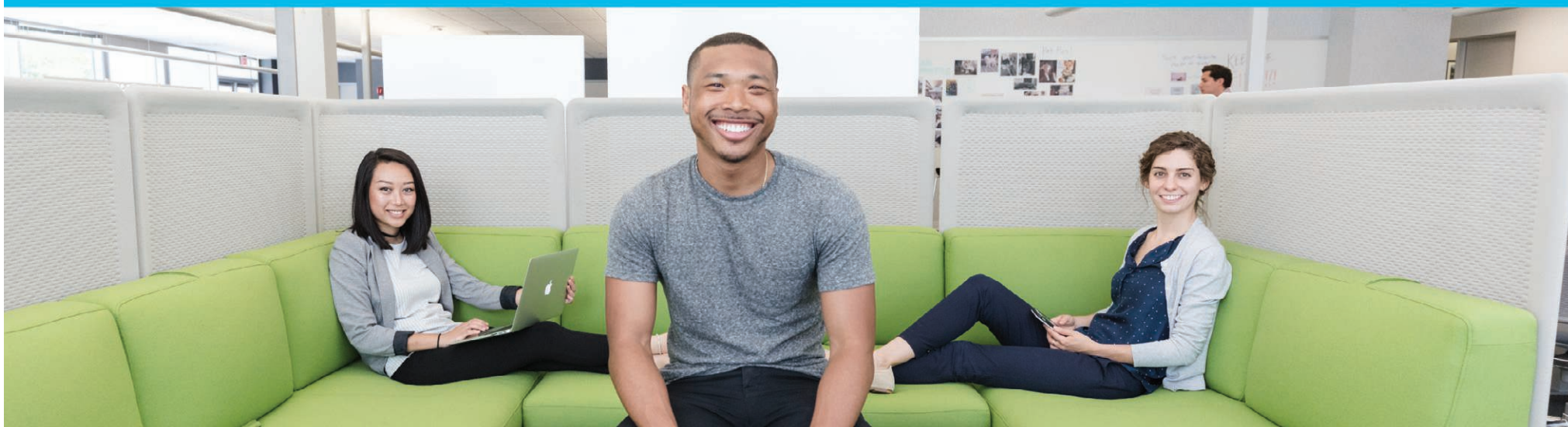
▶ PAIGE YALLOP





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## Features

# 'The accused person

## Gwenno Robinson investigates the growing role of

It's Freshers' Week in Cambridge. Bright-eyed and bushy-tailed first-years pile into hallowed halls, their timetables crammed with workshops, seminars and pub crawls. Consent workshops occupy a 45-minute slot on a Thursday afternoon. Names are called out with no reply, and some dozen seats remain empty.

A chair scrapes the floor. Someone half-heartedly gets to their feet and calls out: "Rape alarms are available at porters lodge." An after-thought. An unlikely prospect, perhaps. In reality, the odds are bleak. A defence lawyer reveals to me that the vast majority of sexual assault cases at university happen during Freshers' Week. For those involved, it's usually the first sexual encounter of their lives.

“

**Two years after she was first assaulted, she's learnt that the reporting system even exists**

A 2018 survey estimated that 62% of students have experienced sexual violence at a UK university. Out of these, only 6% reported the matter to their university. Anecdotally, I suspect the figure at Cambridge is something similar, if not significantly higher. Universities up and down the country are struggling to cope with the growing epidemic of sexual assault cases. Student conduct boards act as the plaster to this problem: panels of academics, investigators and student representatives that deliberate whether a student has broken the university's code of conduct. Their remit covers everything - from plagiarism to cases of sexual assault, violence and harassment.

With rape convictions at a record low, and police investigations sometimes taking several years, it's easy to understand why universities take matters into their own hands, aiming to complete the investigation within a matter of months. But to what extent are student conduct boards equipped to be carrying out investigations into increasingly complex cases? After all, investigating a case of sexual assault is rarely simple. It becomes even harder when these boards lack the power to demand evidence and the forensic facilities the police use.

**'He said, she said'**

Since May of last year, I've been investigating the use of student conduct boards at Cambridge and beyond, speaking to students, policymakers and lawyers. In this piece, I combine testimonies from three victims of sexual assault, and make reference to many more. Some have reported through Cambridge University's con-

duct board (OSCCA), others through their college. Some are yet to report their case.

Daisy had only been at university for a day when she was sexually assaulted. At first, she wasn't sure whether it "even counted" as assault. She'd met him at a house party that evening. He was "a nice person", she admits, and they'd spent the evening chatting together. But she wasn't ready to sleep with him. That night, he followed her back to her room. She can only remember flashes of the evening, like the click of the lock as he closed her bedroom door behind him. She certainly doesn't remember consenting to sex.

In the morning, she had an uneasy feeling about the night, but couldn't quite put her finger on it. Her friends dissuaded her from overthinking it, reminding her she was drunk, and it was probably nothing. "After all..." they said; "it's a 'he said, she said' situation".

The trauma from that evening didn't leave Daisy. Soon, she found herself at her lowest point, resorting to drinking excessively, doing so at 9am before her lectures. She'd often pass out on her bathroom floor. Her friends became so concerned they made a rota to keep an eye on her.

Twice, Daisy tried to take her own life.

In the end, she failed her first year exams. Her college threatened to make her leave. Eventually, she sent her college an account of everything that had happened. After putting up a fight, they eventually let her continue her studies. "No one ever said anything about reporting," she adds. Only in the past month, two years after she was first assaulted, has she learnt that the reporting system even exists.

Even now, she's sceptical as to what it can achieve. She still sees him every now and then, and the trauma from the night clearly stays with her. She shakes her head: "it's not gone".

**'Too little, too late'**

When I met Ella on a rainy morning in May, she had just finished her exams. But little weight had been lifted off her shoulders. Last year, she was sexually assaulted on two occasions by her then boyfriend.

When she approached her college, they were "very adamant" they didn't want the police involved. Instead, they presented OSCCA, the University's disciplinary body, as a "cleaner, faster, smoother alternative". Senior individuals in her college made persistent comments about the benefits of using the informal route as opposed to the formal process. Eventually, when she agreed, she felt they applauded her for choosing the supposedly "kinder" process.

The informal OSCCA route allows victims and their perpetrators to come to resolution agreements: for instance, by limiting the spaces in college they are both allowed to be in. However, as Ella tells me, she felt that the "person who gets accused gets the most power... it was all very much on his terms". It's a recurrent theme that many of the victims I talk to raise. Ella's perpetrator delayed the process for several months, citing exams as the reason, despite them both



being on the same course.

“

**She wishes she would have more seriously considered going to the police**

OSCCA states that cases reported through the informal route take around 1-2 months to process. Eight months after Ella had filed the original complaint, a settlement was finally agreed upon, limiting the spaces in college they are both allowed to be in.

But for Ella, this was "too little, too late". During this time, she developed an alcohol dependency, and relied on drinking to fall asleep. She pauses for a second, hinting at how she experienced suicidal thoughts in the months that the process was delayed.

On top of this, the informal agreement lacks any enforcement mechanisms. Her perpetrator "constantly violates the contract" and only sits a few rows away from her in lectures. Her gaze falls to the table we're sat on, her voice cracks slightly: "I still see him everywhere". She feels she was given "false hope" about what the process could achieve and that, in reality, their lives have "remained very intertwined".

Over a year on, she regrets reporting the incidents to OSCCA. She wishes she would have considered going to the po-

lice more seriously and feels her college deterred her and misrepresented OSCCA as an equivalent process: "They made it seem like an alternative, but it's not."

Alice bustles into the cafe on a sunny Sunday morning: hair swept into a ponytail, a gym bag swung over one shoulder. She was stalked at her college by someone in a position of power. It wasn't the first time for her perpetrator to land himself in trouble either. He had a "reputation", she tells me.

**'Only got worse'**

She was assured that reporting through the college would be a quick process. Following a month of discussions, a contract was put in place, outlining strict restrictions on his ability to contact her. Within ten minutes of



# gets the most power'

## the University in dealing with cases of sexual assault



◀TOMOS ALWYN DAVIES

signing the contract, Alice's perpetrator had already breached its terms by sending her a message on Facebook.

“  
I wouldn't want to put anyone through what I went through

In fact, the stalking “only got worse” after the contract was put in place. With nothing holding the contract together, her perpetrator “didn't take it seriously at all”. “They should have told me to go

to the police” Alice asserts. In fact, she feels she was “actively discouraged” by her college from going to the police.

Eventually, Alice did report the matter to the police, who turned out to be “great”. She's certain the stalking “would have stopped much sooner” had she gone to the police at the start. She was booked in for an appointment as soon as possible and, slowly but surely, things started to improve.

The toll on her and her academics has been immense. But Alice couldn't access the support she needed. She wasn't allowed to see the college counsellor due to a supposed “conflict of interest”, her perpetrator was receiving counselling from the counsellor too. I ask her whether she would advise the college reporting system to anyone. She shakes her head and laughs a little: “I wouldn't

want to put anyone through what I went through”.

### An 'epidemic'

It hasn't always been this way. Up until six years ago, universities were not to deal with cases of misconduct that could also constitute a criminal offence. But, the Pinsent Mason guidelines changed the way things were done, advising universities on how to handle student disciplinary issues where the alleged misconduct could also constitute a crime.

I speak to Rose Stephenson, Director of Policy and Advocacy at the Higher Education Policy Institute, who explained: “Overnight, universities went from not really dealing with this, to running quasi-judicial processes, for cases up to, and

including, sex without consent.”

I ask her why it is that students often do opt for the university route of reporting. She accepts that the alternative, the criminal justice system, takes an “incredibly long time”, and that it can be “very traumatic” for the reporting party.

“Ultimately”, she says, “what a lot of victim-survivors want is to carry on with their life, and not have to do it knowing their alleged perpetrator is in their lectures, accommodation halls and so on.” But she does admit it makes her feel “uncomfortable” that universities are “filling that gap” in the justice system.

Despite the change of guidelines happening six years ago, continued calls for a national framework have fallen on deaf ears. Rose warns this had led to a “huge variation” between universities in how they deal with cases of sexual misconduct. She explains that if you're found to have groped someone in a nightclub, “one university might expel you and another might tell you off”.

Professor of Criminology, Kieran McCartan from the University of the West of England, echoes this: “What you get is 130 universities all doing their own thing.” In his view, sexual violence is an “epidemic” that's “happening across all universities in the country”. He too, wants to see a “driving force” from central government. Rose leaves me with one comment that stays with me: “If universities were investigating murder, we'd all think that was totally inappropriate. Yet we're doing it for rape.”

### 'A two-tier system'

OSCCA states that legal representation is “not normally necessary or appropriate” in their proceedings. However, in “exceptional circumstances” a student can seek a legal representative “at their own cost”, provided that they receive permission from the Student Discipline Office.

I speak to a defence lawyer at a leading law firm, who's witnessed a “clear upsurge” in recent years of students contacting her to seek legal representation after being accused of sexual assault.

She's all too familiar with student conduct boards across the UK — not just OSCCA. She has grave concerns. She feels universities lack the specialist training and resources to deal with serious sexual assault cases. She warns of the “huge, wide-ranging implications for both parties” that stem from this. Representatives on panels are left looking like “rabbits in the headlights”.

She urges the presence of lawyers to be more present in the process and calls for consistency across the country. In her view, if universities were more willing to accept legal presence, “they would see the value we [lawyers] bring to the table”. She assures me that introducing legal representation is “nothing to be afraid of” as it would only “bring about fairness to the process”.

### 'A broken dream'

I can see her point, but it doesn't sit quite right with me. I challenge her:

“Wouldn't that create a two-tier system of who can afford it versus who can't?”.

“That's a problem for the government. Anyway...”, she dismisses and goes on to tell me how she works “covertly” with students, assuming a role “behind the scenes”, regardless of whether permission is granted: “You know... off the record”.

The experiences of the victims that I have spoken to have varied, from what took place, where and by whom. But, they contain frightening similarities. Frankly, this is only the tip of the iceberg: only a fraction of sexual assault cases are reported to the university, even less to the police. Many, many more cases exist. During the course of this investigation, I've been in contact with over a dozen individuals in similar positions, who point to the same issues again and again. Many feel they cannot speak out, even anonymously, due to serious concerns over their safety and anonymity.

“  
Representatives on panels are left looking like 'rabbits in the headlights'

Ella and I finish the remaining dregs of our coffee and wander towards the door of the cafe. When I turn to say goodbye to her, the far-reaching impacts of sexual assault really hit home.

She begins to reflect on how the past year has profoundly tainted her time at Cambridge: “I really hate it here... genuinely, I don't think I've ever hated being in a place so much”, she admits, her voice cracking.

Her eyes well as she remembers how excited she was to have the opportunity to come to Cambridge. Now, she can't help but feel she was sold “a broken dream”. The incidents and the way they were handled left her with an unshakable desire to “distance herself from this place entirely”.

Soon, the two of us are emotional. “I will never get that time at university back. I still have nightmares about what happened,” she whispers.

We turn away from each other and walk to opposite sides of the street.

When asked to comment, a University spokesperson said: “Sexual misconduct has no place at Cambridge. We have clear policies and processes in place about how claims of sexual misconduct are to be treated, and how students will be supported. Further information is available on the University's Breaking the Silence and Student Complaints webpages.”

*The name of the contributors of this piece and some details have been changed to protect their anonymity and privacy. The image is a model who had no other involvement in the article.*



# Comment

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Will McLaughlin is a second-year English student at Robinson College

## The problem with Cambridge's welfare system is that there's too much of it

Will McLaughlin

In the Summer of 2022, the BBC published a damning article about Cambridge's mental health service. In the article, former students explained the process of dealing with an uncaring and ineffective welfare system, which prioritised evading liability for the college, rather than protecting the lives of the students. These students felt thoroughly let down by those whose job it was to help them. One said: "As far as college were concerned, if I were to die they wanted it to be not on their property."

Three months later, I became the 'men's and non-binary officer' of Robinson College's student association. Such a hallowed role brought me the expected power (I could vote on whether the lettering on our committee jumpers should be gold or dark yellow), but it also earned me a place on the welfare team. Meetings soon ensued, and throughout the year I worked alongside students and staff who made up a small part of Cambridge's mental health service – the very same service which has received so much criticism in recent years.

Flash forward a year, and I was sitting on a rug on the grass outside Robinson's Wellbeing Centre, with the rest of the student welfare team, eating a mini Magnum and chatting to our head of wellbeing. Had I been subsumed by the dark machinery of Cambridge's mental health service? Indoctrinated into a shadowy cabal of wellbeing heads whose Wel-

fare Cake Wednesdays, dog walks, and free ice lollies were smokescreens for their complete disregard for students? No. I don't think so. During my time in Robinson's student association, I met people who genuinely cared about the wellbeing of college members, whose faces lit up when their craft sessions or baking socials were enjoyed, and whose biggest frustration was the lack of general interest from students. But, if my experience was of such enthusiasm, I had to ask: where is this uncaring, dysfunctional system?

