

FREE
Take a
copy

Film photography
in focus
pg. 24

The man, the myth,
the mullet
pg. 20

Behind the scenes
at *Gala night*
pg. 23

No.922
Friday 1st March 2024
varsity.co.uk

The Independent
Student Newspaper since 1947

VARSITY

Students hit with flying chair in sports swap pub frenzy

Patrick Dolan
Deputy News Editor

A hockey varsity swap saw two Oxbridge students wiped out after a chair was thrown off a balcony in Wetherspoons on Sunday 18th.

The post-match swap took a violent turn after a student from Lady Margaret Hall, Oxford, picked up a chair and launched it from the upper floor, injuring a Cambridge and an Oxford student below.

An Oxford Men's 4s player had to be taken to A&E after being struck in the head by the chair, receiving stitches for the injury. A Cambridge Women's 4s player also suffered minor injuries to her face.

The incident occurred at around 10pm at the Four Candles Wetherspoons in Oxford following a day of matches between the 2nd's, 3rd's and 4th's Cambridge and Oxford Hockey Teams.

It was supposed to be a day of frivolity, an evening swap after the so-called 'BDoTY' (Best Day of the Year) for the collegiate athletes, which saw hundreds of Oxbridge students flock to Wetherspoons to celebrate the day.

But the mood shifted after eyewitnesses reported seeing an Oxford student dressed as a traffic cone unexpectedly pick up a chair and hurl it over the balcony to the bottom floor.

Customers reported being "shocked and confused" after hearing the crash of something breaking. Most of the swap attendees were seated on the upstairs section overlooking the bottom floor when the incident happened.

Venue staff intervened and attempted to identify what had happened but the other members of the Oxford Men's team were reported to have "closed ranks," according to eyewitnesses. The managers eventually ordered everyone

to leave.

A student told *Varsity* that Oxford players were overheard discussing that the incident would make "great chat."

One student told *Varsity* that they were "all just drinking really and I don't know why but one of them picked up a chair and chucked it over to the bottom floor."

"Everyone was just quite confused," reported another Cambridge student. "There was just a lot of smashed glass all over the floor and the chair."

Security later identified and singled out the individual believed to have thrown the chair and followed him down the road, until they disappeared from sight. However, it is claimed that the suspect was allegedly seen later that evening at the club night, at Spirit Bar in Oxford.

In response to the incident, the culprit has been suspended pending an ongoing internal investigation by Oxford University Hockey Club.

Cambridge University Hockey Club are also in the process of deciding the outcome of their internal investigation, with an emphasis on the affected parties' decision.

When contacted for comment, The Four Candles Wetherspoons branch said: "Wetherspoons are aware of the incident. Members of hockey teams from both Oxford and Cambridge Universities were using the Four Candles at the time after what we believe was a hockey tournament earlier in the day.

"The individual who threw the chair was identified from the pub's CCTV coverage. We understand that he was from Oxford University and that his name is now known by the university authorities so the appropriate action can be taken," the branch said.

"It was extremely fortunate that no one was injured as a consequence of the individual's reckless act," the pub concluded.



Students call for sacking
of 'race-realist' fellow as
Philosophy faculty race
row continues

Page. 2

▲ DANIEL HILTON

Students hold vigil for Ukraine

Wilf Vall
Deputy News Editor

Large crowds gathered on King's Parade on Saturday (24/02) to mark two years since Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine with a candlelit vigil.

The event was organised by Cambridge4Ukraine, a volunteering initiative who have held demonstrations every week since the invasion. Among supporters of the vigil were members of the Cambridge University Ukrainian Society (CUUS), the University Ukrainian language faculty, and the Ukrainian Heritage, Art and Music Centre.

The candlelit display also saw speeches in both English and Ukrainian, the reciting of Ukrainian poems, and a crowd rendition of the Ukrainian national anthem.

In a press release for the event, Cambridge4UK said: "Ukraine became the epicentre of historical events that both affect global everyday life and shape our common future. We refuse to be forgotten and we will not forget."

Those at the event were keen to emphasise the importance of still supporting Ukraine, with one speaker saying: "Every single one of you here today are more important than you've ever been, because in the beginning it's very easy to get a large crowd, now it's a different story."

Vladimir Masaltin, President of CUUS, was asked by *Varsity* if he thought that the University was doing enough for Ukraine. He said: "I don't think so, have we seen any flags flying around? Have we seen any news? I was trying to find a room for an exhibition and I texted so many colleges, I had 20 answers no. Do you think they're doing enough?"

Cambridge University has currently not acknowledged the anniversary of the invasion either through a formal statement or any social media platforms,

Continued on page 3 ►

Editorial

This time last year the newly anointed SU President-elect, Fergus Kirman, declared the SU is “in a pit, and we’ve got to get out of it” and promised that “change is coming”. One year later though, the SU is still in that same pit. Voter turnout is pitiful, there’s no tuition fee refund on the horizon, and most students on the street don’t even realise it exists let alone are they able to tell you what it does.

Kirman might have come into the election as an outsider to the system who wants to cut through the noise and provide meaningful change but, a year on, he has barely anything to show for it. For years we’ve been promised reading weeks, tuition fee refunds, an SU bar, more social spaces, an increase to the Cambridge bursary scheme, and so much more but hardly any of this has come to fruition. Even the SU’s new policy of making NHS prescriptions free has hardly been rolled out to colleges, maybe because JCRs don’t want to make prescriptions free or because they just didn’t know it was happening.

So where does the onus for the apathy lie? Admittedly, it’s not as though it’s just Kirman’s fault - voter turnout has been decreasing for years now (18% in 2021, 12% in 2022, 10.8% in 2023) and isn’t showing any signs of huge revival no matter how many infantilizing pizza parties are promised. It also can’t be because students aren’t interested in

politics or local democracy as even JCR politics feels more engaging than the SU and Cambridge students are often overly political. So it must be the SU as an institution itself - students just don’t believe that the SU has any power.

If you’ve gone anywhere in Cambridge this week, it’s likely that you’ve been accosted by SU staff imploring you to vote in this year’s election. But what difference does your vote actually make? In what ways are the candidates actually different? Most importantly of all, this time next year, will anything have changed? Or will the university still be stuck in a Groundhog’s Day style loop of overpromising and under delivering. It feels like the idea of tuition fee refunds or reading weeks have been promised for at least as long as we’ve been at this university but nothing ever gets past the consultation stage. It’s no surprise then that students don’t think the SU has power to change aspects of our student lives, after all we’ve had countless fruitless promises made to us.

Annual SU expenditure is £1.2 million. For that money students deserve an SU that functions better than this. One that can motivate students to be interested in it. One that can fight for students against University bureaucracy. And, most importantly, an SU that can provide students with the most meaningful change possible - £2 pints.

Michael Hennessey & Daniel Hilton

Editors-in-chief, Lent 2024

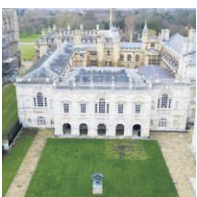
Uni academic head admits ‘failures’ over ‘race-realist’ fellow



▲ CHRIS LORDE

IN THE PAPER

News



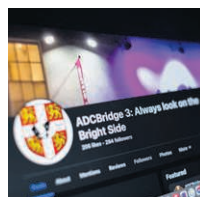
Hardship applications double
Number of applicants jumps from 117 to 292 in one year
(PAGE 7)

Interviews



The prime minister who never was?
Theresa May’s deputy prime minister on his time in and after politics
(PAGE 10)

Theatre



The dark truth behind ADCBridge 3
Varsity investigates the demise of the anonymous confessions page
(PAGE 28)

Tommy Castellani and Sam Hudson
Deputy News Editor and News Correspondent

Pro-vice-chancellor for education Professor Bhaskar Vira has said “there have been failures” in the process of appointing “race-realist” fellow Nathan Cofnas as a supervisor and examiner.