The first problem is a glaringly obvious one. Unfortunately, not all colleges are blessed with a men's and non-binary officer who puts on events like 'Cookies and Condoms'. By the same token, there also exists a wide disparity between the quality of senior staff members involved in student wellbeing across colleges. Because of the small scale of colleges, one sub-standard member of staff can ruin a student's experience with welfare. This is not something with an easy fix but the Student Mental Health and Wellbeing Plan suggests that a dedicated SU service has already been effective and continuing to build on this service will give a greater number of options for those who are dissatisfied with their college's resources.

But there exists another far less visible problem: the sprawling, overlapping nature of welfare roles themselves. If a student has a mental health issue, what

lies before them is not one clear pathway to the gilded gates of 'help', but a labyrinth. You could go to your DoS, your personal tutor, the college nurse, the wellbeing head, a student welfare officer, a porter, an SU welfare officer, or use the numbers provided on the SU website to contact a medical professional. This is, firstly, daunting for the irrational, yet understandable fear of contacting the wrong person. But more important than that is the fact that the current system is both inefficient and risky. Such a wide team means a far sparser distribution of resources, and different members will be more comprehensively trained than others. That first step of reaching out to someone requires vulnerability, and is incredibly scary. If a porter, student welfare officer, or DoS isn't properly trained to handle a specific mental health issue, or crisis, then they could risk ostracising a student forever.

My experience has led me to advocate strongly for a streamlining of roles. Student welfare officers should *know* that their role is not to provide therapy, but to facilitate conversation and community. Wellbeing staff should clearly state how and when they should be contacted, and who to get in touch with based on the severity of the issue. Tutors also, currently, exist in a strange place – purposefully detached from your course (so that they can be talked to without judgement), but so detached that nothing of substance gets discussed, with meetings some-

times feeling like a state-enforced small talk session. As is characteristic of Cambridge staff, their level of engagement is also majorly varied. I was once told a mythical story of a tutor group meeting for teas and desserts, which feels like an anomaly among the all too familiar tales of total tutor desertion. If a college has a dedicated wellbeing head, I don't think it is radical to suggest that *they* would be much more suited to holding meetings with students, engaging them more fully with college life, and giving more useful advice than a somewhat randomly assigned fellow.

The reason that I advocate for these changes is not because I think that welfare staff are incompetent, not because I do not believe in welfare, and not because I want to escape tutor meetings (I promise). In fact it's quite the opposite. Engaging with welfare has demonstrated to me that there *are* people who genuinely care about others and *do* try desperately to reach out to those in need. But before we are able to reach out, the welfare system needs to inspect the terrible mess within. It is only when roles are clarified and information displayed clearly, that the effort of individuals can shine through to those in need. Behind the headlines which disparage the wellbeing system and its staff, there is one quiet actor who requires more blame: bureaucracy.

“Had I been subsumed by the dark machinery of Cambridge's mental health service?”



Ruby Cline is a third-year English student at Murray Edwards College

## Maybe Lent isn't so bad after all

Ruby Cline

Michaelmas brings the sparkle and the new, and Easter is swamped with exam preparation. But what exactly does Lent hold? It can feel like very little. As Michaelmas' exhilaration fades, Lent is when the fatigue sits in. Very few people begin Lent refreshed and ready. After all, Christmas and New Year's, when lots of us can hardly distinguish between being drunk or hungover, are barely behind us. Waking up on the first day of term already yawning isn't a good sign and feels particularly brutal on a January morning. Colder and darker than what comes after, yet emptier than the overwhelming term before, Lent is unpopular. However, I think that Lent is also a sorely underestimated term. Precisely what makes Lent difficult also gives it potential; the opportunity to make changes in your habits and lifestyle and set yourself up for a great rest of the year.

Lent offers you the opportunity to set up habits which will help you when you're not at your best. You still have an echo of the motivation of the beginning of Michaelmas, without being put through the paces of Freshers' Week which will likely have thrown you off your schedule for the rest of term. The

“Without the glitter and glamour of Michaelmas, reality can set in – with yourself and with the people around you”

stress of the incoming Easter term is in the distance, motivating you to face the facts and realise that going to bed at 3am every night simply isn't sustainable. The final push comes from the beginning of a new year, which lets you feel like you're starting something exciting and new even when you're going back to the same old flat. Lent is the only term where I've been able to go in with intentions about changing my habits – reading more, changing my friendships, getting up earlier – and actually consistently kept to those changes.

Additionally, Lent is the least time-pressured term for most people. Termcards shrink a little in comparison to Michaelmas now that freshers don't need to be persuaded by the potential for dinners and drinks to join Kickboxing-Amateur-Dramatic-Wine-Tasting-Matchmaking-Bleeding-Hearts Society (CUKADWTMBHS for short, of course).

Besides, even the events that are running seem far less appealing when it's dark and rainy at 5pm. Exams are still a long way off for most. And since Michaelmas has usually outlined whatever horrific essay deadlines are expected for this academic year, you're less likely to end up with unpleasant surprises in your schedule. Used to filling every moment

with revision, some students point to this spare time and fret, believing that it's only a hectic calendar between them and existential despair. But Lent's more relaxed structure means that stress doesn't have to be your constant primary emotion. Perhaps you can even – and I don't mean to be too bold here – *enjoy* your degree a little, remembering why you're spending thousands of pounds and three years (at least) of your life to obtain it. Lent is a fantastic term for real, actual, self-paced learning.

Speaking of learning, one of the most widely discussed features of Lent is the reality checks that come throughout it. Speak to any third-year and they will have some horrific story about a flatmate they discovered ate raw chicken out of the packet or a screaming match they had with their Freshers' Week best friend. Without the glitter and glamour of Michaelmas, reality can set in – with yourself and with the people around you. Perhaps you realise with some time away from Cambridge that actually, going out four times a week makes you miserable. Coming back to your loved ones at home may not have been the romantic reunion you expected (I can name at least six people, myself included, who broke up with their long-distance partners dur-

ing freshers' winter holidays). Maybe your flatmates aren't so splendid. Lent is when the chill feels chilly and the bad feels worse. This is tough, I'll admit it.

If it helps, the Lent term blues are not unique to Cambridge. Students from universities all across the country return home at Easter touting the same message: "You'll never *believe* what happened this term." It may not be enjoyable to get through at the time, but these reality checks are vital for the rest of your time at university. Those same third years who told you about their flatmate's unfortunate chicken habits likely don't regret a thing, because wiping away the false glitter of life at university lets you find the real joy underneath. And I promise you, they are so relieved they aren't living with raw-chicken-girl again next year. Lent gives you clarity, which is vital before choices for the future need to be made with room ballots and May Ball tickets around the corner.

With all this in mind, I hope you find the good in the bad and the light in the dark. Use this term for good. Personally, I'll be spending my spare time – when not reflecting on the miserable realities of the world – to finish *The Crown*. Maybe you can use it for something a bit more valuable.





Hugh Jones is a third-year English student at Magdalene College

# Cambridge students don't realise how lucky they are

**D**o you wear your college puffer outside Cambridge? I didn't think so. Broadcasting the fact that you're at Cambridge is just too embarrassing. I'm now a withered third-year, but am yet to find the right tone of voice in which to answer the question "So where are you at uni?"

There is something about the Cambridge brand that only seems cool if you're an embarrassing alumnus tormenting your offspring by loudly reminiscing about "When I was at Caius..." Part of the awkwardness comes from the way people react when they find out you study here – the immediate assumption that you must be Einstein born again can be rather off-putting, especially if you're an English student who has obtained Oxbridge status purely because you have strong feelings about poems.

Still, I don't think that's the whole story. Saying "Cambridge" doesn't just make people think of Watson and Crick, or Stephen Hawking. It conjures Carols from King's, formal hall by candle-light, and posh blokes in gowns talking about rowing while crossing Trinity Great Court. In other words, admitting you go to this university is awkward because Cambridge is old, rich, and big on traditions. It looks like a caricature of the British establishment – and, famously, there is nothing students hate more than the establishment.

Within Cambridge, I think this attitude explains why students tend

*"An Oxbridge education is one of the few things left in Britain that actually are world-beating"*

to be so suspicious of the people running the University and its colleges. Talking through my plan for this column at the *Varsity* social, most people agreed that they wouldn't call the University actively malevolent. Yet if you listen to the way students here talk about Cambridge, you could be forgiven for thinking that it was run by a cabal plotting to undermine student welfare.

Take the Freshers' Week power cuts at Wolfson College earlier this term. I am sure they were inconvenient, but was there really a need to accuse the college of gaslighting? Hardly – yet this kind of language is pretty standard whenever students (myself included) criticise this university.

There is a chain of reasoning which starts with the fact that Cambridge is the richest university in Europe, over-stuffed with suspiciously old and posh fellows and its vari-

turn off the heating to save money?" as one disgruntled student did in a recent article about Lucy Cavendish reducing the number of hours during which rooms will be heated.

There are several possible answers to the rhetorical question. Maybe Lucy Cav is thinking about the planet, not its budget – as I type I'm pretty sure the radiator running in my empty room is eroding what's left of our ice caps. Even if it is a financial decision, fixing colleges' money problems isn't really the job of the central University.

Such responses, however, miss the point. For many, the fact that Cambridge's Wikipedia page reads "Endowment: £9.326 billion" means that any real or perceived failure that happens even loosely on the University's watch is a moral outrage. One imagines Deborah Prentice in a gold-plated office in Senate House, burning £50 notes and gorging on swan – while poor, blue-fingered students shiver at their desks.

The truth is that Cambridge's money, prestige, and age don't make its administrators dastardly defenders of the establishment any more than they make its students Thatcher-loving Waugh-enthusiasts. Cambridge is a massive force for good. An Oxbridge education is one of the few things left in Britain that actually are world-beating. As Cambridge students, we are protected from the real world (and the rental market) by the security of college walls; thanks to the Cambridge Bursary, a frankly incredible amount of financial support is available even for those at less magnifi-

cantly-endowed colleges. Last year the University announced it was spending almost £5 million pounds on revitalising the Counselling Service, meaning that as NHS mental health provision flounders, Cambridge students essentially have private therapy on tap.

Cambridge does more than just coddle its students, though – according to data published earlier this year, Cambridge contributes almost £30 billion per year to the UK economy, supporting more than 86,000 jobs. People around the world benefit from discoveries that researchers here make.

I know that writing this makes me sound like the kind of university spokesperson that *Varsity* journos usually terrorise. Of course, Cambridge is often incompetent, especially at the college or faculty level. It often gets things wrong, and when it does then students should protest – I'm not advocating silent martyrdom here. The University also has all sorts of obligations – to free speech, to future generations of students, to preserving academic standards – which might stop it from giving current undergraduates what they want. Arguing over how Cambridge balances those obligations is obviously a legitimate subject for debate.

Still, our university is run by good people with good intentions, doing their best to make our lives better – and largely succeeding. To villainise these people because some of them happen to inhabit wood-panelled offices is a shameful capitulation to lazy stereotypes. It is also scandalously ungrateful.



▲ LOUIS ASHWORTH

Hugh Jones



Faye Harrison is a second-year History student at Sidney Sussex College

# Social smoking isn't about image - it's about community

**W**hy do some people smoke? Most smokers I encounter do so in a strictly 'social' capacity, and I too largely fit within this category. I hardly ever smoke alone, and while a fag (or three) outside the library during an essay crisis never goes amiss, my pack-a-fortnight policy hardly qualifies as an addiction, so why even bother? For me it's neither the nicotine, nor how cool I look, but the company that keeps me running to the off-licence every two weeks.

On a random Tuesday in Easter term, past 4am, my closest friends and I were sitting in a tied-up punt smoking. There was no one around, and we were wearing mismatched pyjamas telling each other our most embarrassing secrets. We had long forgotten to care about personal image. I was practically making the boat rock with how much I was shivering, but I also laughed the hardest I ever have. Trying to light a friend's cigarette with your own half-smoked one two inches from their eyelashes is an intimate, almost romantic experience, even though we eventually had to admit defeat and just let them use a lighter. This random night, one of my most treas-

ured memories that thereafter became tradition, only came about because of a sheepish text: "I can't sleep, want to go for a fag?" I didn't make these friends because I smoke, but our shared habit has given us the excuse to spend more time with each other.

Some of the closest bonds I have made at Cambridge have been born in the MASH smoking area: a friendship is cemented when a stranger lets you skive one. A ten minute conversation is traded for a cigarette, and who knows what will be exchanged after? I fall a little bit more in love with my best friend every time he shows off his cigarette case to the whole Revs queue, drunkenly opening it up to offer one to our favourite bouncer. The metallic-y silver case is an extension of his image, yes, but also makes you feel special when he saves you the last one inside. "Let's go for a fag" is his code for "I have something outrageous to gossip with you about", and there's no better place for a debrief than cramped together in a pub garden while being harassed for filters.

Being a social smoker also gives you remarkable levels of insight into your relationships. My love language is quality time, and insisting on having a second

cigarette because whoever you're smoking with isn't quite done yet is perhaps the ultimate demonstration of friendship: It says "sure, I'll further increase my risk of getting cancer just to spend another five minutes with you". My smoke breaks have been known to last over an hour with the right company, and once resulted in an impromptu La Raza trip despite having two essays overdue. If your fingers are too cold to roll one, how much effort a friend puts into crafting the perfect rollie can tell you just how much they value you. If I let you use my favourite pink lighter from Benidorm, it means that I'd take a bullet for you. If I offer you one of those plastic sparkwheel lighters, it means that I couldn't care less whether you live or die.

Some people argue that Cambridge students smoke to distance themselves from their middle class families, but I'm never more ready to quit altogether than when I feel like I'm letting them down. My supervisor catching me smoking made me worry what he must think of my background and my parents. When a date told me she can't stand to be around smokers for the disregard they must have for their lives, I couldn't help but imagine her looking in disgust at my

mother, freshly permed and living life to the fullest, lighting one up when she was my age. We didn't go for a second date.

Most of my friends from home smoke, and not in a Parisian way. Having a casual fag on the walk to the Eagle reminds me of them. When I think of my circle of social smokers, I think of their charisma, their humour, their generosity, and I start to worry less about looking unprofessional. Smoking may convey a particular image, but the sense of community it brings runs deeper than this. I don't smoke because I hate my parents; I smoke because I love my friends.