Following a protest on Sidgwick site yesterday, a Black student who went to the student services building to complain was asked whether he was a “current student at Cambridge” and told “I’m asking because ARU has a different complaints system”.

After facing mounting backlash, Cofnas has voluntarily resigned from his teaching and examining responsibilities, Varsity can reveal.

In controversial blog posts, Cofnas argued in favour of the “preservation of racial distinctions” and said the number of black professors at Harvard would “approach zero” in a meritocracy.

Renewed pressure is mounting against the University to sack Cofnas after the protest was on Sidgwick site yesterday.

Students chanted “fire Nathan Cofnas” and accused the University of insincerity in their response to Cofnas’ blog posts.

One student said they were “just given excuses” at a meeting, which was held by Philosophy faculty chair Angela Brietenbach, and attended by Professor Vira, to hear student opinion.

Another student said that in the context of rising racial hatred, “there is not a clear line between speech is just speech and action is just action”.

“Speech causes violence and there is blood on the hands of Nathan Cofnas and there is blood on the hands of the Cambridge University philosophy faculty,” he alleged.

Cofnas was appointed to examine the Philosophy part 1A paper sat by freshers this year, even after students raised concerns about his controversial views about race.

In 2022, students circulated a petition calling for the termination of Cofnas’ employment and the Philosophy faculty organised one to one meetings with students to hear their concerns.

A town hall on Cofnas’ employment was held on Wednesday evening at Emmanuel College, where Cofnas is a research affiliate, hosted by Emma Master Doug Chalmers and Homerton Principal Lord Simon Woolley.

Lord Woolley told the town hall: “I see it for what it is. Abhorrent racism, masquerading as pseudo-intellect.”

“There is no place for bigots in institutions like this,” he said.

According to Woolley, the first black man to head a Cambridge College, “We should protect free speech but not at the expense of abhorrent racism.”

Woolley suggested that the University should sack Cofnas, telling the room: “If this is not gross misconduct [...] I don’t know what is.”

A petition calling for the termination of Cofnas’ employment has amassed over 800 signatures.

At the Philosophy faculty meeting, Brietenbach said the faculty has tightened its hiring procedures following the backlash.

Vira said at the meeting he believes

Cofnas has “crossed a line” when it comes to concerns for freedom of speech and the University is seeking legal advice on freedom of speech law.

Alice Hickson, a philosophy undergraduate who attended the meeting, told Varsity: “The dynamic of the meeting quite quickly established itself as a few black students having to provide quite intense, emotive and personal testimony to convince the faculty staff that the situation was as bad as it clearly is.”

“I think we were made to feel like we should be grateful for having the bare minimum in terms of transparent communication with the faculty, which, as Philosophy students, is exactly what we are owed,” she said.

Cambridge UCU have released a statement, saying they are “particularly dismayed” at how Cofnas “promotes a discredited, ‘scientific’, ‘biological’ understanding of ‘race’ and associated abhorrent ideas regarding the assessments of groups and their social positions.”

“This is not only a form of race pseudo-science, but also of eugenics, which have both caused unspeakable harm in the world and should be actively fought under any circumstances,” they said.

The Philosophy faculty has published a statement, saying “The Faculty recognises the importance of upholding academic freedom and freedom of speech within the law, but remains resolutely committed to eliminating racism and unlawful discrimination of all kinds.”

The University has declined to clarify whether Cofnas’ comments breached its freedom of speech policy.

Comment



I’m sick of Cambridge’s workload problem

If our work gets derailed by the slightest cold, then the university needs to change, argues Matthew Taylor.....Page 15



May Ball committees, your theme won’t change the world

Ruby Cline argues that May Ball themes have gone too far, and there’s no harm done by repeating an old theme.....Page 14

Anti-abortion protest sparks student anger

Arwen Godingen
Deputy News Editor

Cambridge students have condemned anti-abortion protests held outside St John's College, criticising the campaign's "deliberately divisive rhetoric".

The demonstration, held earlier this month, was organised by the Centre for Bio-Ethical Reform UK (CBRUK). The group displayed graphic imagery of aborted fetuses while campaigners interacted with members of the public to "expos[e] the reality of abortion".

Student group Cambridge University for Reproductive Rights (CURR) have said they were "appalled" by the campaigner's use of "graphic, gruesome, and misleading images," which was "intended to cause distress and polarise the public".

One student who engaged with the campaigners stated that they had "little to no empathy with the extreme harm that their upsetting imagery, and their outdated attitudes, were causing".

Sammy McDonald, a second-year History student at John's who witnessed

the protest, told *Varsity*: "I was sad to see such graphic intimidation of women outside John's using photoshopped and misleading images, as well as deliberately divisive rhetoric."

The CBRUK website states that their mission is to "[educate] society on the humanity and value of unborn children and the reality of abortion". The website has been criticised for its use of graphic imagery and comparison of abortions to genocides.

CBRUK is a British branch of the larger American CBR company. Although the CBR states its mission is not religious, the group claims: "The founders of CBR UK and its staff are all committed Christians, motivated by the revealed love of God for us and for all human beings, whatever their size or level of development."

McDonald told *Varsity*: "Protesters demonstrated little to no empathy with the extreme harm that their upsetting imagery, and their outdated attitudes, were causing, and I was disgusted, upon discussion, by the attempts to minimise victims of sexual assault and rape in this

protest."

"Amid growing global threat to abortion rights across the world, students must organise and protest to protect themselves against these wannabe demagogues and defend bodily autonomy worldwide," he said.

CBRUK was the subject of controversy in 2018 after BBC News revealed that the company's project, Abort 67, had claimed £29,000 in Gift Aid, a tax break that allows charities to reclaim tax on donations from UK taxpayers.

CBRUK is not registered as a charity, despite it being a legal requirement for charities with over £5,000 in income to be registered with the regulator.

The group responded to these claims, stating: "It has taken the Charity Commission a lot longer to get this going but now it has been rolled out we have begun the process of registering through the Charity Commission. It's not something we have been wanting to put off; on the contrary we have been keen to get on with this process."

CBRUK found further controversy in 2023 after the group claimed it would

"actively" engage with individuals who attended an event organised by the National Secular Society (NSS) on the history and evolution of contraception.

The organisers stated they were "baffled", and Bob Forder, the presenter of the talk, stated: "Our event is about contraception in the 19th century - which aimed to reduce abortion. It's bizarre that this group want to picket it."

CBRUK told *Varsity*: "We frequently collaborate with survivors of rape. It is heinous to claim that killing their child helps a rape victim. Alleging our images are photoshopped is false and clearly demonstrates that abortion is far worse than its supporters assert."

"Abortion advocate, Naomi Wolfe stated, "To insist that the truth [showing abortion images] is in poor taste is the very height of hypocrisy." BPAS' Abortionist, Patricia Lohr, proclaimed abortion to be "self-evidently moral" and that performing them was "extremely gratifying." How can a factual abortion photo "intimidate" if abortion is "self-evidently moral"? We would welcome a public debate on this," they said.

Naomi Wolfe is widely described as a conspiracy theorist. The Patricia Lohr quote reported by LifeSite News is not verified, and the media outlet has been banned from Facebook and Twitter for its misleading content.

A spokesperson for Cambridge University for Reproductive Rights said: "We at CURR were appalled to encounter the Center for Bio-Ethical Reform, an American anti-abortion organisation, campaigning in a local public space."

"Their use of graphic, gruesome, and misleading images is intended to cause distress and polarise the public about the experience of abortion - an experience which is common, safe, and medically routine," the group said.

"This same group previously targeted Labour MP Stella Creasy whilst she was pregnant by billboard her constituency with graphic pictures of fetuses. They campaigned against the legalisation of abortion in Ireland, and claimed almost £30,000 in Gift Aid by 2018, despite not being registered as a charity in the UK," they added.

Students commemorate two-year anniversary of Ukraine war



▼ MARTHA SHAWYER

Continued from front page

CUUS noted. The University has also failed to fly the Ukrainian flag to commemorate the invasion since 2022, the society said.

Anastasiia Koziak, CUUS secretary, added: "We do acknowledge and appreciate the support the University has provided for those students who are here, but Ukraine and Ukrainian students need more support."

Michael Clegg, a University administrator and Ukraine campaigner, told *Varsity*: "When the full-scale invasion first happened, there was support for Ukraine right across Cambridge and the University. Russian aggression was obvious and Ukraine was the plucky underdog. That support isn't always so evident today."

"Yet it's now, after two years of terrible war, that Ukraine's dedication to a democratic future is most impressive and our solidarity most needed. It's understandable that the war in Gaza takes a lot of people's attention, but there's no anti-colonialism worth the name that doesn't stand with Ukraine, its armed forces as well as its people," Clegg continued.

"Everyone in Cambridge - the people and the University - need to step up and stand by Ukraine for the long-haul, whether through providing resources and hospitality, or just staying clear-eyed about false narratives that pretend surrender to fascism is peace," he said.

A University spokesperson told *Varsity*: "We will continue to do everything we can to support students and staff who have been impacted by Russia's war on Ukraine. The welfare, wellbeing, and safety of our community is, and will remain, our priority."

News

Sarah Anderson wins SU presidency

Eleanor Mann
Senior News Editor

Sarah Anderson was elected as the new undergraduate president of the SU last night (29/02), with Sumouli Bhattacharjee being elected postgraduate president.

With 1400 votes, Sarah Anderson was elected in the first round of the elections, stating that she felt: "Tired, but very happy!"

A current Fitzwilliam undergrad, Anderson said her plans were "to go back to Fitzwilliam and go to the college bar and thank them all for turning out."

She added that her first task in her position would be to "assess where things are" and "where you can start working on immediately to get help out there."

Fitzwilliam was the college with the largest voter turnout, with 28% of their students voting.

Across the University, 2862 students voted, with 2071 of those being undergraduates and 786 postgraduates. The turnout (roughly 10% of the University's total student body) is roughly



▲ DANIEL HILTON

the same as last year.

The current undergraduate president, Fergus Kirman, said: "I am delighted that we have such a strong team of sabbatical officers elected, and I have absolute confidence in them to keep pushing the SU forward in a really positive way, to keep building trust in students, and to keep pushing to meaningful change in the coming year once they start in July."

Sumouli Bhattacharjee was elected with 782 votes in the first round, and 801 votes in the second round.

Bhattacharjee stated that: "The only thing that helped me is the pages that I put in my manifesto. They were in a very clear format of what really matters to us, and I also did not try to over-promise - I just kept it on what I thought was deliverable, and so I think the vote is for that."

The other officers elected last night were Katie Clarke for undergraduate access, education and participation officer (AEP), Neela Maadhuree Aramandla for postgraduate AEP Officer, Manjari Gupta for women's officer and Chalo Waya for disabled students' officer. Maroof Rafique was re-elected for BME officer.

Pink Week Ball cancelled for second year running

Patrick Dolan
Deputy News Editor

The Pink Week Ball has been cancelled for the second time in a row by organisers, due to a lack of ticket sales, *Varsity* can reveal.

The ball was also cancelled just last year due to the ongoing cost-of-living crisis.

The event had already been rescheduled from February to the new 7 March date earlier this year because funds from recently secured sponsors were not due to be transferred by the original date.

Prospective attendees were promised "a starrier night better than ever" and the "best (for quality and relative price) ball this year" on social media.

In a statement seen by *Varsity*, Lauren Herd, president of Pink Week 2024 expressed her "great shame" over the need to cancel the ball "due to circumstances outside of our control".

"I am so very proud of every one of the ball committee and their hard work towards the event, and commend them for their perseverance even through the tough times".

"I hope that Pink Week 2024 will be remembered for its many successes, and encourage any individuals who have not donated already to do so via our Just-



▲ CHARLIE GRIGGS

Giving link, as every penny could save a life," Herd said.

Adriana Midkiff, co-president of the Pink Week Ball, described "leading the committee" as a "wonderful experience".

"The Pink Week Ball will hold a special place in my heart. It allowed me to meet and work with a team of incredibly talented individuals in support of an important cause," they said.

The co-president also commended the team behind the ball, as they "displayed the highest level of professionalism, motivation and drive in regards to laying the foundation for what was set to be an incredible night".

"I personally commend each and every one of them, and I wish that circumstances were different, so their efforts would have been brought to fruition," Midkiff said.

The organisers also confirmed that everyone who purchased a ticket will be refunded the full face value. They emphasised vigilant commitment to using sponsorship money to pay for early expenses so that refunds could be managed smoothly and efficiently "in the worst-case scenario".

"We hope that our efforts in Pink Week as a whole will help support future Pink Weeks and the fight against breast cancer," they said.

SEO/LONDON

SPONSORS FOR EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY

HAVE YOU SECURED YOUR NEXT CORPORATE INTERNSHIP?

OPPORTUNITIES: access to internships & work experience with 140+ world class employers

SUPPORT: free training, mentoring & employment support

LIFELONG NETWORK: professional connections through our Alumni programme

GIVING BACK: volunteer & pave the way for future generations to follow

JOIN US

campus@seo-london.org
www.seo-london.org

ecm

THE HIGH-TECH RECRUITMENT EXPERTS

CAMBRIDGE • UK

Software • Electronics • Mechanical • Maths & Physics
Applied Sciences • Consultancy • Graduate / PhD

Let us do the detective work.

From knowing what jobs are out there to advice and guidance through the hiring process, we work with you.

01223 81 33 99
register@ecmselection.co.uk
ecmselection.co.uk/university

Emmanuel paid 50 staff below living wage

Felix Armstrong
Senior News Editor

Emmanuel College paid fifty of its workers below the national living wage last academic year, *Varsity* can reveal.

Freedom of Information statistics obtained by Harvey Brown, the Student Union's welfare and community officer, have uncovered that these 50 staff were paid less than £10.42 per hour.

These staff account for 23 % of the employees paid directly by the College.

All workers aged 23 or over are entitled to the living wage, with staff under this age entitled to the minimum wage.

The lowest hourly wage paid out to Emmanuel's casual workers was £7.49, which is the minimum wage for 18 to 20 year-olds.

The lowest wage the College paid its contracted staff was £11, which stands below the new living wage to be introduced on 1 April, £11.44.

The SU has long been pressuring colleges to pay the Real Living Wage, which stands above the national living wage, at £12 outside of London.

Brown told *Varsity*: "In the collegiate university – like the country at large – workers are being hurt by outsourcing, low pay, and a lack of recognised unions in colleges. Student workers are forced to accept more precarious work, as are casualised members of staff in colleges."

"What does it say about the 'commu-



▲ TXLLXT TXLLT / WIKIMEDIA COMMONS <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/deed.en>

nities' colleges claim to be if they won't pay workers enough to live on?" the sabbatical officer questioned, saying: "As students and workers we must refuse to accept attacks on staff and stand together to demand good conditions for all and a Cambridge pay weighting."

"Some colleges (Queens, Girton, Selwyn, Fitzwilliam) are leading by example in paying the real living wage. Emmanuel and every other college should take note and pay the real living wage with a Cambridge weighting," Brown said.

Cambridge SU has long been cam-

paigning for colleges to pay the Real Living Wage. In 2022, Emmanuel sat at the bottom of the SU's Taylor's table, which ranks colleges on the lowest wage they pay to staff.

This investigation found that the College paid some staff £6.83 per hour in

the year 2021/22.

This comes in the same week as the Government named Emmanuel among 500 companies that failed to pay minimum wage. The College deprived 47 workers of £3,924.75 in total wages, which have now been paid following Government pressure.