*"Trying to light a friend's cig two inches from their face is an almost romantic experience"*



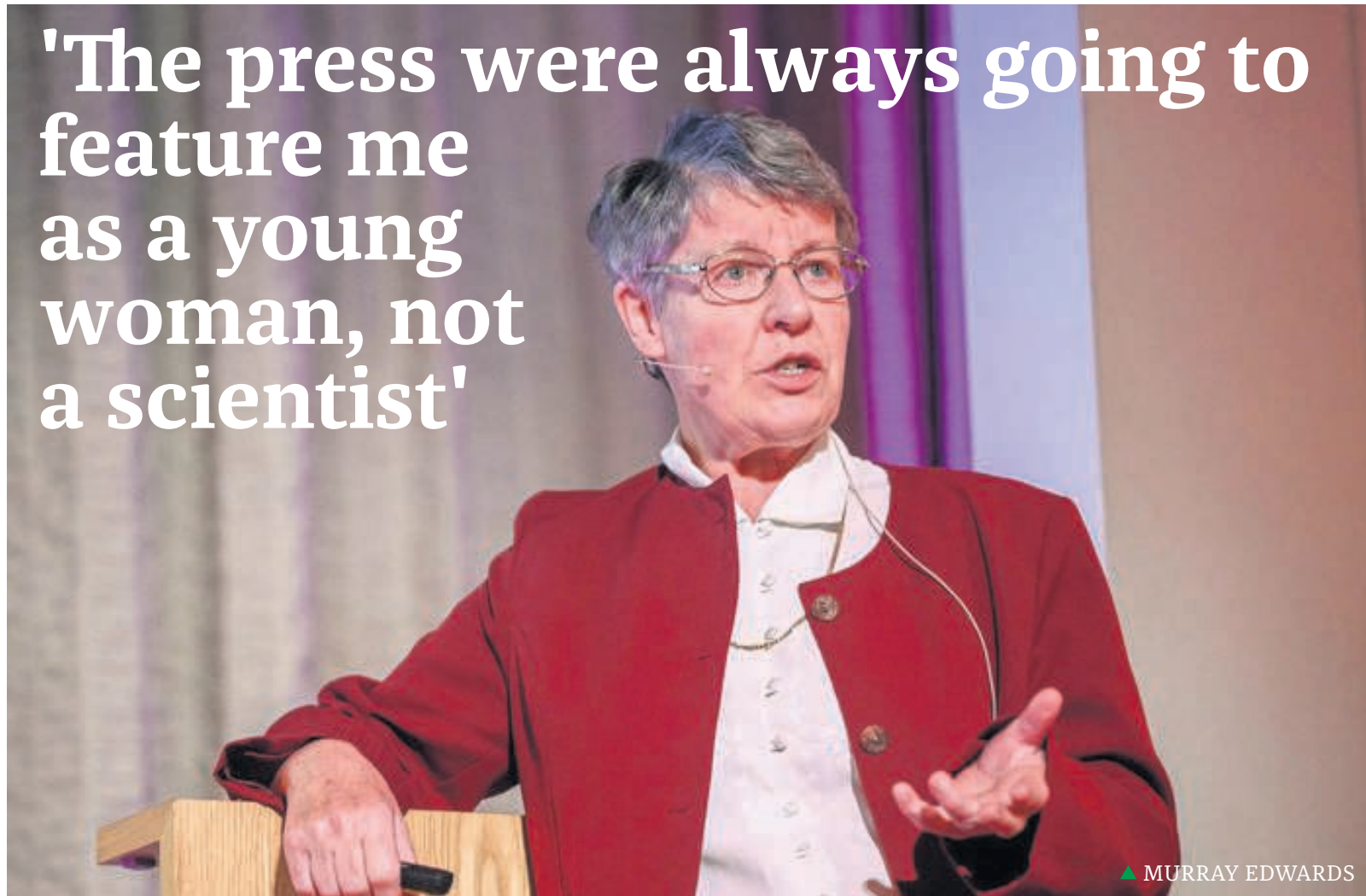
▲ IONA BOYER

Faye Harrison



# Science

## 'The press were always going to feature me as a young woman, not a scientist'



▲ MURRAY EDWARDS

## Anouk Waller-Sargent speaks to Dame Jocelyn Bell Burnell, discussing her Nobel prize controversy, imposter syndrome, and life as a woman in STEM in the 1960s

When someone mentions Dame Jocelyn Bell Burnell, the first thing most people think of is her contribution to astrophysics – she was part of the otherwise all-male team who here, in Cambridge, discovered slight variations in her data, which were later named “pulsars” (the colloquial term for pulsating radio stars). Bell Burnell explains: “When I think of what pulsars mean to me, it’s kind of the whole experience of being a female grad student in Physics in Cambridge.” She tells me that despite “being a very small minority” the New Hall College (now

Murray Ed-

wards) postgraduate community pulled together and supported one another.

When Bell Burnell came to Cambridge following her undergraduate degree at the University of Glasgow, it was one of only two places in the UK that offered the Astrophysics course she embarked on. “I’d been told by other students not to apply to a place called Jodrell Bank, for they’d never take a woman. I applied anyway, and they never responded. So I thought, this is them not taking a woman.” Bell Burnell reflects how she was plagued by imposter syndrome throughout her academic life, but particularly as a postgraduate student at Cambridge: “I thought I’d never get in. I put an application into Cambridge just in case and hugely to my surprise, and somewhat to my alarm, got it.”

When asked about her proudest achievement, she answers modestly: “Discovering pulsars was quite important,” and “I’ve actually done quite a bit of work about women in science.” In 2018, she was awarded the Special Breakthrough prize: “it was \$3 million [...] And if you get a large sum of money, you need to have a scheme for what you’re going to do with it very, very quickly.” After talking with her son and his wife, both professors, “we came up with this scheme that would give the money to the physicist professional body to fund grad students from different backgrounds.” Supporting female physicists was at the top of her agenda: “There’s a lot of very inspiring young women out there who do amazing things and, in spite of all sorts of things, get to do a PhD in Physics,” she remarks.

The inequality surrounding women’s chances of receiving prizes, especially the Nobel prize, for the work they have contributed, is no secret today. It’s why Rosalind Franklin’s name has recently been added onto the bottom of the plaque by the Eagle – this being, according to Bell Burnell, “extremely powerful”, as it shows how passionate the public are about changing the the historical

“**I have probably done better than if I had won a Nobel prize and then nothing else**

narrative to include women. It’s also why there’s widespread controversy over whether Bell Burnell should have been awarded the Nobel prize for physics for the discovery of pulsars alongside her male supervisors. But Bell Burnell is not bitter. “I think, looking back, I have probably done better than if I had won a Nobel prize and then nothing else.” She goes recalls meeting a fellow female physicist who subsequently won a Nobel prize, who “was scared that I’d be angry. Because she’d got it and I hadn’t. And I wasn’t!”

For Bell Burnell, it is important to re-

tain the idea that all women are connected by shared experience. When she was being interviewed after the Nobel prize was given, she recounts how “there was a persistent pattern in that they talked science with my supervisor, and wanted to know my hair colour, or, you know, my bust, waist and hip measurements.” There is clear frustration in her voice as she tells me, powerfully, that “however hard I tried to be a scientist, the press were always going to feature me as a young woman.” Despite having an all-female fellowship at her college – “all women who had probably struggled professionally to get to be a Cambridge don” – the physics professors were male, as well as the majority of the physics department. This came at quite a personal expense: “When you have to stand up to male physicists, there’s a temptation to wilt.” It was therefore crucial to meet other women: “It’s good to find other people who have the same kind of mindset as you have.”

The struggles faced now by women at Cambridge are not too different from when Bell Burnell was a student. When I mention that many students still struggle with imposter syndrome, she seems disappointed, and recounts how “my attitude was that I was not fit to be here, that they made a mistake, and they are going to throw me out.” In terms of advice, Bell Burnell notes how “if the imposter syndrome is not crippling, it’s a good dynamic between you and your work because it keeps you trying.” For all women in STEM and beyond, take it from an extremely accoladed astrophysicist: “If you get this sort of opportunity, you may as well make the best of it.”

## Research Round up

Ananya Vijay catches you up on the science you’ve missed over Christmas

### The ‘north-south divide’; cause of difference in multiple sclerosis cases uncovered

Through a comprehensive analysis of the bones of nearly 5,000 humans, researchers have discovered the reason behind the prevalence of Alzheimer’s and multiple sclerosis in northern Europe. The genetic risk profile in the bones they studied (from humans living thousands of years ago) contained 233 genetic variants which increase the risk of MS by approximately 30%. The significance of studying the past is evident in this case, with Dr William Barrie at the University of Cambridge’s Department of Zoology emphasising that we are “the recipients of ancient immune systems in a modern world”. The team plans to use the DNA profiles to conduct further research into other disorders such as schizophrenia and Parkinson’s.

### Mystery minerals in Venusian clouds discovered

Researchers have emulated the solar flare spectrum in Venusian clouds, utilising light sources to examine the spectroscopic features of these minerals to corroborate the results at Rimmer’s FlareLab at the Cavendish Laboratory. Clancy Zhijian Jiang from the Department of Earth Sciences confirmed that the “patterns and level of absorption” were “consistent with the dark UV patches observed in Venusian clouds”. This discovery paves the way for future missions to explore Venus’s atmosphere, a planet which we don’t have much information about despite its proximity to Earth.

### Battling the climate crisis by tackling inequality

Researchers at the University of Cambridge and the University of Oxford contend in a report published in *Nature Climate Change* that an issue standing in the way of achieving tangible progress is inequality, something which they define in terms of finances, political influence and the ease of access to low-carbon alternatives. They believe the main focus should be on introducing policies and opportunities to increase the accessibility to low-carbon options for all income brackets. For example, plant-based alternatives for meat are currently more expensive than meat options, creating less incentive to make the switch. However, they don’t dispute the requirement for interventions for people with higher incomes. Still, Dr Emma Garnett argues that this provides a person with a greater capability to offset the emissions created. In conclusion, some of the suggested modifications are better urban planning, including pedestrian pathways, low-carbon meals subsidised by employers, and greater tax rates.







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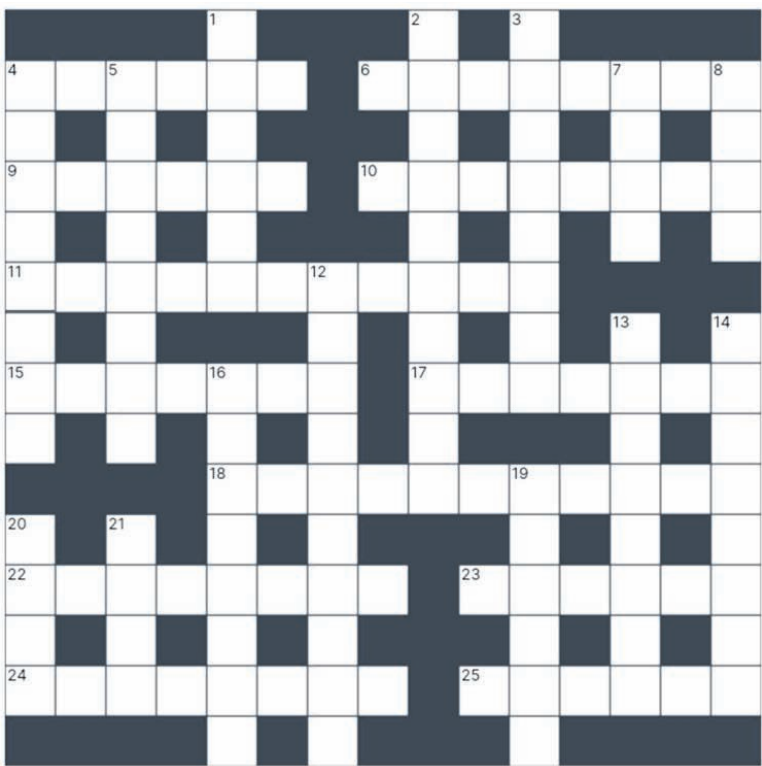
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# The Smoking Area

## Varsity Crossword



## Quick by Wombat

- Across**
- 4 One who had a bad year in 2008 (6)

6 Upset (8)

9 Even if (6)

10 Had a leisurely walk (8)

11 He helps you across the road (8,3)

15 7 might suggest something's this (7)

17 Endure (7)

18 Tickety-boo (5,2,4)

22 Employing workers (8)

23 In ward (anag) (6)

24 Used to be (8)

25 Hard drinking Greek spirits (6)
- Down**
- 1 Famous banking family (6)

2 Man to taunt (anag) (10)

3 Was next to (8)

4 Fighting (especially in a pub) (8)

5 Elusive (8)

7 The lifeline of Egypt (4)

8 Extinct land bound creature (4)

12 Helpfully (10)

13 Where you might see a show (8)

14 When you might have lie ins (8)

16 Esoteric (8)

19 Ancient Egyptian beetle (6)

20 Yeah, right! (2,2)

21 Beautiful (4)

## Cryptic by Tiro

- Across**
- 4 Muck up at rear's horrible smelling (6)

6 Mark's hosting nearly half of holiday for gifted students (8)

9 Cry about losing energy for article illustrating powerful tool (6)

10 These military people generate wind power! (3,5)

11 Manufacture queerer mint? This is a must (11)

15 Toilets? 'arry said you're in college

17 College attempt to fence in tech support (7)

18 Asian lad began his puzzling (11)

22 Modification by soldiers sitting with central ingredients of Soviet Russians' autonomy (8)

23 Rise! Because Church's non denomi-national at first (6)

24 Nadal, perhaps, wants this with net and balls too? (8)

25 Hesitate twice hiding as cleaner (6)
- Down**
- 1 Italian city: all round, I love it, no Ecstasy required! (6)

2 Western love for America mistaken (10)

3 Shrapnel out to infect (8)

4 Loss of energy and ability, with ap-proximately never-ending UTI (5,3)

5 Managed to stitch into back-to-front quilt. At peace. (8)

7 Drivers surround ancient city that supplies energy (4)

8 Place in Ely, perhaps, visited at last (4)

12 Where one is in disguise as Presi-dent? (10)

13 Joints needing rest after working with trendy youngsters (8)

14 Some Aminoacyl in derivatives ex-pressed in boiling tube, perhaps (8)

16 Material of seat boss interfered with (8)

19 Something sought after about French knight -- elegance, to begin with (6)

20 Portion of swallowed rum: this is for beating (4)

21 Father makes a comeback, chasing drug, as always! (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.

DO YOU WANT TO SET A CROSSWORD, NUM-BER PUZZLE, OR SOMETHING ELSE? EMAIL MJU29@CAM.AC.UK TO GET INVOLVED.



## The Taming of the Chancellor

By Alex Myall

2011. For the first time in 164 years, the ceremonial position of Chancellor of the University of Cambridge was up for a contested election. Following the res-ignation of Prince Phillip as chancellor, Lord Sainsbury (politician and former chairman of the eponymous supermar-ché) was selected as the official candidate by the University high ups, expecting an easy victory. However, a local grocer - un-happy with the expansion of Sainsbury's to Mill Road - protested by entering the race; opening the curtains on both the bizarre and corrupt nature of University elections.

Once it made the news that nomina-tions weren't technically closed, a Face-book group of alumni put forward Shake-spearean actor Brian Blessed - without

his knowledge - and was delighted when he embraced the opportunity. His cam-paign website is still available online, where he highlighted his background as a state-educated coal miner's son, and put improving access at the heart of his campaign, eventually described by *Varsity* as a "runaway favourite" (coming alarmingly close to the official candidate nominated by the University).

Despite Blessed's earnestness (or per-haps because of it) the election increas-ingly highlighted everything ridiculous about Cambridge. Technically anyone with a fake MA ('Cambridge Master of Arts') could vote, as long as they were wearing their gowns. In reality, the elec-tion was swung by modern capitalist donors - voting staff were encouraged to

vote for the university's official candi-date, in departmental emails that noted his status as the university's largest single benefactor. Varsity questioned whether this was "an unfair election?" - and it remains a worthwhile question.

Despite the switch to a proportional Single Transferable Vote system for the election, there was only a 2.5% turnout (5558 votes out of an estimated voter base of 200,000); we can assume these were mainly coached staff, as although alumni had the right to vote, they were not informed, unless they discovered an obscure University website page. So, de-spite the democratic facade of hustings and an election, the fact that Sainsbury won with 52% of first-round votes is hardly a surprise. Our chancellor was always going to be (Lord) David Sains-bury: a wealthy benefactor, chosen by a committee of University higher-ups, to attract more wealthy benefactors rather than someone who might have better represented the interests of current and graduate members of the University.

## Easy Sudoku

	1				9	6	4	5
	7	9		5	6	3	1	2
	4	6	1	2				8
4	6	2	5		1		9	
3	5	1		7		2	6	4
			6	4			5	3
9			3		5	4		
		5	2	1	4	7	8	9
1	2	4	8					

## Hard Sudoku

	6		1	2	4			8
4				8		5	6	3
	9	8	6	3	5			2
	5	4			3		8	7
3		1	8		9			4
9			5		6	3	2	
	7	9		6			3	
1		5		9	8	2		
	4		3		1	8	7	

**EDITORS** Michael Hennessey & Daniel Hilton [editor@varsity.co.uk](mailto:editor@varsity.co.uk)

**DEPUTY EDITORS** Eric Williams, Romilly Norfolk & Jude Crawley [deputyeditor@varsity.co.uk](mailto:deputyeditor@varsity.co.uk)

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**INVESTIGATIONS** Ella McCartney [investigations@varsity.co.uk](mailto:investigations@varsity.co.uk)

**COMMENT** Katie Heggs, Omar Burhanuddin & Gwenno Robinson [opinion@varsity.co.uk](mailto:opinion@varsity.co.uk)

**FEATURES** Joshua Shortman, Lauren Welsby-Riley & Isabella Dowden [features@varsity.co.uk](mailto:features@varsity.co.uk)

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**SCIENCE** Aisling Sheppard & Sam Hudson [science@varsity.co.uk](mailto:science@varsity.co.uk)

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**ARTS** Laila Hussey & Flóra Kiss [arts@varsity.co.uk](mailto:arts@varsity.co.uk)

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**HEAD OF VISUAL** Anna Teke

**CHIEF SUB-EDITOR** Rafal Wilowski [subeditor@varsity.co.uk](mailto:subeditor@varsity.co.uk)

**ASSOCIATE EDITORS** Isabel Dempsey, Taneesha Datta, Hannah Gillott, Erik Olsson, Famke Veenstra-Ashmore & Nick Bartlett [associate@varsity.co.uk](mailto:associate@varsity.co.uk)

**BUSINESS MANAGER** Mark Curtis [business@varsity.co.uk](mailto:business@varsity.co.uk)

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# vulture.





# Getting scholarly in the tub

'Work from home' is so last year. **Ines Mugbar-Spencer** finds that working in the bath is the perfect blend of sudsy and scholarly.

I love smoking cigarettes. The rush of sharpened concentration. The bitter stained tongue taste. The Rock'N'Roll-of-it-all. Hell! If they weren't addictive, I'd smoke them all the time.

These are the sort of hard-hitting insights that appear to me in the steamy mist of the bath – bubbled or otherwise. You can naturally imagine my surprise when a friend told me his university peer confessed to an absurd ablution habit. Upon being quizzed on why he was so appalling at responding to texts, the mite murmured, almost miserably, that he spent upwards of four hours a day tub-side. Why? 'It's the only place I can get any work done'.

Incroyable! Mad! But there is something mesmerically memorable about the concept. For starters – is bathtub-essay-bashing some sort of insane commitment to productivity, or it's inverse – an aesthete excess to agitate even Louis XVI? Rubber-ducky-diligence or decadence? And does it even work?

Fortunately, my current student digs have only bathtubs – which I have embraced with 1960s hair-rolling-cigarette-smoking gusto. The lab for this experiment is primed. However, my dips until now have been a refuge away from work – a soak of solitude. In a world where my work has wormed its way into my bedside, did I really want my laptop accompanying my lathering too?

Outlook notifications are what comes to mind at the mention of coitus interruptus, and now I'm meant to entertain them even while loving my loofa?

Firstly, there are practical considerations. As biscuit-crumbed as my computer is, I doubt it would benefit from a soak, or my soggy paws woman-handling it. Hmmm. One MDF laden trip back from B&Q and I have begun to construct a work-from-bathroom contraption. It balances precariously on a wicker laundry basket. The thrill is palpable. Who says Cambridge is a lessened Uni-Experience?

I have additionally garnished my set up with a martini. No olives are haunting the gyp so I've

**“Push past the anxiety that your Apple product will become a product of Atlantis**

improv-ed with capers and a generous splash of brine. Let's just say there's a reason the caper martini is NOT a

stalwart staple of the Soho scene. Further, the steam has carried the caper scent with great enthusiasm. I feel as though I'm stepping into a sardine simulator.

Let's ignore my inadvertent *Dennis the Menace* style bath bombs – and get down to bubbly-brass tub-tax: can you focus while fricasseeing?

Yes! Surprisingly. Push past the anxiety that your Apple product will become a product of Atlantis and you'll find an odd flow taking over you. I suppose it all makes sense: baths aid in de-stressing and in getting your blood circulation all excited. Legendary chess Grandmaster and World Champion Bobby Fischer was seen as unusual for a multitude of increasingly unpleasant reasons, but his commitment to athletics despite his cerebral chess playing attracted much press in the 60s. In conversation with talk show titan Dick Cavett (I know) he claimed he exercised with so much vigour in order that, during 6-hour sedentary chess matches, his cardiovascular system was primed to pump blood to his brain. Is bathing the short-cut?

The bath also forces your shot-out limbic system to calm down. Then again, the typing tizzy of essay-writing does spike whatever thing produces cortisol. So, on that front, maybe the bath is only a net-neutral space – algebraic cancellation between strain and relaxation? The sudden return of serotonin to my slovenly student body is welcome, either way.

If you'd like to try this at home, here are some words from the wise (and washed!):

Careful with the temp. Don't Icarus too close to the soporific side-effects of a nice boiling bath.

You will hit peak-flow and then suddenly realise that the water has cooled. Splash back in some scalding waves, and then promptly have your computer die on you. Charge ahead!

You're going to want to be neurotic about wet paws on nice expensive electric-abacuses (this is what my boomer father calls laptops). Keep your towel behind your head as both a pillow and a tool to occasionally dry your ever-pruning fingers.

Might I further suggest you transition from a solid hour of steamrolling work to a proper sudsy sulk? Anyone who's ever had the displeasure of knowing me knows that I'd hate to advocate for anything even resembling hard work. Clatter at your keyboard, quaff some wine, and then allow your laptop to return to it's umbilical-cable to recharge – and let yourself recharge.

◀ FLICKR/JIM KILLOCK/WIKIMEDIA COMMONS/HECTOR BOSSANGE/ABBOT ACADEMY

## Recipe corner



## Smashed cucumber salad with elevated scrambled eggs

by Charlotte Knorzer

### Ingredients

- ① 90g or roughly ½ cup white rice
- ② 3 eggs
- ③ ½ large cucumber
- ④ 1 small garlic clove
- ⑤ 1 green onion
- ⑥ 3 tbsp soy sauce
- ⑦ 1 tbsp rice vinegar
- ⑧ 2 tsp sesame oil
- ⑨ 1 tbsp neutral cooking oil

### Method

① Thoroughly wash your rice and cook according to the instructions on the box.

② While the rice is cooking, finely chop your garlic and thinly slice the green onion, separating the greens and whites.

③ Smash your cucumber with a heavy object until it opens on the sides. I recommend a rolling pin, but the back of a particularly frustrating book would work. (I've tried this before, and it tastes the same). Cut into bite-sized pieces.

④ Add the whites of the green onion, chopped garlic, 2 tbsp soy sauce, 1 tsp sesame oil, rice vinegar, and a teaspoon of sugar to this. Mix well. Don't let the salad sit out too long, as the cucumbers will release water, diluting the sauce.

⑤ Beat your eggs, lightly salt them, and pour them into a coated pan with some neutral oil. Once the edges start setting, use a spatula to push the cooked egg into the centre of the pan. Don't stir; just continue to push the cooked parts around until big ribbons of cooked egg have formed in the pan. Once the eggs are almost done, let them sit for another minute before taking them out.

⑥ Place the eggs on top of the cooked rice, and pour over 1 tsp of sesame oil and 1 tbsp of soy sauce. Garnish with the remaining green onions and serve with cucumber salad.



# Notebook: packing my life into boxes

**Rose Dolan** packs and unpacks what it means to live your life through suitcases

It's been a week since the countdown to return began. A week since we were leaning against rattling Tube doors, ambitiously calculating whether we could realistically see each other just once more. 'You go back on Tuesday? Maybe Tuesday morning?' It's also been a week since I stopped putting clothes away after they came out of the wash and began writing my thank you cards to a slow morning in a double bed, a hob that doesn't turn off every 10 minutes, and a regular -sized toaster.

But now there's just 24 hours left on the clock and it's the same as ever. Somewhat the last one standing, with the majority of my friends having returned to their university towns, I sit on the floor of my childhood bedroom, a small pile of clothes in front of my crossed legs. It's a starting point, I tell myself, and think back to a friend a week prior wishing for 'just a few more days!' A few extra days under my belt, I'm wishing for the same.

I begin to stack the pile tenuously, unhooking my most worn pieces from my wardrobe, and laying them flat on top, hanger still attached. It's the obvious pieces that come first. If I've worn it most days this holiday, of course it's language class worthy. I

move my attention around my room, impressing myself with my system, and continue to throw my favourite pieces onto the pile, now about calf height. This fleece will envelop my limbs when I'm reunited with my bike, and of course the jeans that seem to work for every occasion get to make the journey between home

and CB3.

Briefly waylaid by reading a childhood diary (I wanted to be a perfume maker when I was younger, or a singer that only sang the choruses of songs), I'm back on track. This time the selection process is slightly more challenging. Perhaps this will be the term I manage to read fiction?

The mask I acquired after my New

Year's party might come in handy at some point, and of course the February winds will be harsh enough for me to wear that hat I haven't touched in years. Add it to the pile.

The pile is growing and becoming a layered assortment of my belongings, a patchwork of colours and textures acquired from age 15 onwards. The foundations are solid. The fleece can hold it up. The coloured pencils I tell myself I'll find time to use are

somewhat more precarious, but reassure me that, should creative inspiration come to me in Week Five, I'll be well-equipped.

My final task is to zip this pile up into a suitcase, a check in label from my summer holidays still attached



▲EMILY LAWSON-TODD

“

**The mask from my New Year's party might come in handy**

to the handle. The label reads something like Samsonite, but perhaps it would be better described as '15kg of my favourite things acquired from aged 15 onwards that leave my room bare and get increasingly niche as you dig deeper'. I compress the pile and drag the heavily worn zip around its edges.

I will hold the pile by its metal handle, tight to my knees and let it rattle along Greater Anglia railways for another term. It will be deconstructed and rebuilt, unzipped and rehomed for a few more eight week residencies. I could get used to this.

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**Arts**

# The campus novel trap

**Felix Armstrong** argues that Cambridge internalises and preserves its own fictional stereotypes

**T**he campus novel is now so popular in our culture that it has become almost invisible: a transparent gloss on everything we consume, painted not only onto fiction but television and film. From *Normal People* to *Saltburn*, mainstream art is increasingly hemmed into the university campus, or, more often than not, the four corners of an Oxbridge court (or quad, for our neighbours across the M25).

Even if not by name, every consumer of culture is aware of the campus novel: any work of fiction taking place around a university or college, whose popularity seems to stem from its blend of coming-of-age stories with the intensity of student environments.

As our generation sees more

besides, so expect it from ourselves as the deadlines pile high, and the library books higher. Let's for all of our sakes hope that *Saltburn* fever dies fast, else we'd better use our shared

rooms more carefully.

This is not just to say that campus novels are good or that they accurately relate to the student experience.

Rather, I believe that the genre runs so close to the environment it fictionalises that the relationship has begun to flow both ways. Campus novels influence student life directly, as students and universities both play into, and allow for, their conventions.

The simplest example of Cambridge appealing to its own fictionalisation is the privilege within campus novels:

the way elite universities are portrayed as playgrounds for the gilded youth. A mere glance at recent headlines shows the University to be parodying its own campus novel stereotype. Adverts for a wine connoisseur

at Corpus, instructions for students to layer up with gilets, and defences of drinking club hazings prove that ours is a university which plays to the gallery.

Looking deeper into the mechanisms of campus novels further proves how Cambridge

trap. The two novels I've mentioned so far, alongside a stack of others (such as *Lucky Jim*, *Stoner*, and *Small World*) are patently male, representing a

“

**The conventions of the genre have seeped into our cultural consciousness**

FELIX ARMSTRONG

macho, tortured-artist view of academia and student life which, while obviously informed by our University, informs it too. The misogyny present in Cambridge is rightly still debated, for example with regards to the “Sidgwick girlie” stereotype, because our generation has been taught and retaught the supposedly

The same goes for many more conventions of the campus novel. The genre teaches that university-like Cambridge places isolation reigns (see *Stoner*), sexuality should be jacketed (*Tiepolo Blue*), and diversity is invisible (almost any campus novel could be named here, but take *Maurice*).

Such universities, then, are readers. They pick up the next paperback with

their face on it, and (even if subconsciously) emulate it. This campus novel trap means that elite

university culture is stuck in a loop, it has been internalised by our society and projected back onto these institutions.

This makes it ever easier for Cambridge to sit comfortably within the status quo, to act as the genre says it does, and forever will. While every student has enough reading on their plates, perhaps this leads us to read our own University that bit more intently, and to catch it when it's performing itself.

## Faux books

**Harmless room décor or a crime against literature?**

“Never judge a book by its cover”: this well-worn cliché has caused stigma about book-buying for years, yet what if a book's appearance is all you have to go on? The recent surge in ‘faux books’ (the French adjective attempting to add a touch of sophistication) has given new meaning to this phrase. Commercial markets are forcing us to do exactly what we are told not to.

As university students across the country move into their new rooms, books undoubtedly appear on many shelves. As an English student, I often feel pressure to have a ‘good’ selection of books on show, frequently scattering in a couple of volumes I never have, and probably never will, read. And of course colour coordination is paramount – the books must be aesthetically pleasing. What is the difference then, between using ‘real’ books for room décor, or ‘faux’ ones?

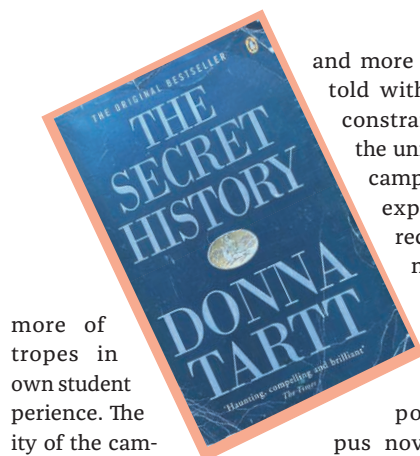
It is unsurprising that I am not particularly onboard with the idea of buying items that pretend to be books. But it would be hypocritical of me to preach that we should completely ignore books' aesthetic potential. I do get excited when a book I want to read also has a beautiful cover. When we intend to read the book, it seems harmless to also appreciate its cover. So why shouldn't we buy faux books for room décor? The aesthetic possibilities are endless, and we've all added books to our rooms for decoration.