The College told *Varsity* that this particular issue is "historical", arising from "a misunderstanding about how the NMW legislation applied to a small number of students who worked on a voluntary basis in the student bar". These unpaid wages date to a period before June 2018.

Responding to the new 2022/23 statistics, Emmanuel College told *Varsity*: "The College closely monitors staff salaries across the University and Cambridge colleges to ensure that our salaries remain fair and competitive. Each year we take into account the real living wage set by the Living Wage Foundation when we consider the cost of living award to be applied for all staff."

"All our permanent staff have been paid the Real Living Wage, or more, since before 2023. In January, the College made further pay awards to ensure staff benefit from the increased level of the Real Living Wage. The only exceptions are some of the students working in our bar. Which is rather uniquely student run and operates on not-for-profit basis," the College said.

MOUNTVIEW DRAMATIC TRAINING

POSTGRADUATE COURSES IN

Acting
Creative Producing
Musical Theatre
Site-Specific Theatre Practice
Stage and Production Management
Theatre Directing
Theatre for Community and Education

Find out more at
mountview.org.uk

UEA University of East Anglia

Southwark
Council

FDS FEDERATION OF
DRAMA SCHOOLS

CDMT
Accredited School

AMTC
ALLIANCE OF MUSICAL THEATRE CONSERVATORIES

"AdvanceHE
Affiliate Member 23-24

News

Around town



Eleanor Mann & Patrick Dolan

Cambridge's 'criminal hotspots' revealed

Cambridge's most anti-social hotspots have been revealed in the Home Office's crime crackdown report released yesterday (15/02). Among the sixteen places listed are Mill Road, Drummer Street, Gonville Place, and Post Office Terrace off St Andrew's Street. Although the county has some of the lowest crime rates nationwide, Cambridgeshire police are set to receive £1mn from the government to carry out patrols to tackle anti-social behaviour.

Fan flies from China to watch Cambridge United match that gets cancelled nine minutes in

8,000 miles was the journey one football fan took to watch his favourite team play in the Cambridge stadium - only for the match to be cancelled nine minutes in. Andy Bebbington had intended to support his home team, the Bolton Wanderers, against Cambridge United, but had a "sinking feeling" as rain started to hammer down. Flooding on the pitch forced players off the pitch, as Bebbington was left to mourn his £800 flight expenses in a local pub.

Council to face £1.6m in legal costs after Cambridge busway fatalities

A Cambridge council is bracing for £1.6 million in legal costs as it faces prosecution over three fatalities and one life-changing injury on a local guided busway between 2015 and 2021. The council has already spent £617,000 on legal advice and may incur an additional £1 million for potential trial expenses. At the end of last year, the council announced its commitment to allocate £920,000 for the construction of a new safety fence along the pathway and the guided bus lane in the southern segment of the busway.

Thief meats justice

A 29-year-old, dubbed a 'prolific meat thief,' has been barred from all Co-Op stores in and around Cambridge. He received a 20-week prison sentence for stealing steak and mince from four locations between 15th January and 7th February. The ban, also extending to specified bicycle-related items, is to be enforced until June 2024.

Cambridge making 'no progress' on climate goals, says audit

Felix Armstrong
Senior News Editor

Cambridge has "no detailed plan" for its carbon reduction goals, according to an annual report on the University's management structures.

The report of the Audit Committee, which assesses the University's "regulatory compliance" every year, found that there is a "lack of allocated funding to enable the delivery" of Cambridge's carbon targets.

In 2020, the University pledged to cut its greenhouse gas emissions to zero by 2038. Many of the commitments behind this promise fell upon the University Endowment Fund, whose goals include collating "significant investment" in renewables by 2025, divestment from "meaningful exposure" in fossil fuels by 2030, and net zero emissions across its investment portfolio by 2038.

There is no "detailed plan for the medium-term delivery of these targets", the audit found, with "no key performance indicators to assess progress".

The committee also noted a "lack of governance to support the implementation of decarbonisation interventions within a realistic timeframe".

Jason Scott-Warren, an English professor and member of University Council, told *Varsity*: "The University has am-

bitious emissions reduction plans but it has been slow to put them into action. Our tolerance of failure in this area is linked to our wider inability to grasp the level of threat from climate collapse."

Sam Hutton, Chair of the SU's Ethical Affairs campaign, said: "There is some good progress being made in starting to decarbonise Cambridge; but, as we know, this action is not fast enough. This latest audit proves the critiques students have been making about the

lack of a costed plan, and about how working groups are not able to consistently commit to timelines for better climate policy."

"There is still no commitment to stop installing new gas boilers, the biggest next step in reducing scope 1 and 2 emissions, and no timeline on getting the actual emissions below targets rather than just the market-based emissions. This cannot be yet another example of university governance failing us all on

the climate crisis," Hutton said.

Fergus Kirman, SU President and member of University Council, told *Varsity*: "The University's commitment to reduce carbon emissions from all its activities to net zero by 2038 is an integral part of its approach to the climate crisis. We risk losing credibility as a world-leading institution in climate research if the University fails to deliver decarbonisation of the estate on the timeline promised."

"Students will rightly be concerned by the Audit Committee's report, and will question when the funding and governance support will become available to deliver serious interventions," Kirman said.

The audit committee's remarks come after academics voted down proposals to create a pro-vice-chancellor for sustainability, who could have facilitated a "reset in approach" for Cambridge's green agenda, according to University Council.

The motion to create the role was initially passed by the Vice-Chancellor, before pressure from academics forced Dr Prentice into a U-turn, putting the proposal to a vote, where it was defeated.

Academics proposed a motion to ban all new funded collaborations with the fossil fuel industry late last month, but the University's next steps are unclear.

The University of Cambridge was contacted for comment.



▲ XR CAMBRIDGE

Colleges fine students £8,000 in a year

Tommy Castellani
Deputy News Editor

Fines issued to students for breaches of colleges' rules amounted to more than £8,500 last year, *Varsity* can reveal.

There are significant disparities among colleges related to policies for fining students.

Some colleges say they try to avoid financial penalties "whenever possible", while others fine students for missing supervisions, smoking in bedrooms and leaving mess in kitchens.

Fines issued by three colleges made up roughly two thirds of student fines last year.

Emmanuel, Jesus and Magdalene Colleges collectively fined students over £5,500.

The most common reason students were fined at Emma and Jesus was the late payments of bills, while at Magdalene most fines were issued for failing to complete exeat formalities.

Students at Magdalene must meet with their tutor and fill out an exeat form confirming they have "kept term" (been in Cambridge for a minimum of 59 nights).

Failure to follow these procedures incurs a £30 fine. At Selwyn, there are fines of £20 for failing to fill out exeat forms or if a student does not meet with their DoS or Tutor at the beginning and end of each term.

Some colleges also fine students for disciplinary matters investigated by the dean or to recover the cost of damage to accommodation.

Gonville & Caius College fined 11 students a total of £1.1k for hosting a house party in college accommodation this term.

The students who were told they had to pay £100 each said they asked the College for a non-financial penalty but this was denied.

Alternative means of punishment include community service, writing essays or letters of apology.

Trinity Hall disclosed they only fine students for one very specific breach of the College rules: the misuse of fire safety equipment.

Magdalene, St Catherine's, Caius, Trinity and Girton all issued fines of £100 or more last year.

While the amount colleges take in fines has decreased significantly since Covid, when one college alone fined students more than £5.5k, their continued existence is a subject of debate.

One student who was fined £100 told *Varsity*: "A blanket fine of £100 seems an elitist means of punishing students. No consideration is taken of socio-economic backgrounds, leaving some students in extremely tricky financial situations, having to have further difficult and awkward conversations with their College."

Gonville & Caius was contacted for comment.

Robinson cracks down on 'scam societies'

Isabel Dempsey
Associate Editor

Robinson JCR is cracking down on "scam societies," amid student complaints that some use student funds to pay for activities among friend groups.

Following the crackdown, the college's inflatables and speed cubing societies are yet to prove their authenticity.