One set of faux books I discovered included Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* and Melville's *Moby Dick*. While the set is beautiful, if the purpose of having these books is intellectual posturing, wouldn't it be embarrassing if a guest picked one up only to realise that it is not in fact a real book? Buying faux books is often cheaper, and so I can understand the appeal. Yet the paranoia of being caught out would be too much for me personally to handle.

Impressions aside, the surge of faux books could have a harmful effect on literature. The death of the novel has been discussed since the 20th century. The current reduction of books into decorative commodities is no doubt accelerating fears of the decline of the novel. We are already facing a generation less inclined to read, particularly in the face of modern technology, and the emergence of faux books will only exacerbate this decreasing appreciation of novels' creative and literary value, while making the already highly competitive publishing market even harder to navigate.

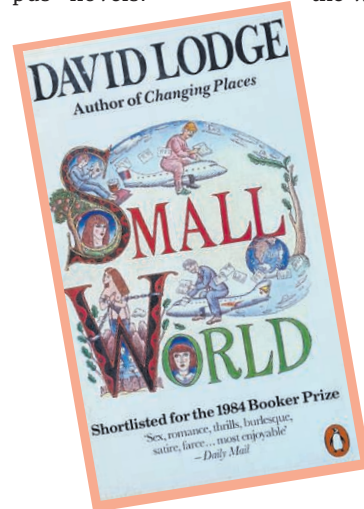
While I, like any book-buyer, appreciate their aesthetic value, faux books are not just harmless room décor. Their emergence risks accelerating the devaluation of novels' literary importance, creating a culture of solely judging books by their covers. Books do have an aesthetic impact; however, we should not allow this to supersede the primary reason for their existence: reading. Even if I have not read every book on my shelf, they are real, giving them the potential to be picked up and enjoyed. So, if you're contemplating adding books to your room as decoration, I urge you to go for ‘real’ ones – they're worth the investment.

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**Universities are readers. They pick up the next paperback with their face on it, flick through, and emulate it.**



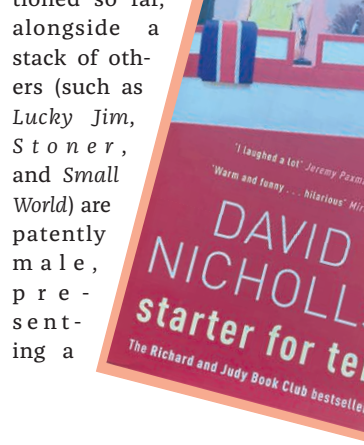
more of tropes in own student experience. The intensity of the campus novel has meant that the conventions of the genre have seeped into our cultural consciousness: we are aware of them, we expect them, whether or not we've read them ourselves.

We recognise the snobbery of the elite demonstrated in *Brideshead Revisited*, so expect it in the Pitt Club; we recognise the financial inequality of *The Secret History*, so expect it as more students are forced towards grants; we recognise the brooding loneliness of both of the above and many novels

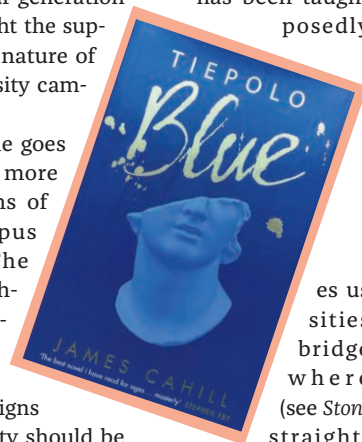


and more stories told within the constraints of the university campus, we expect to recognise more and its our experience. The campus novel has meant that the conventions of the genre have seeped into our cultural consciousness: we are aware of them, we expect them, whether or not we've read them ourselves.

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# In (between) the Emma Library

**Madeleine Clark** contemplates the silent conversations between art and the space it inhabits

Whenever I enter the Emmanuel College library, I feel unnervingly observed. The building, from the outside, is beautiful: at night the windows glow with stained glass fragments, giving the impression of a teenager's bedroom – warm, youthful, psychedelic, nocturnal – somewhere ‘in-between’ and out of time. Inside, however, traipsing up to the Fane Room, I feel a pair of eyes watching on intently. The stare of Jesus Christ bores into me.

It isn't because I haven't finished my essay. John Constable's altar painting, towering at the entrance of the library, depicts Mark 10, Christ blessing a child in his arms. The effect should be magical, miraculous, but it fails on me. All I see is the engorged head of the blessed baby, concerningly swollen and equally unimpressed – cleansed, but straining as though soiling its nappy. I find the subject humorous, perfect for the Emma library – grand but playful, with a rainbow of lightheartedness smirking across its authority. The painting's other subjects have their eyes awkwardly averted; I, too, walking up those stairs, pretend I can't see.

We often think about spaces being altered by the paintings they keep, but I wonder, rather, how paintings are altered by their spaces. Poetry blends into architecture through its careful handling of structure, architecture passes into painting, and all art aspires to the evolutionary acme that is music. Everything hums when we get close to it.

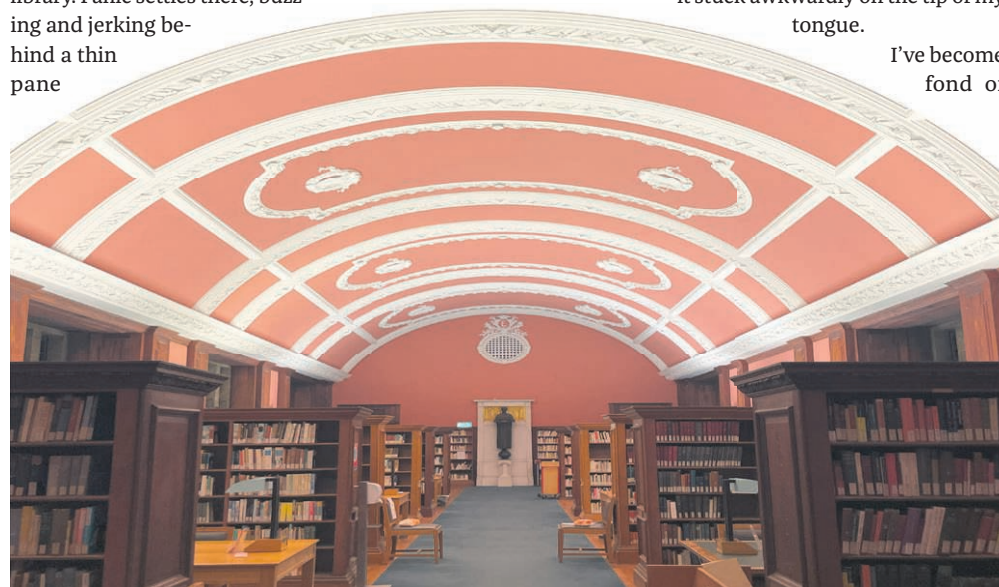
Art is often protean. I think about this as I climb the library's levels, pausing where a painting or

print is framed. A few of the pieces border on abstract – Victor Passmore's untitled 1972 etching shows a grey pockmarked page with scrawls and cracks across it like a broken window, or the frantic message of a stroke patient striving to be understood. I look at it sideways, dramatising my own confusion, and it begins to look like an open book. Abstract art, however, is anything but transparent. The disorientating piece requires actual disorientation to be ‘read’ – it is framed chaos – and I'm baffled, for a moment, why it would ever be put in a library. Panic settles there, buzzing and jerking behind a thin pane

of glass.

The top floor stairwell, too, is decorated with a piece by Sean McGuerny, and it is ugly, greasy, and impossible. Though the painting is titled ‘Country Field, Sligo’, friends in the past have called it a chicken, others a fist, and I personally see the lanes and bulbous houses of an off-yellow, American, suburban cul-de-sac. It cannot commit to its shape; it can barely commit to its colour. This kind of Rorschach art has never appealed to me. Like an evasive word, it bears only a suggestion of something, and leaves it stuck awkwardly on the tip of my tongue.

I've become fond of



these contained confusions. Initially they seemed incongruous with the silent college library, taunting stressed-out students with more unanswered questions. But now I find these paintings have borrowed the building's scholastic hush and feeling of timelessness – a silence so prominent, even the clocks stop ticking. Jacobs' London tableau, for instance, evokes the beauty of street lamps in darkness. The scene is an intersection beside Blackfriars Bridge – somewhere between places, even directions – and a sign pronounces angrily: ‘NO WAITING’. But a painting's form, halting a moment in time, rebels against this, and asks its viewer, too, for pause.

The ‘betweenness’ of the library space has been borrowed by these paintings like a book. Maurice Stubbs' 1967 landscape, showing a cool, white expanse of what could be sand or snow, is empty and inviting. The scribbles of Passmore's piece are equally inscrutable – somewhere between madness and expression – but they remind me that all penmarks are personal, and I find myself trying to translate its sprawling loops. I am even drawn, now, to the oily abstraction of McGuerny's piece, capturing the serenity of non-apprehension within its yellow swabs.

After an evening spent in the Emma library, I leave with my brain feeling just as inflamed as the Christ figure bidding me goodbye. But whenever I return, I see all of its art melting together, and am drawn back into its strange refuge.

◀ DANIEL HILTON

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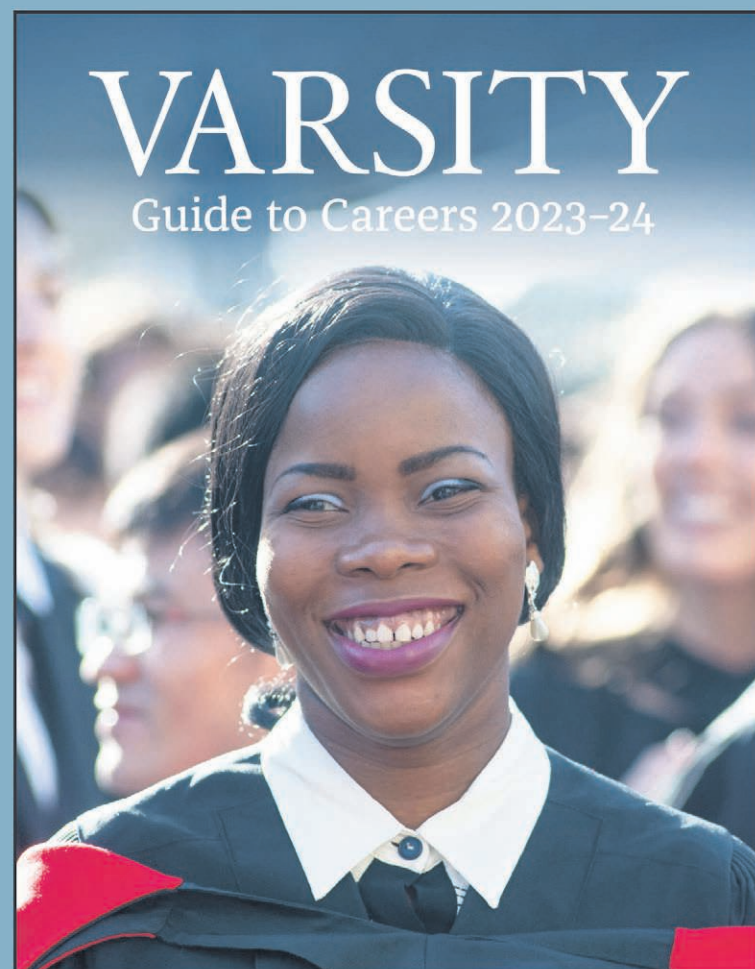
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# New Year, same wardrobe

It's the beginning of the year once again, and with the usual utterings of fresh starts, new beginnings, and New Year's resolutions, it's very easy to fall into the trap of post-Christmas sales which draw us into the never-ending cycle of consumption. The pressure is real. Whether you've picked up running as a new lifestyle change, and so simply must purchase head-to-toe new running gear, or find yourself staring into your chest of drawers thinking, 'I'm starting the year off with a brand-new, shiny personality, so I absolutely need a sparkly new wardrobe to match,' I feel the struggle.

But you don't need a fresh new wardrobe every time you get a little bored of the items you already own. The excitement of buying new clothes and eagerly anticipating their arrival in the post is a thrill that quickly dies down.

It's a vicious cycle that usually goes a little something like this: you order something new online; eventually, you hear a knock on the door – it's the postman – you run upstairs, tear open the parcel, try it on ... and slowly realise ... it's just not coming together as you imagined it in your head. In fact, it's AWFUL and you can't even return it because it's from Depop. You vow to never order anything online again. EVER.

A week goes by, and you find yourself in the same vicious cycle next time you need a dopamine hit. So, how can we create new looks and avoid this dissatisfaction? Well, I think that clothes should be fun – even the ones you've

owned for years. There's no point in buying new things when there's so much we can do with the items we already have.

So, how can you revamp your style without breaking the bank? It's all in the power of styling and accessorising.

Bored of a dress you already own? Try using a funky belt to alter the silhouette. Or perhaps add a long coat and tie in the waist to elongate the shape. Feel as though your clothes all look the same? Add a pair of coloured tights or lacy socks to add some interest to a tried-and-tested outfit. You know that jumper that you always wear? Find some brooches from a charity shop and pin them all over it. I believe that virtually anything shiny, glittery, or sparkly will revamp any outfit. So go crazy, the sky is the limit. Imagine you're a beautiful antique photo frame; of course, the artwork inside is important, but what can't be improved with the

addition of some ornate gold finishings? Layer up the jewellery and trinkets; it's not just magpies that adore shiny things.

Clips and pins can also be a great way to gather up material and create new shapes out of the clothes you've got. Got a dress that fits a bit loose? Create some ruching at the waist by pinning the fabric in pleats at the side. The most important thing is to have fun and experiment with what makes both you and your wardrobe light up again.

Apart from adding to an outfit with accessories, layering is something that never gets old. If you're less inclined to add glitz and glamour with jewellery and clips, layering is a practical way to elevate an outfit easily. Try putting a turtleneck under your favourite shirt or wearing a partially buttoned-up cardigan to expose the different textures, patterns, and materials beneath. Coloured or ribbed socks can also add a bit of pazazz when you need that pop of colour to freshen up a look.

Don't worry, I haven't forgotten the importance of shoes. Rather than buying a new pair, try mixing and matching your shoes with different outfits. The 'wrong shoe theory' warrants some

attention here; try pairing a feminine dress with a pair of chunky boots or wearing a pair of dainty ballet pumps with baggy jeans. If you own a pair of boots, try wearing them as your new go-to shoe of choice – you'd be surprised with how much this can help refresh an outfit if you're sick of wearing the same pair of trainers every day. But if this isn't your thing, don't fret! Have a go at swapping around the laces of your trainers to give them a fresh lease of life. Ribbons can come in handy here, but if you don't have them then adding any sort of clips onto your laces can be fun too.

Overcoming the feeling of boredom when your clothes no longer seem new is all about experimentation. Pair different items you wouldn't expect to go together and see if this can inspire any new

outfits.