Robinson College's Student Association (RCSA) has passed a motion to remove funding from these societies, which are "using RCSA funding without publicly announcing their events, or their existence at any stage beyond their creation in an open meeting".

Alex Myall, RCSA President, said at the meeting that the motion aims to prevent "people [from] bullshitting and sending out emails [although] they don't really want you and don't provide any information on how to actually do anything in relation to that". He said that the policy, which is already constitutionally, will be enforced so that "we won't continue funding scam societies".

As one student in the meeting said: "If there's a society that's taking up money that could be used for something else more productively, it is in all of our interests to keep the list of societies productive and clean."

College societies sent emails to students to prove their existence, including the Angling Society and the Cold Water

Swimming Society.

RCSA president, Alex Myall, told *Varsity*: "The reason I felt this motion was necessary, is that several RCSA-funded societies had been running events without informing the college at large about it; this does not mean that I think Robinson has a problem with societies in general."

"It was more that several new societies had failed to properly advertise themselves; this was hopefully more of a gentle reminder that RCSA funding is conditional on that advertisement, and that societies must be open in 'principle and practice' (in the constitution) to all members of the College", he added.

"The Treasurer will be making sure that all societies meet this condition of the constitution before they are given funding in the next budget. And societies that do not meet these conditions will not be funded or reimbursed," Myall said.

Robinson's BBQ society came under fire on the college's Facebook confession page, Love From the Bricks, as one user commented: "Robinson BBQ society should be disbanded. It is not a real society but just a bunch of annoying rugby boys using college money to pay for their food. Why is their Instagram private?"

Following this, the society sent an email inviting students to follow its Instagram, though the account remains private.

Undergrad applications to Uni hardship funding double

Hannah Gillott
Associate Editor

The number of applications made to the University Hardship Fund more than doubled last year, a Varsity investigation can reveal.

In the academic year 2021/22, 117 applications were made to the Hardship Fund, a scheme which provides grants to students in “unforeseen financial need”. 102 were successful. Last year, this jumped to 292 applications, with 211 successful claims.

This represents a drastic increase in the number of undergraduate students in need of financial support, and a departure from a fairly consistent level of need in the five years prior – between 2018-22, an average of 114 students applied for Hardship Funding, with a peak at 163 in 2020/21.

While the number of successful applications last year increased by 106% – from 102 to 211 – the amount awarded has increased by a whopping 215%. Cambridge awarded £296,024 last year, an amount far higher than the £94,043 granted in 2021/22.

This increase in funding dished out by the University means that each applicant has been receiving far more than previously offered, with an average of £1403 awarded per applicant this year, compared to £922 in 2021/22. For the first time in the last 5 years, applicants have

received in excess of £2500.

While Cambridge has made efforts to keep up with the increase in demand, the percentage of successful applications has fallen. The 72% success rate in the academic year 2022/23 was substantially lower than the years 2018-22, during which an average of 85% of applications were successful.

Cambridge cited the cost of living crisis as one of the main reasons for students’ financial difficulties last year, alongside parents being less able to offer financial support, and other unforeseen family circumstances.

In 2022, an NUS survey revealed 96% of students were cutting back as a result of the crisis, with 1 in 10 accessing food banks. 90% of students surveyed said that their mental health had been adversely affected.

Although maintenance loans have increased gradually over the last 5 years, this has not matched rates of inflation. Last January, the IFS warned that these real term decreases in maintenance support would leave students on maximum maintenance loans £1,500 poorer.

This cut – 11% in real terms – in government support, is larger than any real cuts since the early 1960s, according to the House of Commons library.

Maintenance loans are also, in real terms, becoming harder to access. Since 2008, the household income level at which a student qualifies for the maximum maintenance has remained

unchanged at £25,000, even as the purchasing power of that income has declined. CPI data suggests that goods and services costing £25,000 in 2008 would now be valued at £38,741.

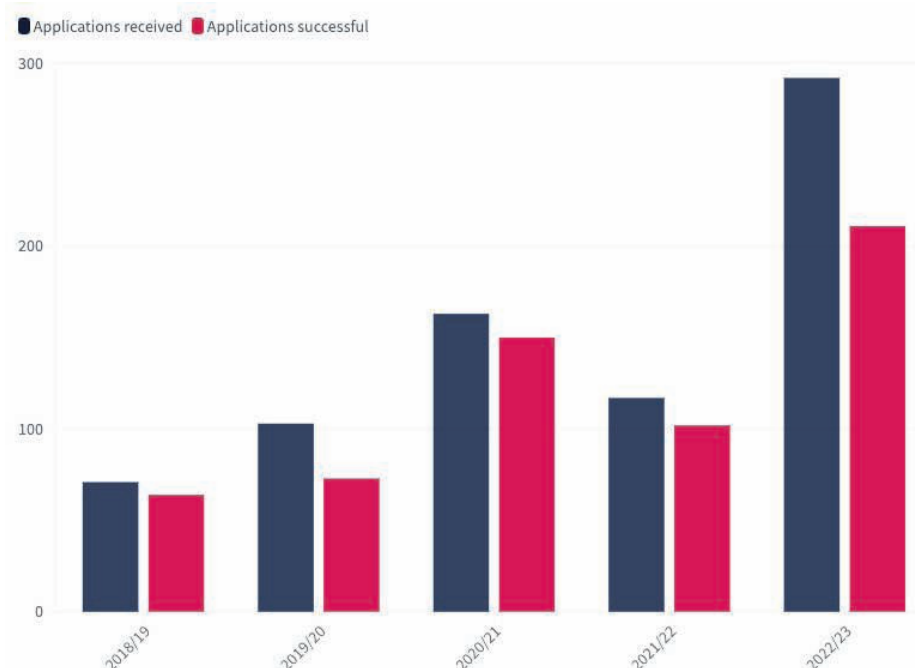
Although Cambridge has set aside an extra £500,000 for the hardship fund, it has failed to match other cost of living policies implemented by Russell Group Unis. The University has not offered one off payments, or bursary uplifts. Unlike Edinburgh and LSE, rent was not frozen.

Even the £500,000 injection into hardship funding pales in comparison to the £2.5 million committed by the University of Sheffield.

When approached for comment, the Chair of the Class Act Campaign at Sidney told Varsity: “The cost of living crisis has hit university students hard, like everyone in the UK. Cambridge is an extremely expensive city with not a lot of affordable spaces, and given that the Cambridge bursary

isn’t rising with inflation it is no surprise that students are facing more financial difficulties than in previous years. The university needs to take a long hard look at how it handles its bursary system so that it can be adjusted accordingly to this new financial climate we find ourselves in, to ensure that being able to afford to live is not a barrier to studying at this university”

The University of Cambridge was contacted for comment.



Varsity The Varsity Trust

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

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

Up to £5,000 is potentially available.

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



OXFORD SUMMER COURSES



RECRUITING NOW FOR SUMMER 2024

FOR AGE GROUPS:

- 9-12
- 13-15
- 16-17
- 18-24

SEASONAL ROLES INCLUDE:

- Tutors
- On-Course Staff

 LOCATIONS: OXFORD, CAMBRIDGE, HARROW AND WINDSOR

SCAN QR CODE FOR MORE INFORMATION



Contact us
recruitment@oxfordsummercourses.com

News

A tale of two wankers

Rumours of a suspected 'New Court Wanker' have sparked controversy and outrage at Christ's College, with students reporting sights of public masturbation in the typewriter building. However, this is not the only scene of the crime, as suspicions have arisen of a second 'Chribrary Wanker', targeting the college library. *Varsity* has also heard reports of a "Sidge Wanker" in recent days, however it as of yet remains unclear whether these offenders are related - or if they are indeed the same person.

Byronathon at Trinity

Trinity College hosted a 24 hour reading of the works of Lord Byron last Friday (23/02). College staff, students and alumni (including *The Crown* actor Pip Torrens and Trinity's Master Dame Sally Davies) took part in the reading in Trinity's chapel to commemorate 200 years since Byron's death. Byron was notorious for keeping a bear as a pet while at Trinity, as the college rules banned students owning dogs. After graduating, Byron went on to fight in the Greek War of Independence and write a number of poems.

Stroke of bad luck

Lower crews of the Lent Bumps' divisions will be unable to participate following the cancellation of the Getting On Race (GoR) last week. The GoR allows for the lowest crews of the divisions to compete for places at Bumps. Bad weather and river conditions have led Cambridge University Combined Boat Clubs (CUCBC) to cancel the event as it "could not safely go ahead". Rowers in the lower boats have expressed their disappointment, saying they have "nothing to show" for their hard work.

Wild swimming - Cam it be done?

Parts of the notoriously filthy River Cam could soon be safe to swim in, says the Department for Environment, Food, and Rural Affairs (DEFRA). Sheep's Green, just past Coe Fen, has been shortlisted by the government to possibly become an official inland swimming spot, meaning that DEFRA would regularly monitor water quality and investigate sources of pollution. Speaking to *Cambridge News*, Anne Miller, a member of the Cam Valley Forum, called the move a "great step forward" for wild swimming in Cambridge.



CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS
BOOKSHOP

20% OFF*

ALL BOOKS FOR HOLDERS OF
CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY AND CAMCARDS

SIMPLY PRESENT YOUR CARD IN STORE

WE ALSO STOCK A WIDE RANGE OF CAMBRIDGE RELATED GIFTS AND SOUVENIRS



Illustration by Richard Briggs



1 Trinity Street, Cambridge CB2 1SZ

01223 333333

✉ bookshop@cambridge.org

*Offer can't be combined with other promotions

University watch

Patrick Dolan rounds up student news from around the country

Oxford serves Halal menu with red wine

St Antony's College, Oxford is facing criticism for offering a Halal menu option in its dining hall that included red wine. The menu, which featured "Halal minted lamb pasty with a red wine jus-lie," was shared by a PhD student who called it an example of an "Oxford college trying diversity". The menu has sparked backlash online, with some expressing embarrassment and disappointment with Oxford's most international college. This incident follows a similar mistake in the past involving bacon-wrapped chicken being served to Saudi dignitaries at the same college.

Valentine's Day 'wife-beater' social at Cardiff

Cardiff University's Psychology Rugby Club is facing backlash and alleged bans from the SU following a Valentine's Day social where members dressed as "wife beaters," wearing white vests and drinking Stella Artois. While the club claims the theme was originally meant to be "dead beat dads," the SU has confirmed that there is still an ongoing investigation in place. The rugby club maintains, however, that "the issue has been dealt with" and claims it "paints a false image of our club and its members".

Prominent London universities set to merge

City, University of London, and St George's, University of London, have announced that they are merging to form "City St George's" from August. The combined institution aims to become a major higher education destination and a "health powerhouse" in London. The merger has been welcomed by Sir Patrick Vallance as an "exciting opportunity" to educate future generations of healthcare professionals, with full integration to occur gradually after the start of the next academic year.

Bristol removes slave trade connection from logo

Bristol University has removed the dolphin emblem associated with Edward Colston, a 17th-century investor in the slave trade, in its new logo. The dolphin crest has been replaced by a book, which aligns with the university's commitment to education. The decision to change the logo was made in November last year and remains part of the £10m Reparative Futures program which aims to address racial injustice. The university will retain the buildings named after its founders, however their historical connections to the slave trade will be acknowledged and contextualised appropriately, Bristol maintains.

In Conversation with Dorothy Byrne

Isabel Dempsey talks art, feminism, and chocolate biscuits with the president of Murray Edwards

Channel 4's ex-head of news. Murray Edwards president. Author, journalist and producer. When I met Dorothy Byrne, I was prepared to be intimidated. Indomitable she may be, the warmth of her humour and the soothing cadence of her Scottish accent put you instantly at ease. This was to be no stiff interview conducted behind an impenetrable oak desk.

Rather reclined in the Medwards porters' lodge, Byrne proudly informs me that 2024 marks 70 years since Medwards' founding, being one of three Cambridge colleges to admit women at its conception. But in an age of gender-equal access, is a women's college still necessary? When offered the role, Byrne was similarly hesitant: "I went to a convent and one all-female institution is enough for any woman in one life." Thankfully, her nunnish perceptions were swiftly de-wimpled - open to the public and accepting of male fellows, Byrne realised the necessity of this inclusive yet female-centred space: "While there is inequality, we do need a women's college." One such inequality is the under-representation of women in STEM. Reeling off horrific statistic after statistic, she explains: "As you move up the hideous pyramid, you get fewer women at each point." Much of her work since becoming president has been organising conferences, planning workshops and building networks to help women climb the ranks of these traditionally masculine industries.

“As you move up the hideous pyramid, you get fewer women at each point

Byrne is also particularly passionate about wellbeing. While some colleges may think of their art as superfluous, Medwards' works are integral: "The College doesn't have an art gallery. It is an art gallery." and living in a gallery "just makes you feel much better". Strong-arming me around the Women's Art Collection she points to works by African-American artist Faith Ringgold, as well as Charlotte Hodes' feminine take on the classical vase. "It's pink," she tells me with an excited grin. Rather than the normal iconography of "spears and shields, here you've got coffee pots, casserole dishes and spatulas" - a somewhat redundant symbol of what it is to be a woman. And instead of men with "perfect muscley bodies, here you see women with all their wobbly bits." For Byrne, the aesthetics of the building, and the opportunities these create, are crucial: "We encourage people to walk on the grass. Lie on the grass. We grow vegetables; we grow herbs; we have proper kitchens. I've introduced freezers." There are even dahlias you can pick with your parents. While I usually maintain that Medwards

looks like an abandoned sci-fi film set, in the bright blue February sun with daffodils bobbing their yellow heads, I begin to appreciate its charm. At the time of the College's erection, a maybe unfittingly phallic word choice, "two architectural critics condemned it as being feminine brutalism. Of course to them just the word feminine, was derogatory, but I now wear that with pride."

As she utters these words her voice is drowned by the raucous sounds of men in business suits. Byrne was right: maybe not a convent, but sadly not the feminine-utopia I'd begun to imagine. Part of the College's goal is to ensure women can speak in supervisions without their voices being overshadowed by men such as these: "If a man interrupts you, just interrupt him back." But why are women so much more susceptible to this self-doubting anxiety? Byrne tells me that "by university in England, young women are three times more likely than young men to say that they're stressed and anxious." Although the College has been granted £150,000 by Christina Dawson to research this, Byrne has her own stunningly simple hypothesis: "I feel there's too much work in some of the courses. If it was up to me, I would reduce the levels" so "that people can be more relaxed and enjoy themselves." Enjoyment was Byrne's own approach to university. After experiencing an unhappy childhood, she "went to university to have a nice time". She tells me: "I looked up what subject it was easiest to get a First in" and thus did her BA in Philosophy. She reflects: "When I was young, nobody expected anything of me. That's terrible, but it wasn't quite so stressful."

After university, she studied for a Business master's at Sheffield University, which in uncharacteristically bad feminist form was because of her then boyfriend. He was interviewing, told her to come along, and the next thing she knew she was the first person with an arts degree to ever be accepted. With

alarming casualness she informs me: "I left the diploma bit because somebody tried to kill me," explaining that the police failed to do anything because she'd had sex with her attacker in the last six months. She relayed this same instance years later to the vice-chancellor of Sheffield, much to the shock-horror of his press officer. Byrne was offered an honorary doctorate soon after: "I'm not saying that's why they gave it. But I wanted to write to the man who tried to strangle me to death and say you contributed to me becoming an honorary doctor. Thank you."