I often feel like my clothes start to feel like a 'uniform' where I wear a very similar shade of jeans every day (only I can tell the difference), alongside some sort of knitted jumper, a scarf, and a leather jacket. There's nothing wrong with having tried-and-tested set outfits that you can easily rely on when you don't know what to wear, but equally, sometimes we all need that bit of inspiration to get us loving the ward-

robe we already have again. Invite a friend over and have some fun creating new outfit combinations together, and see where the power of accessories takes you.

So, when you next find yourself blankly staring at your open wardrobe, feeling as though your clothes are dull and uninspiring, remember that a new look does not need a new set of clothes. It's important to know your staple pieces and what looks good on you, but supplement this with accessories and have fun with layering and matching (or mismatching!) items together. Breathing new life into clothing doesn't have to mean making new purchases; it's all about your willingness to experiment.



Writer: Emily McDonagh  
Photographer: Heidi Atkins  
Models: Alice Mainwood, TJ Lotus, Fatima Mamood



# How I gave in to Cambridge's favourite boot

**Omar Burhanuddin** describes coming round to Cambridge's most (in)famous footwear

I was a diva once. In the leafy outer-London suburb of Twickenham – a town with the median age of a retirement home, but nice enough if you like coffee and charity shops – it wasn't hard to stick out. From my yassified Prince-inspired fits at parties, to an obligatory long hair phase, my mid-adolescent style slapped.

At least I thought it did. Cambridge, as always, has its way of making you feel average. Just as nerdiness goes from being everybody's to nobody's distinguishing characteristic, so too will your impeccable fashion sense be rendered pitifully unremarkable. Ripped shorts-wearer? Scarf enjoyer? Bore off. STEM-bashing stereo-types

Not the least of my week five worries was the growing realisation that I was even being outdressed, time after time, by my own supervisors. Sitting before my cracked mirror at 3am in pyjamas, crunching on my fourth Taco Bell of the week, I was overcome by the pathos of it all. How far I had fallen!

It was during my midterm fashion crisis that I noticed something unusual. Every now and then, some of my bandmates would suddenly become taller than me. During

these growth spurts, they wouldn't so much walk as sway, airily sauntering down Trinity Street like mafia dons traversing an avenue in Sicily. What was causing these transformations? None other than the Docs.

There they were. Again. And again. And again. The more I looked, the more I saw these strange things. Every five minutes to the hour, when Sidgwick transforms into the valley from the stam pede in the Lion King, a pair of Dr. Martens can be seen strapped upon many a sweaty arts student. Weirder still were the appearances they made at clubs, bops and even formals. Formals - nihil sanctum est? Seeing those whoppers in each of these settings, I would be overcome by powerful emotions.

And what did I feel? Imagine me, will you, sipping coffee on a bench outside the ARC Café, hands clasped around my thermos, peering over my glasses in engrossed fascination at the sea of leather. Was I impressed? Bedazzled? A touch envious, perhaps? Did I, like stout Cortez, gaze at those open vistas in speechless rapture?

The fuck I did not. Dr. Martens disturbed me. From the too-thick laces, to the tacky yellow stitches, they combined farce

and indelicacy in equal measure. The ridiculously chunky soles screamed Simon Cowell. And the gleaming, jet-black boots looked oddly...fascistic? Oswald Mosley probably had something similar in his wardrobe. Discovering that their inventor had been a doctor in the Wehrmacht didn't help dispel this impression, I must admit.

I whinged and bitched in this vein for a time. Eventually, during one such rant over a hall lunch,



**My sneering jibes were effortlessly parried by the unassailable logic of Docs**

I exhausted the patience of a long-suffering friend. For over an hour, we had it out over the pros and cons of Dr. Martens. My venomous, sneering jibes were effortlessly parried by their unassailable logic. Indeed, so persuasive was my learned friend, converting me with a speed that would turn any American televangelist green with envy, that I now own a pair of 1460s. From parading around in them over the last two months, I have confirmed the following of my friend's observations:

Dr. Martens match every outfit. This is inarguable. Those sleek black boots can obviously enhance a goth's dark combo, but they also contrast nicely with lighter colours and softer textures (think cosy

cardigans or fluffy scarves). This universal suitability means that Docs take out some of the thought that goes into getting dressed every day. When collections are looming and I'm trying (as a recent blockbuster put it) to 'hear the music', every extra bit of headspace helps.

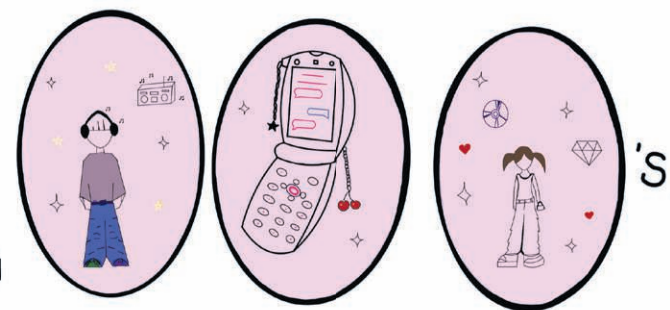
They are supremely versatile and durable. Care for a midday romp through Grantchester Meadows? Fancy a late night gallivant up Castle Mound? Paid your entry at Kelsey Kerridge, and realise you've forgotten your climbing shoes? Your Docs have got you (yes, I once actually went bouldering in Dr. Martens). In the unplanned twists and turns of life in Cambridge, there is only one pair of shoes for you.

Dr. Martens intersection with queer history is well known: the boots are a staple of LGBTQ+ activists, from London Pride marches in the 1980s right up to the Russian Pussy Riot protests in 2012. The brand's popularisation is one of the most visible ways in which queer culture has been brought into the mainstream and seen as cool. This is a wonderful thing. Cambridge is, on the whole, a queer-friendly place. In life outside university, though, that generally isn't the case. I've often found, in these chillier contexts, that wearing them can be my own little mark of quiet assertion, of understated confidence - of pride.

The case in favour of Dr. Martens is now settled for me: I have never changed my mind so dramatically about anything. The motivation for getting them will vary for everyone, with reasons ranging from the playfully frivolous to the personally affirming. These shoes are truly for everyone. And so I raise the call to (literally) take up space, and cop yourselves a pair of these bulky beauties. Although the heavy soles might prevent a spring in your step, you'll still feel amazing.

# Why-2K? 2000s

IMAN KHAN ▲



**Lauren Bird** finds out why we're obsessed with the noughties aesthetic

2023 was a year of nostalgia. Continuing a trend set during lockdown - style, film and music for the youth of today has all followed the same pattern - Y2K rules! Obfuscated by claw clips and chunky rings, low-rise and statement belts, Y2K's entrenchment in Gen Z culture goes further than the aesthetics; our desire to go back in time signifies a deeper longing for a teenage-hood we never had. At the risk of sounding like \*that\* HSPS student, the reasoning behind the enduring popularity of 2000s culture amongst my generation certainly isn't limited to its aesthetic value. If anything, it displays that the digitisation and technological progression of the postmodern era we grew up in is not necessarily what we want, nor feel fulfilled by.

We may be the only teenagers so far able to order a taxi, takeaway, even drug deal, with a few clicks - but coming of age during the tech revolution comes with its downsides. Our teenage years coincided with all the natural and political disasters endemic to the modern world. But, for the first time, technol-

ogy meant that information was with us constantly, parcelled into short-form, easy-to-consume media. As a result, the last decade has seen a world of definitions rapidly replaced by one where 'information' is an uncertain, fluid commodity. Meanwhile, we're touted as the generation who can finally change things. But despite the digital world lying at our fingertips, our distant online vantage point to the world's disasters makes our attempts to effect change seem insignificant, even futile.

Amidst this chaos, the Y2K trend has been a fairly consistent feature of Gen Z culture. Ignoring the endless Netflix docuseries on professional athletes, 2023's TV and film offerings certainly saw an influx of 2000s-inspired settings and remakes. From the *Hunger Games* and *Percy Jackson* to Emerald Fennell's *Saltburn*, which covers many Instagram explore pages with Jacob Elordi or Alison Oliver smoking cigarettes. (Unless that's just mine). And in defiance of fast fashion, low-rise, retro trainers and chain belts still form part of the uniform seen on Sidgwick Site (the observance of which is certainly the most

accurate method for judging what's cool).

Alongside the obviously nostalgic aesthetic allure, *Saltburn* and other movies subtly reminded me of the 'mystery' of a teenage life not overseen at all points by a looming digital presence. With our every party, drunken one-night-stand and new haircut carefully curated and documented on our profiles, most of Gen Z's youth didn't experience teenage life without being surveilled constantly. Oliver Quick and his creation of a false self-image was reminiscent of our collective 'second self' in the form of our social media profiles, but also of our inability to be truly mysterious. How much more difficult, if not impossible, would his deception have been if it played out today?

It isn't as though the 2000s themselves were a particularly stable time - recession, terror, and war remained omnipresent. However, from a childlike gaze, we saw it that way, and never suspected that the teenage life we saw from our highchairs would have changed dramatically by the time we reached that age. Sweaty teenage rebellion portrayed on

*Skins* has been replaced by club events carefully sanitised and lit for Instagram feeds. Playing outside is a fond memory, confined to a blurry past where kids weren't attached to devices tracking their every move. A past when school, work, and friends could be taken for granted, instead of things that have been taken away and can be again.

Maybe I'm exaggerating the significance of one psychological thriller, and our unending obsession with Y2K fashion trends. But it seems plausible that, having had everything that seemed permanent stripped away from us during the pandemic, as well as the threat of a world-changing climate crisis looming closer ahead, we would want to escape to a time when it all seemed more...manageable? Previously, facing a glowing box containing all the information in the world, and other people's highlight reels, and the latest war or forest fire or recession or far-right politician in power was an impossibility. Now, it is simply 'just checking my phone'.

And that is why the people crave rhinestone jeans and MGMT.



**Theatre**

# 'What's best is home soil'

**Milly Kotecha** sits down with the ETG's Jacob Gaskell and Kez Prescod to talk Shakespeare, innovative adaptation, and getting stuck at the Swiss border



▲ PHOTOS BY THE EUROPEAN THEATRE GROUP

“I got back home and crashed,” admits Jacob Gaskell, the current tour manager and president of the European Theatre Group (ETG). I expect this would be a familiar experience for many of us after an exciting yet “in and of itself exhausting” term at Cambridge but imagine the extra level of “pent-up fatigue” when you have spent the first two weeks of December travelling around western Europe by coach to perform *The Tempest* at a range of different venues - which is exactly what the ETG did. You know their schedule was jam-packed when Gaskell proclaims himself “one of the lucky ones” for being able to visit one supermarket in Montreux in Switzerland, with the rest of the troupe too wrapped up in the two shows and six workshops during their 24 hour stint to explore the stunning Swiss city.

The ETG started touring in 1957. This year, their tour commenced on 2nd December when a group of 24 Cambridge students, including Gaskell and one of the co-directors Kez Prescod, began their journey across France, Belgium, Germany, and Switzerland to present their innovative version of this Shakespeare classic to audiences spanning eleven-year-old French schoolchildren to Swiss university students, even to university professors.

I marvel at the difficulty of tailoring any show - let alone a Shakespeare play - to such a vast demographic, especially considering that English wasn't the first language for many in their audience. Gaskell states that it is exactly this “broad appeal” which makes the ETG stand out as a theatre company. Prescod adds that it creates this beautiful outcome where each person can appreciate a different aspect of the production. University students picked up on the manipulation of the text to reveal a critique of colonialism, while the school students appreciated the singing and dancing.

Moreover, this challenge of mass appeal forced innovation and creativity, resulting in a dynamic production which is both accessible and relevant. Prescod speaks about the use of paint and art on stage, producing a medium through which audience members who may have been lost in the narrative could see the tensions within the play realised visually. This supports their re-interpretation of the text

in which they portray Prospero as a tortured artist. Another distinctive creative decision taken by the directors was to change the gender of Prospero, traditionally a male character, to a woman. Prescod explains how Prospero's art became a visual representation of how her powers manipulate the people around her, which removes the possibility of the audience sympathising with a coloniser - a highly appropriate choice for their “direct post-colonial reading” of *The Tempest*. However, as engaging as this abstract use of art forms is for the audience, it is equally a challenge for the actors, who had “a heck of a lot of paint to wash off at the end of each show.”

What is special about the ETG is their extensive process. This is not just in terms of rehearsals and performances, but the logistical side of preparing for such a great undertaking. Gaskell is keen to emphasise the amount of work that went into arriving at a particular place at a particular time, with the process of contacting venues, coach companies, and creating an itinerary beginning in April 2023. It was this effort over the course of the year which allowed them to be a “smooth machine on tour” ... for the most part at least. Between nearly losing someone at a service station in Germany (not to panic - she was just asleep on the back of the coach), turning up at the chalet for their weekend break to find there were no washing machines, or a sudden reroute around Geneva due to Swiss customs not being open on Sunday to check their specialised theatre lighting, they had their fair share of anecdotes.

“That should be what your next show is about,” I joke.

Gaskell replies, amused, that he doesn't know how many people would be interested in that.

Despite these minor heart attacks, the sense of passion put into the show, as well as the close-knit community built up between the team, really came across. Prescod's endearing statement: “coach time was the best time”, summarises, for me, the magic of the ETG experience. My fellow thespians will agree that the end of a show is always bittersweet, as each member of the cast and crew ultimately parts ways. This sentiment was shared by both Prescod and Gaskell: “It's weird to have spent two weeks so closely with everyone and then no time with them at all afterwards. I'm excited to see everyone!”

Prescod answers when I ask how they feel in the approach to their last crusade.

After a well-deserved break over Christmas (“though what is a relaxing holiday when going to this university?” Prescod quips), the final run of *The Tempest* will be at the ADC Theatre from the 16th - 20th of January. When I ask if there are any elements of the show that they will adapt for the ADC, considering the amount of space and equipment which will be available to them in comparison to the majority of venues they performed in during their tour, Gaskell comments on the innate “malleable” nature of the show, which means that the main difference with their home run will just be that the ADC is “nicely familiar” and a “return to normalcy”.

In the end my curiosity gets the better of me; I probe about the grand celebrations awaiting the team after their final curtain call. Amongst vague talks of an after party, Prescod comes through with a very relatable response: “I think we'll find ourselves in Spoons. We've been to so many random European pubs and bars, but what's best is home soil - anything which means we can spend a little bit of time together.” Although I did personally quite enjoy the notion of “some prancing around the ADC stage.”

Whatever form their celebrations take, they will be testament to months of hard work invested by every person within the ETG to make a tour of this magnitude possible. In the end, the result is an incredibly rewarding experience for both the company and the audiences alike, and I look forward to seeing what the ETG has in store for next year's tour.



## What's on in comedy this term?

We get it. Lent term is the worst. The essay deadlines are near, and the promise of ever being free is so very, very far away. The last thing you want to do is venture out into dreich, drizzly evenings to the theatre (even though you promised your friend you would *definitely* see their original, ground-breaking one person musical). But you'd be wrong to give up! Here's a list of Varsity-approved comedy gems that we think will be well worth the soggy feet and overdue essays!