But this was not to be the last of her near-death experiences. While teaching in Nigeria an accident left her immo-

bilised for the next year: "I didn't know if I would ever walk again." Then 24, she began applying to journalism schemes only to discover she was above the cut-off age. One editor told her: "Not only will I not give you a job, nobody ever will." At the time *Reader's Digest* sent out unsolicited mail addressed: "Dear lucky reader, you have won, you have won, you won." And so, she wrote to 50 editors: "Dear lucky editor, you have won, you have won, you have won, the trainee journalist of a lifetime competition." Of the 50, only one was amused and she landed her first job at the *Waltham Forest Guardian*. Still struggling to walk, she would go to the phone box at the end of the road to get the scoop "then sit in a cafe for the length of time it should have taken me to go and do the story". Although employed, she remained convinced "I'll never live in a house." Now ironically talking to her from inside her house - I got invited round for tea - she might not literally own the building (it's rented from St John's), she does get the rare privilege of living in a president's lodge. From newspapers, to Granada TV, Byrne eventually worked her way up the ranks to Channel 4. Post the media attention surrounding her condemnation of Boris Johnson and the book that followed, she garnered the attention of headhunters, and long story short here we are. In the president's lodge.

She tells me how when the lodge's sofas were delivered she asked the "bloke", or rather the woman (she had ironically misspoken), if she could deliver them Monday, to which she responded: "How do I know the president will be in?" And so Byrne uttered the "golden words" for the very first time: "I am the president!" Even now she repeats the phrase with fittingly dramatic gusto - "I can see why it went to Donald Trump's head." She recalls: "I've been in several situations where people have looked around to see if there's anyone there, but there is no one there. There's just a middle-aged woman, having a cup of tea and reading her book, no-

body at all." And so they have "divulged all their secrets to each other with me sitting next to them". Despite these rare benefits, sexism of this sort is something that Byrne has fought against throughout her career. She is particularly vocal on the horrors of the female body. After making a film about menopause with Davina McCall for Channel 4, the number of women taking hormone replacement therapy (HRT) in the country tripled and Britain ran out. "I was annoyed that I couldn't get my HRT and I thought, who is responsible for this? And I realised, oh that would be me."

“The odd biscuit is absolutely key for wellbeing

More recently, Byrne came under fire for discussing fertility, accused of infantilising women's decision-making abilities and implying that we must have children in our 20s to be happy. "I actually had a baby using IVF at 45, so why would I say that and why would I say you can't be successful? I don't want to show off about it, but I am actually a president." Having spent a year of her life making a series that uncovered this need for fertility education, she tells me: "I believe that a woman cannot be truly empowered if she doesn't as much as possible control her own body at every phase of her life." Criticism has also been raised against her for the fact that so much of Byrne's discussions - of menopause, contraception, and fertility - largely affect straight cis women. Despite frequently referring to Medwards as a "women's college" throughout the interview, in these final moments she makes clear that "you enter this college if you define yourself as a woman when you enter." Be that a cis woman, a trans woman, or somebody who will later discover they are trans. When I pose this criticism, she says: "One of the things that did annoy me about that is that for the past 25 years I have helped the Donor Conception Network, and as a charity a major thing it does is help lesbians and people of all genders to have babies." She expresses frustration that "I was accused of being against" the "very thing I spent 25 years doing".

Moving from college, to gardens, to her home throughout our chat, we conclude the interview munching chocolate from the comically large biscuit jar she keeps around for students - "the odd biscuit is absolutely key for wellbeing." Her house is a feminist haven: images of Diana dancing on the back of Acteon, Judith beheading Holofernes, an empowered rewriting of the *Song of Songs*. As strange as it may be sipping tea in Dorothy Byrne's living room with her pink toes on display, it also feels particularly fitting. Imposing offices and impenetrable desks are simply not the Medwards way.



DOROTHY BYRNE ▲

Interviews

The prime minister who never was?

Jude Crawley speaks to Sir David Lidington, Theresa May's deputy prime minister, on his time in and after politics

It was March 2019 when David Lidington's name hit the headlines. Sunday papers talked of a "Remainer" plot within Theresa May's cabinet to oust May and install Lidington as a caretaker prime minister. As the longest serving Europe minister in recent history, and May's de-facto "deputy" prime minister, Lidington becoming prime minister was far from the wildest idea in 2019 British politics.

When I asked him how these headlines had emerged, Lidington was quick to reassure. "I did have a number of cabinet ministers who came to me and said look, we think that Theresa's position is going to become untenable," he tells me. The 'remainer' cabinet members asked Lidington: "Could you step in and you know, try and hold the show together?"

Lidington told his cabinet colleagues, and the Sky News cameras parked outside his house, that Theresa May had his full support. He tells me he only would have considered the role of caretaker prime minister if May had chosen to step down, something he believes her Christian faith would have prevented, and if there was "consensus around the cabinet table".

Ultimately when May was toppled by a frustrated Tory party, Lidington resigned in anticipation of a Boris Johnson premiership. He suspects it was one of his more Brexit-ite cabinet colleagues who had leaked the interim PM story to the press – though he refuses to give a name, he divulges that the suspect went on to run for the leadership. "There, that gives you a shortlist", he chuckles.

Lidington is evidently uncomfortable with the current direction of his party. Throughout our conversation, he returns to Suella Braverman as the prime example of insane Conservatism, decrying her recent *Telegraph* piece as "mad" and musing he was lucky that his successor MP for Aylesbury was not a Braverman-type.

Lidington has seen his party go mad before. Following a PhD in Tudor History at Cambridge, Lidington entered Conservative politics in the late 1980s, before becoming MP for Aylesbury in 1991. He vividly remembers the Conservative's last spell in opposition.

"Last time round it took from 1997 to 2005, six years for the party to decide it wanted to win and

pausing to adjust his tie, blue with pink swirls tumbling down. "I hope it doesn't take that long again."

While Lidington resists my attempt to get him to endorse a current MP in the seemingly inevitable Conservative party leadership election, he says there are a couple of MPs who "have the right grasp of where the party needs to go". Lidington suggests Tom Tugendhat, Gillian Keegan, Victoria Atkins and Bim Afalomi as future leaders, lamenting the thought of the party "letting Farage in".

Lidington turns to his brief stint as justice secretary to locate his proudest achievement over his long political career. He describes his personal success in resolving

ruled a violation of human rights by European courts in 2005. Britain does continue to deny almost all prisoners voting rights, but Lidington introduced a scheme allowing prisoners in the final year of their sentence to commute from prison to work and re-enfranchised these offenders. This was enough to satisfy the European courts, and Britain was deemed to no longer be in violation of the EU Convention of Human Rights.

This seemed almost small scale for a man who was once the second most senior politician in Britain. But clearly it stood out to Lidington because of how central a role he personally played, "calling round the justice ministers of Europe" and going "to Strasbourg and make[ing] the case".

Talking more widely about the failure of the May government, it does not seem particularly personal to Lidington as his diagnosis of the collapse of May is almost entirely structural. "There were majorities in the House of Commons against any cause of action", he said with an air of nonchalance, and May could not have solved this without crossing the personal red-line of "doing as little harm as possible to the union". Lidington has only one question he keeps asking himself: could the Brexit deadlock have been overcome if he had entered into negotiations with Corbyn's Labour earlier?

As the most senior representative of the government in the cross-party talks which took place in April 2019, Lidington describes a major sticking point with the Labour negotiating team, led by then-shadow Brexit secretary Sir Keir Starmer. Labour insisted on using the term "customs union". "We basically said we

are prepared to accept the customs union in all but name," Lidington tells me, despite May repeatedly telling the media a customs union was not on the cards. Ultimately, "it came down to a bit of politics involved."

“

There is a world out there to go back to when the politics finishes

A historian at heart, Lidington has tried to devote time to historical reading throughout his political career. He credits this habit to a piece of advice his first boss, Thatcher's Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd, gave him in the late 1980s: "Every day, try to read something has nothing to do with work [...] to remind me that there is a world out there to go back to when the politics finishes."