### Impronauts Quickfire 23-24, 21st January

Improv gets a bad rep, probably because of numerous GCSE drama classes gone tooth-grindingly wrong. But the Cambridge Impronauts are cut from a different cloth: witty, fast-paced and best of all, staged at the ADC Bar so you can enjoy a pre- (and mid- and post-) show cocktail, this troupe are the perfect antidote to those January blues.

### The Good, The Bad and the Humbling, 23rd January

Cambridge Footlight Diya Shah takes a self-deprecating look at the highs and lows of her life so far in this late night stand-up show. To anyone who's never been to a late night ADC comedy show before - now's your chance! (Be sure to bring your best cheers, guffaws, and maybe some earplugs to survive audience calls for an encore!)

### Footlights Presents: Nothing Really Mattress,

31st January-3rd February

This wacky comedy show gives you Cambridge's best and brightest, with a nocturnal twist. Every sketch is themed around sleeping, but you certainly won't be snoozing during this high-energy performance. This certainly isn't one to sleep on.

### Cambridget Jones's Diary, 3rd-4th February

You've seen Bridget Jones - but how about Cambridget Jones? A parody of the classic movie you weren't expecting, this comedy features an entirely Murray Edwards cast and crew, and is completely student written. There's no Hugh Grant in this version, but nonetheless, it'll be entirely worth the trek to Medwards!

### 5 Lesbians Eating a Quiche, 9th-12th February

The blurb for this play plays for interesting reading. It's hard to tell but I think... I think? It's a play about lesbians and maybe, just maybe, some quiche. The bizarre play is set in 1956 and explores themes of repression, queerness, and atomic bombs. What more could you want?

Molly Scales



# Embracing your inner theatre kid

Grace Cobb rediscovers time capsules of childhood at the V&A's 'Re:Imagining musicals'

Visiting the 'Re:Imagining Musical' exhibition at the Victoria and Albert museum, I was unsure whether I would recognise the 'iconic musicals' or 'modern classics' it pledged to celebrate, preparing for bemusement at ancient cabarets before my birth, and only faint recognition of recent productions through hearing their songs on TikTok.

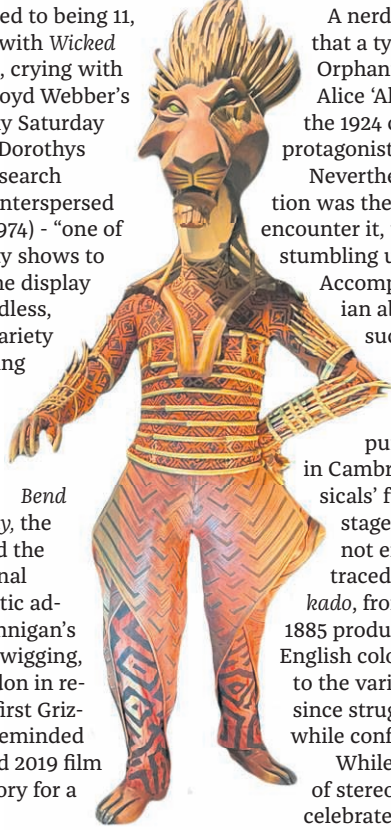
As a rare breed of English student not (yet) sucked into selling my soul to the ADC and whose most recent encounters with musical theatre were mediated through *Varsity* reviews I edited, my primary memories of musicals belong to childhood. Somewhere in the midst of being old enough to be taken to 'adult' theatre (think Shakespeare, T.S. Eliot's *Four Quartets*, and other seemingly endless soliloquies), I lost touch with the shows I used to love trekking to the West End to watch (and the songs I would sing on repeat for weeks after, to the absolute joy of everyone in my household).

Fortunately, upon arrival I was greeted by a familiar sight: Scar's costume from the 1994 production of *The Lion King*, an (albeit intimidating) harbinger of memories from a primary school trip: the intricate costumes, enchanting music - and falling into fits of giggles after our coach drove away from the Lyceum Theatre without our headteacher.

The next costume triggering a wave of nostalgia was the raven-like figure of Elphaba. Surrounded by posters from various iterations of *The*

*Wizard of Oz*, I was transported to being 11, surprised by my best friend with *Wicked* tickets, and then eight again, crying with happiness during Andrew Lloyd Webber's adaptation after investing my Saturday evenings in the prospective Dorothys and hopeful Totos on talent-search TV series *Over the Rainbow*. Interspersed with posters from *The Wiz* (1974) - "one of the first large-scale Broadway shows to feature an all-Black cast" - the display demonstrated the story's endless, spiralling propagation of a variety of shows, from those exploring the possibility of being born evil to celebrating African-American culture.

Embracing the silver screen roots of shows like *Bend It Like Beckham* and *Hairspray*, the exhibition equally celebrated the survival of quirks from original stage productions in cinematic adaptations, including Mrs Hannigan's trademark whistle and gin-swigging, improvised by Dorothy Loudon in rehearsals in 1976. Seeing the first Grizabella's shoes nevertheless reminded me of *Cats*' far less celebrated 2019 film adaptation, still a sore memory for a staunch Taylor Swift fan.



▲GRACE COBB

A nerd to my core, I loved discovering that a typesetting error in the poem 'Little Orphant Annie', about real orphan Mary Alice 'Allie' Smith, managed to inspire the 1924 comic strip from which the iconic protagonist Annie was born.

Nevertheless, while a musicals exhibition was the last place I imagined I'd first encounter it, the literary peak of the day was stumbling upon Shakespeare's first folio.

Accompanying a model of Juliet's Parisian abode in *& Juliet*, it displayed the success with which the canon has been brought into contemporary conversations about misogyny.

But while the nearby diamented puff sleeves of Catherine of Aragon in Cambridge-born *SIX* suggested that musicals' future lies in reinventing history, stagecraft's own past of prejudice was not erased. Prompt-books and posters traced the history of musical *Hot Mikado*, from Gilbert and Sullivan's original 1885 production using yellowface to satirise English colonialism through a Japanese lens, to the various productions which have since struggled to reclaim this narrative while confronting the racism at its core.

While recognising their cementing of stereotypes, the exhibition equally celebrated musicals' crucial fluidity. A history of gender-bending performances, from

Danny La Rue's Dolly Levi in *Hello, Dolly!* (1984) to Paul O'Grady's Miss Hannigan in *Annie* (1998) reminded me that musicals have long been a space for self-expression. Noting this as we passed *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* programme prompted my mum's reminiscence of attending the musical with fifty other people at uni. Her memory of dressing up in fishnets, suspenders and mini skirts - "even the guys" - to sing along, practically putting on the show themselves, reminded me of the heart and soul students throw into Cambridge theatre. However, I was surprised to discover no Camdram history of the feat - maybe next year?

Exiting the V&A's stretching corridors left me with an overwhelming sense of awe at musicals' endless designing, performing, adapting, altering and transforming, from stage to screen or page to stage and everything in between. Whether taking on the songs of everyone's favourite Swedish band or addressing the tensions of the Vietnam War, inspiring you to confidently express your identity or simply giving you a laugh at a difficult time, musicals' multiple incarnations keep them constantly returning to our lives to speak to us in new, relevant ways. Poignant time capsules of what mattered to us in single moments of our lives, it's not just the catchiness of their songs which ensures they stay with us.

'Re:Imagining Musical' at the Victoria and Albert Museum is open until the 4th February. Admission is free.

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**Film & TV**

# Is University Challenge elitist?

**Anuk Weerawardana** asks whether the show has an Oxbridge bias



▲ RIC LOWE / BBC PHOTOS

**I**s *University Challenge* elitist? Frank Coffield, an emeritus professor of education, certainly seems to think so. During a yearlong campaign, Coffield argued that the programme has turned a blind eye to the BBC's impartiality rules by allowing Oxford and Cambridge to each enter up to five teams representing their various colleges, while all other universities are confined to a single team.

## “The programme's affiliation with Oxbridge extends beyond its contestants

It pains me to say this but the man has a point. Despite personally being delighted to have my own college team (go Homerton!) to support – a team that I feel a much greater connection to than the less personalised “University of Cambridge” label – there is no doubt that this convenience creates a profound unfairness in the game. This is especially true since other collegiate universities like York and Durham, the latter being where Coffield used to teach, are constricted to a single university-wide team.

This clear preferential treatment towards the country's oldest universities is most apparent in

the programme's Christmas specials, which Coffield stressed in his letters to the show's current presenter, Amol Rajan, and Tim Davie, BBC director general, both of whom are Cambridge alumni. Since the debut of *University Challenge*'s Christmas special in 2011, a quarter of the 168 teams that have participated in these episodes have hailed from an Oxford or Cambridge college. Thus, the odds of an Oxbridge victory are increased, as evidenced by us winning nine out of the 12 specials so far. This awkward Oxbridge bias is not a recent discovery either, with the University of Manchester expressing their resentment during the 1975 final of *University Challenge*, in which they finished second to Downing College, by answering every question with “Che Guevara”, “Marx”, “Trotsky” or “Lenin” in an attempt to affect the ability of the show to be broadcast.

The programme's affiliation with Oxbridge extends beyond its contestants, with all three of its hosts having attended Cambridge. It is perhaps this which provoked Coffield's scathing remarks in his letters to Davie and Rajan:

“What was the BBC so determined to conceal? The fact that it continues to rig this quiz in favour of the already privileged. The senior executives in charge of the show ignore criticisms and continue to push their unjustifiable favouritism of the Oxbridge colleges they themselves have attended.”

He goes on to claim that this alleged bias is “symptomatic of how this country is run – in the interests of a small elite who fight to preserve their unearned advantages for their colleges and their children”.

This is where I draw the line. Even if Oxbridge alumni have certain “advantages” that come with the Oxbridge name, this does not mean that they were

“unearned”. The stereotypical notion that mummy and daddy are so wealthy that they shell out on average £15.2k a year to send you to private school before having you automatically enrolled into Oxford or Cambridge after your “gap yah” does not represent reality in the slightest. 2023 records show that 71.8% of students at Cambridge and 68.6% of students

## “It's not the 1960s anymore when 66% of all Oxbridge students went to a fee-paying school

at Oxford hailed from a state or grammar school.

It's not the 1960s anymore when 66% of all Oxbridge students went to a fee-paying school. Times have changed and, thanks to outreach programmes that target state schools, the type of student attending Oxbridge has also changed. Ironically, it is Coffield's own Durham University that welcomes one of the highest private school applicants (39.1%), coming second only to the Royal Agricultural University (39.5%).

It is one thing to criticise the workings of a late-night quiz show, but to use this as an argument for “how the country is run”, well, that's a bit mad.

## What's On in 2024

The Film & TV team reveal the most anticipated releases of the new year

**True Detective: Night Country (15 January):** According to showrunner Issa López, where *True Detective* is hot, unrelenting and masculine, “*Night Country* is cold and it's dark and it's female”. We look forward to a tense, brooding mystery and an always-stellar Jodie Foster.

**The Zone of Interest (2 February):** Based on a novel by Martin Amis, this film follows the commandant of Auschwitz, Rudolf Höss (Christian Friedel), as he attempts to live an idyllic life with his wife Hedwig (Sandra Hüller) and his family in a home next to the camp.

**The Iron Claw (9 February):** A film about a boxing family dynasty might sound somewhat questionable but *The Iron Claw* heralds a Zac Efron renaissance, the return of *The Bear*'s Jeremy Allen White and the rise of promising British newbie Harris Dickinson

**Dune: Part Two (1 March):** Part two of *Dune* features several new actors, including Florence Pugh (billed above Chalamet), Austin Butler (swoon), Léa Seydoux and Christopher Walken. We expect to see a whole lotta sand, a whole lotta blue eyes and a whole lotta giant worms.

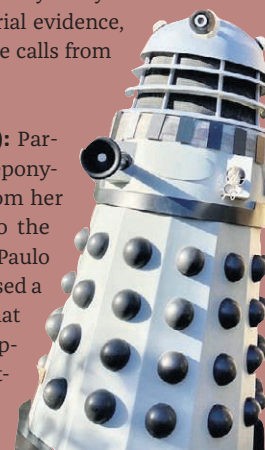
**Challengers (26 April):** Luca Guadagnino's sports drama promises style, a potential threesome, and Zendaya (with a bob, incredible). The plot centres around a love triangle between tennis prodigy Tashi Duncan and two comparably mediocre players and former best friends.

**Doctor Who (May):** With Russell T Davies back as its head writer, the next series promises to be a thrilling watch, taking viewers from Abbey Road Studios to a Regency ball and everywhere in-between.

**Nosferatu (25 December):** Here's an idea for a family Christmas outing. Go visit your local cinema and share the heartwarming experience of David Eggers' new film: a “gothic tale of obsession between a haunted young woman and the terrifying vampire infatuated with her, causing untold horror in its wake”.

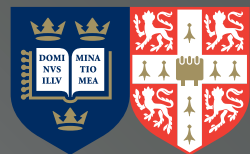
**The Jinx – Part 2 (TBC):** That's right, the world's most entertaining convicted murderer is back! Part two promises not only many new interviews and material evidence, but also Durst's phone calls from prison.

**Parthenope (TBC):** Parthenope follows an eponymous protagonist from her birth in the 1950s to the present day. Director Paulo Sorrentino has promised a meditative portrait that “embodies the full repertoire of human existence”.



▲ ROBIN BUNCE





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## Music

# ‘What the fuck do DJs actually do?’

**Stella Williamson** sits down with Maya Panasar to work out what actually goes on behind the decks

In the words of internet personality Madeline Argy: “What the fuck do DJs actually do?” It is a good question – one I must admit asking myself when I reached out to Cambridge’s hottest student DJ Maya Panasar (@neverusemybrain) for this piece on student musicians. Despite having enjoyed several of Maya’s own gigs, my laziness and lack of curiosity meant I’d never really considered what was actually going on on those decks. Stats show that two-thirds of Cambridge students are unaware of what DJ stands for. As a completely unqualified avid musical theatre fan, member of Taylor Swift’s top 3% of Spotify listeners (a disappointingly high percentage following my 0.5% streak of prior years), and someone who doesn’t really like alternative music (what can I say ... I love a lyric), I felt my interview may at least reflect the general Cambridge population. Thankfully, the conversation that I feared would become technical, analytical, and reminiscent of my failed Grade 5 Theory exam turned out to be an illuminating and highly quotable discussion about the idea of spectacle, the responsibility of performers, and

consumerism, topped off with a quick game of “kiss marry kill” (Varsity condemns the use of profanities) with Josh O’Connor characters (for those who want to play at home, we were choosing between *God’s Own Country*, *The Crown*, and the upcoming *Challengers*).

After a poignantly moving opening question from me (“You DJ ... how did that happen?”), we were smooth sailing. Like most “really unoriginal” creatives (their words not mine), Maya got into DJ-ing over the pandemic. Unlike most creatives, original or not, they had the wholehearted support of their parents: their first proper job was a strict hour that was set aside at their dad’s 50th birthday.

with a professional DJ waiting in the wings to come on after for the rest of the party. Maya’s set of “older music” clearly went down a treat, leading to subsequent gigs at their school prom and house parties as well as professional (and paid!) sets at a Nike partnership event, a three-day job at an International Hair Studio event, and – of course – their impressive roster of Cambridge club and bop performances.

Most recently, I saw Maya perform an excellent set at Darwin Bar’s GayDar, chock-a-block with queer classics. Since multiple people approached the decks during the evening, with phones aloft and Notes apps open, undoubtedly asking for Katy Perry’s ‘I Kissed a Girl’, I asked Maya how they

felt about people requesting songs during a set (something I’d like the record to show I have never dared to do). While Maya revealed they would “never go up to a DJ to request a song”, they shared that such requests are certainly “worth paying some heed” – especially since they’ve now developed the technical abilities to be able to fulfil such requests. For Maya, while “the worst feeling as DJ is when you feel your services have been used”, ultimately they’re unwilling to “become a music dictator”, and appreciate that part of their services is providing a good night out – which often involves playing what the people want. Fundamentally, “in Cambridge there are so many bad nights out, so I love to give my friends a good time.”

The endearingly earnest way in which they prioritise their audience and treat their carefully curated sets as products going out to be consumed became more apparent when divulging how they pointedly tailor their sets to fit within the schedule of a successful night out. They decide not to play songs in a “strictly BPM order” but instead have “gaps” for a quick trip

to the smoking area and time to queue for drinks, before a gradual progression to a frenzied climax where people are possibly at their drunkest and dance their hardest.

Having learned something about DJs and their world (the bar was on the floor, below deck, was truly working with the bare minimum), this is where I ask you to check out Maya’s socials @neverusemybrain and manifest them booking Junction.

### Varsity's top picks

- *Scrub Scrub* – The Cast of *Wonka*
- ‘B’ Movie (*Intro, Poem, Song*) – Gil Scott-Heron
- *Harry and Sally* – Red Zest
- *Slope* – corto.alto
- *Gotta Get Up* – Harry Nilsson
- *A Hatful of Dreams* – The Cast of *Wonka*
- *Stuck on the Puzzle* – Alex Turner
- *Pana-vision* – The Smile

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# Blues vs Blues: Varsity matches and more this Lent

Alex Berry highlights the sporting moments to look forward to in 2024

If, like me, you're not particularly excited by the idea of a very cold and dark Lent term, one positive I can offer is that it's probably the best term for sport in Cambridge. Varsity matches take centre stage as many teams face off against the other place, while college sport remains in full swing off the back of a busy Michaelmas. With so much in store, here's a quick preview of the biggest events to look out for this Lent term.

## Football Varsity matches

Starting off with my most anticipated sporting event of the term, the football Varsity matches once again return to Cambridge this year and will be hosted at the home of Cambridge United, the Abbey Stadium, on Friday 15 March. With the men's Blues seeking revenge after last year's narrow defeat, and the women's team hoping to match last year's strong performance to retain the trophy, these are sure to be a thrilling pair of highly contested matches.

## Lent Bumps

While rowing might not be my cup of tea, it is the centre of many students' lives in Cambridge, and Bumps is sure to bring some fierce competition. For any confused freshers, the Bumps races see the boats line up in a staggered format

down the river with the aim being to catch up with the boat in front in order to 'bump' them and gain a position on the river for the next day without being caught by the team behind. As only one team can be crowned head of the river, the majority will have their eyes set on the coveted Blades, which can be earned by bumping a boat in every race. This year's Lent Bumps will take place across five days from Tuesday 27 February to Saturday 2 March, so if you've got a spare minute at the end of term, head down to the Cam to manically scream: "Yeah, [insert college name]!" and try to motivate those unhinged enough to be out on the river.

## Rugby Varsity matches

If rowing isn't your thing (a very valid opinion) and you fancy a quick trip down to London, then Saturday 2 March also sees the return of the rugby Varsity Matches. These matches never fail to draw a crowd, even if that crowd is predominantly filled with entitled alumni who feel like reliving their "wild" university days by getting unacceptably drunk before kick off. This year sees a change of venue for the clash away from the traditional Twickenham to the StoneX ground, the home of Saracens, where we're expecting the atmosphere to be as good as ever.

## Lacrosse Varsity The Boat Races matches

After Cambridge women's slim 15-14 victory over Oxford last year and a draw in the men's division, this term's Varsity Lacrosse match is sure to be a nail-biter. Happening on the 24th of February in the dark midsts of Oxford, our triumphant light blues are sure to give the dark blues what for and hang on to victory despite playing on enemy turf. It's not one to miss, even if it would cost you three hours on the bus - and hey, you might even learn what Lacrosse actually is!

## TTP Cambridge half marathon

Possibly the most feel-good event on the Cambridge sporting calendar, the Cambridge half marathon sees thousands of runners take to the streets in aid of a huge variety of charities and good causes. It's one of the few events where university students can get more involved with the wider Cambridge community and the new course for this year sees the addition of two colleges, John's and Trinity, on top of the traditional King's and Jesus. The race is on Sunday 3 March and even if you're not competing, it's worth heading down to cheer on the runners as it's an atmosphere worth experiencing.

Now, I know this isn't *technically* in Lent term, but it's close enough, and I couldn't really write this article without covering what is undoubtedly Cambridge's biggest sporting event. The Blues return to the Thames off the back of their most successful year ever in 2023, when they took a clean sweep of all 13 races for only the third time ever. As always, we can expect crowds of hundreds of thousands lining the banks to see the crews in action on Saturday 30 March, and a few million more watching from the comfort of their homes. Let's just hope that the crowd will be celebrating another clean sweep for Cambridge this year.

## College sport

If you've never really gotten involved with college sport before, Lent is the perfect time to get started. With leagues well underway and cuppers fixtures tallying up, there are plenty of opportunities to try something new. Excuse the completely biased plug, but sports like netball are really easy to pick up as a beginner, and have the bonus of a fun team atmosphere. College sport can be underappreciated in Cambridge at the best of times, so make sure to keep up with your college teams during this busy Lent term.

## Fixtures Weeks 1 & 2

Friday 19 January  
Men's Rugby Union  
Cambridge RFC XI vs Bristol University

Saturday 20 January  
Ladies Netball  
Emmanuel vs Fitzwilliam  
Homerton vs Queens'  
Medwards vs Magdalene

Wednesday 24 January  
Football  
Women's Blues vs Nottingham Trent 2s  
Men's Blues vs Uni of Nottingham 3s

Saturday 27 January  
Women's Football  
Johns/Kings vs Fitzwilliam/Corpus  
Homerton vs Sidney/Magdalene/Selwyn/Robinson

## 2024 – the year of the run

Are you hitting the tarmac for a New year's resolution? **Bea Wood** finds the balance to make running enjoyable and sustainable

As my favourite GCN cyclist presenter proudly stated: "I've never broken a new year's resolution because I've never actually set a new year's resolution," and this noble credo is one with which I've inadvertently aligned myself over the years. However, Eliud Kipchoge reminds us each time he laces up his shoes that "no human is limited", and general knowledge reminds us that running tends to take the brunt of new year resolution focus. No matter your personal opinion of the split shorts-clad, strava-graph-bragging, achilles-drills-chatting, carbon-plate-evolution-expert that is the quintessential runner, the sport is undoubtedly a tantalisingly perfect undertaking. It is simple, cheap, accessible, time-efficient, self-improving and well-being-boosting. And this is how best to stick with it.

**Route-planning**  
A stunning-at-most and tolerable-at-least rotation of running routes can also keep your levels of motivation just above the waterline of will-power. Try switching out the Grange Road slogs for a towpath trot or Grantchester gallop. Exchanging pavements for actual paths really can transform a session or run. Furthermore, the added lark of chasing down rowers on the towpath can offer a scintillating race-simulation.

**Recovery**  
Sleep and fuelling must not be neglected in the quest to run more; it's the health advice of lore – eating within half an hour after a run will lessen excess fatigue, and combined with sleep, will help reduce injury risk. No need to fill your kitchen with a beetroot quinoa smoothie or avocado-coated pistachios though – food is fuel for the fire, hay for the barn, diamonds in the mine.

**Goal-setting**  
Because it swiftly yields results, running is an attractive option to the new year resolution chaser, and setting achievable but motivational goals can help remind you why you started, dividing up your running and reducing boredom and stagnation. You don't need to go full Markus Torgeby and camp in a Swedish forest for four years to run and live, but micro-goals, such as ticking off the 3km, 5km, 10km distances or reducing the Parkrun time by 1 minute are perfect in their own right.

I'm not going to conclude with a platitudeous "most importantly, just enjoy it", because when it's Week Five and you just want to pound out the aggro onto the pavement but get caught in a storm, it could be hard to preach to anyone of running's myriad benefits. So, with that, take Bob Dylan's advice and come crawl out your window, use your (hands and) legs – it won't ruin you!

## Captain's Corner

Ultimate Captain **Magnus Oakes** chats to Ed Marsh about Cambridge's Ultimate club

**Who is your sporting idol?**  
Rowan McDonnell – an amazing Ultimate player who brings a lot of joy and kindness to the sport. He is also largely responsible for me getting into the sport and learning to throw.

**Best sporting moment?**  
Throwing the disc the full length of the field to help thrash Oxford 15-4 away last year at Varsity.

**Worst sporting moment?**  
Ignoring injuries, going to U24 trials and getting skyed (disc caught on top of my head) a lot.

**Why Ultimate?**  
I wasn't very good at PE in school and didn't play any sport before Cambridge. I wanted to get involved in sport at university and tried Ultimate at Curve, my local team, and found that I really enjoyed the throwing and running of Ultimate. It is an envi-



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ronment full of other people who weren't very good at sport in school and this makes it very welcoming and relaxed.

**What is the best bit about being captain?**  
For the first time ever, we have a second team in BUCS! As 1st team captain, I've been directly involved in their development as a squad. Watching that has been incredibly satisfying and fun.

**Worst bit about being captain?**  
Apart from admin, picking teams is quite stressful. It's a pretty thankless task.

**Is it easy for beginners to join?**  
Yes! Most people haven't ever tried the sport before university, so the bar for entry is very low. There is also a very healthy college league that a lot of people

who want a casual level of commitment get a lot out of.

**Who could a beginner contact to get involved?**  
They could find their college's team and contact that captain (found on the strange blue website or by pestering your JCR) or get in contact with the university team (@cambridgeuniultimate on Instagram) if they want a higher level of commitment!

**What might a typical training session look like?**  
Normally a few tactical drills that might be focused on a certain kind of throw, and then pretty quickly we break into scrimmaging. We end every training with sprints.

**Who should we look out for this year?**  
Luke Piggot is playing extremely well this season and has a good shot, in my opinion, of making the U24 Great Britain squad in 2025. Also, Sophie Mance, as she represented New Zealand at last year's U24 Worlds.

**Funniest moment with the team?**  
The Open trophy at Varsity is a car door which the team sits behind and takes a photo with.

**Varsity predictions?**  
Considering that last year we won 12 out of the 13 matches played at Varsity, I'm hoping that this year we win 100% of the games we play.



# Sport

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## The long row-d to Bumps



WILLIAM CONNOLLEY

### Euan Aspin looks back at the Fairbairns Cup, and what it means for Lent Bumps

On two frigid days at the end of last term (30/11 and 1/12), college rowers took to the River Cam for the most important race of Michaelmas term, the Fairbairn Cup. This year saw the tightest competition between Cambridge colleges in the Men's Senior VIII division in 10 years, while the Jesus women's side dominated the women's divisions. Now in 2024 before Lent term gets underway, it provides the perfect opportunity to reflect on these results and where they leave colleges for next term's Lent Bumps.

#### Men's boats

The Senior VIIIs 1st division ended Fairbairns as the most competitive of all the races. Caius narrowly snatched victory overall finishing in 14:39.5, with Emma, Downing and Selwyn all finishing within ten seconds of Caius. Meanwhile in the Senior IVs division, Magdalene finished the race in 11:02.4 – a strong lead of nearly 14 seconds to Lady Margaret (St John's).

The novice races were a different story with both having comfortable winners.

The Wolfson 1st Novice VIII, who won both Qerqs and Clare, ended with a comfortable 12-second lead. They were followed by Jesus and First and Third (FaT/Trinity), respectively. The Novice VIII's 2nd division followed a similar story with an emphatic victory of over 20 seconds by FaT.

So where does this leave colleges' men's boats going into Lent term? Last year Lady Margaret managed to maintain the headship in Lent Bumps while Caius held onto May Bumps headship. Both colleges performed well at Fairbairns, but as they competed in different categories, we will have to wait to see who comes out on top. Yet both colleges will be watching Magdalene, who dominated in the IV+ category and finished third in last year's May Bumps. They will be hoping to close the gap over the next term.

Elsewhere in the men's top divisions, Emma will be hoping for back to back blades in this year's Lent Bumps after finishing second at Fairbairns. A low starting position of 12th should help Emma

make this a reality. Similarly, after both their senior and novice VIIIs finished fifth in their respective categories, Selwyn will be aiming to take home a set of blades from their favourable position down in fourth in the second division of Lent Bumps. Meanwhile, Wolfson's strong novice programme in Michaelmas could provide further competition for their M1 boat. This will likely help them move further up the second division from eighth and place blades on their agenda.

#### Women's boats

In the Women's 1st VIII division, Jesus firmly dominated the division with an impressive 40-second lead over their closest opponent, the largest lead in over ten years at a time of 16:32.8. They were followed up by St Catharine's, Downing and Newnham, in that order. Jesus's women's side furthered this achievement by also winning the IV division. They finished with a time of 12:48.1, an eight-second lead over King's College.

For the women's novice races, Selwyn NW1 won their division with a time of

11:33.9 and a lead of nearly ten seconds. The top five were then rounded out by Jesus, Churchill, Lucy Cavendish and Caius, in that order. Meanwhile in the NW2 division, Wolfson successfully won their second race, seeing off their nearest competition from Fitzwilliam by over 20 seconds.

So how does this shape our predictions for Lent Bumps? Last year Jesus W1 successfully took headship from Newnham in both Lent and May Bumps to end the year with double headship. A 40-second lead at Fairbairns and second place for their novices places Jesus in a strong position going into this term to hold onto their headship. Below Jesus, hoping to close this gap are Emma, Newnham, Lady Margaret and Downing, with Newnham and Downing coming the closest to Jesus at Fairbairns.

Further down the top division, St Catharine's ended Fairbairns second. With an advantageous starting position of 17th, this gives them a strong

chance to achieve blades in Lent bumps. Success would bring them a second set of blades after an impressive May's campaign last year. In the second division of Lent Bumps, Homerton will be hoping to build on a ninth place Fairbairns finish as they start in third. However, on the first day they will be chasing King's who, in the IV+ division, ended only eight seconds behind a strong Jesus boat. King's will have blades on the mind as they transition to a VIII this term.

As is the case every year, this next term of rowing is shaping up to bring some fierce competition and undoubtedly boat rivalries. Furthermore everything can still change with some rowers potentially being cut from trialling with the University and a whole term of training for colleges to improve. If I have learned anything from Bumps, it's that they can be unpredictable on the day and no boats should rule themselves out from performing a shock upset. Therefore, we wish everyone rowing in races this term the best of luck!