Nowadays, the politics has finished for Lidington. He spends his time chairing a security thinktank and tries to spend one day a week rifling through historical archives in London, revisiting his passion for history stimulated as an undergrad at Sidney Sussex. His next career move? A book on William Cecil, Elizabeth I's chief minister for over 40 years – a political career only marginally longer than Lidington's own.

which was



▲ FCDO PHOTOSTREAM / FLICKR

Meet Booktok sensation Ayman Chaudhary

Ami Khawaja and Ayman Chaudhary talk books and social media

Ayman Chaudhary, better known as @Aymansbooks on TikTok and Instagram has amassed over one million followers on social media and a staggering 138.2 million likes on TikTok. Her account is dedicated to giving reading recommendations, reviews and other short, light-hearted skits.

How would you introduce yourself to someone who's maybe not come across your content?

My name is Ayman and my pronouns are she/her and I'm a content creator on TikTok and Instagram. I talk about all things books, pretty much 24/7.

When did you start posting online and what was that like?

I started posting around 2020. It was basically due to quarantine boredom. I randomly discovered booktok one day. I really liked reading before too, but I didn't really have the time to do it often. It was because of quarantine and being

at home and away from school for longer that I found myself just falling back into the love I had for reading. I began reading again around March 2020, but I didn't start making content until August 2020.

How quickly did you grow followers? At what point did you think to yourself: 'Wow, people are really watching me?'

It was after a few viral videos I got more of a platform. I think around November 2020 was when it kind of struck me and I thought: "I'm getting more of a platform" because even after a couple of viral videos, I didn't take it seriously. I've always loved reading but I never thought I could monetise it and create content around it. I never thought it would be a full time job or anything like that.

Is creating content for TikTok currently your full-time job?

No, I'm also in school. I'm in my third year in college.

Are you studying English? You have to be.

Surprisingly, no. I study graphic design.

How would you say that you deal with negativity or criticism online?

I think TikTok does a very good job when it comes to recommending content using its algorithm. What you see in your for you page, nine times out of ten, is going to be content you'll

like based on your past engagement. Based on this, I'm assuming people who see me on their for you page may like me to some degree. Occasionally, here and there, there are some more negative comments. There are always going to be hate comments no matter what you do, right? That's just the internet. I don't think I get a lot though, and I don't notice it much. It's one of those things that you have to actively seek out to notice it. I don't seek them out. I think doing so is detrimental to your mental health.

How many hours a day or week would you say you spend on creating content?

There's no set schedule or anything like that. I'll do it when I get inspiration. A lot of it comes from me scrolling on my phone in the middle of the night and thinking to myself:

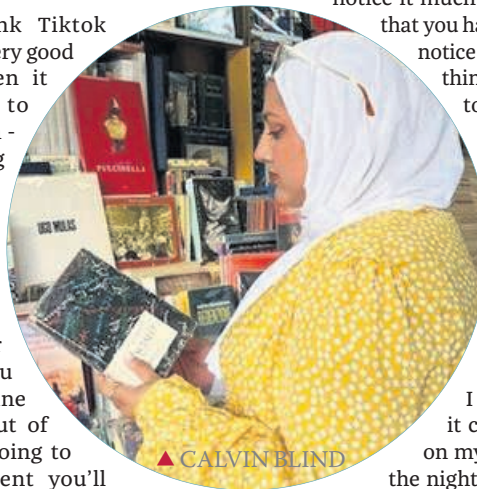
"This is really funny. I should recreate this but make it book-related."

Do you have a dream project that you have yet to accomplish?

I'm quite lucky. I've worked with authors in the past whose books I've read or grew up reading, doing interviews and making content for publishers I enjoy. Right now, I don't think I have one particular dream or goal I want to achieve. I just want a bit of everything if that makes sense. I really enjoy interning at a publishing house currently.

If you could organise a book club with any three authors, living or dead, who would you choose and why?

Definitely Olivia Blake. I love anything that she's written. I think her writing style is very unique. I would love to pick apart her brain.



▲ CALVIN BLIND

HIRING

Summer School 2024

LECTURERS

Are you a **lecturer, fellow, post-doctorate, or PhD student** specialising in...?

Biology
Maths
Physics

Chemistry
Engineering
Technology

Economics
Finance
Sociology

Psychology
International
Relations

ACTIVITY OFFICERS

Are you an energetic undergraduate wanting to work as a **Pastoral & Activity Officer?**(training provided)

Ability to lead debating classes is an advantage (training provided)

Meals and accommodation provided

Please contact Dr Jon Fearon-Jones to find out more: Jon@CambridgeInternationalAcademy

MANAGERS

Part-time & full-time positions available throughout the year

Academic Manager

Sales Manager

Alumni & Internship Manager

Pastoral & Activity Manager

Business Development Manager

Or Scan this QR code to find out more



WE BELIEVE THAT A HIGH QUALITY SUMMER SCHOOL EXPERIENCE SHOULD NOT ONLY BE FOR THOSE WHO CAN AFFORD IT

Since 2016 our British Accreditation Council accredited summer schools and online courses have been helping students learn more about higher education and beyond, and to accomplish their potential. In 2023 we fully funded 25% of our summer school places to deserving but under-represented students. In our 2024 summer schools, we are continuing with this commitment. Come and join us this July and / or August to give all our students a life-changing experience that will remain with them for the rest of their lives.



<https://www.cambridgeinternational.academy/summer-school>
<https://www.cambridgeinternational.academy/scholarships>



We contract Clare College for the use of facilities but otherwise have no connection or association with Clare College or the University of Cambridge.

Features

From Cambridge to the Commons

Nick James speaks to Cantab MPs to find out what is behind Cambridge's lasting influence over Westminster

During the 1980s and 1990s, the halls of Westminster were held captive by a mafia. This mafia sat on the front row of the green leather benches where they wielded enough influence to determine the fate of the country. But this mafia was not from Sicily: they were from Cambridge.

Its members – including Norman Fowler, Michael Howard, Kenneth Clarke, and Norman Lamont – all attended Cambridge in the early 1960s, where they held senior positions in the Cambridge University Conservative Association (CUCA) and the Cambridge Union. It was at Cambridge that the politicians first met and where their political philosophy was moulded. They would go on to hold most senior positions in government bar prime minister, and introduce policies that continue to have a lasting impact on the UK.

Today, the reign of the Cambridge Mafia is over, but even as the UK strives for greater social equality and diversity, Cambridge alumni continue to have significant power in government: almost a quarter of MPs elected at the 2019 general election attended Oxford or Cambridge, and a quarter of the current cabinet attended Cambridge. This includes the deputy prime minister, Oliver Dowden; the most important political decisions about the NHS, the environment, and national security are currently being made by someone who studied here.

Yet not all parts of Cambridge are represented equally in Westminster. A breakdown of the data reveals that at the start of 2024, almost seven in ten MPs who attended Cambridge were Conservative, and the Conservatives continue to be the most Oxbridge-dominated party.

Certain subject backgrounds certainly dominate: Law and History are the chosen areas of study for almost half of all sitting MPs that attended Cambridge. Politics and Economics were also popular choices, but STEM degrees are considerably lacking. This trend is true across all of parliament, and many believe the lack of STEM degrees among MPs is something that needs addressing. This is especially prudent for roles which might benefit from a greater understanding of the science behind the decisions they make, such as the minister for energy security and net zero, a post which is currently filled by a Cambridge Philosophy & Law graduate.



A quarter of the current cabinet attended Cambridge

But how and why do so many from certain corners of Cambridge end up in Westminster? For the Conservative minister Greg Hands, who read History at Robinson in the late 1980s, his time at Cambridge gave him the tools and,

perhaps more importantly, the contacts he needed to break through into politics.

When I spoke to Hands, he recounted how his journey into politics was not initially intentional, first getting involved in the Cambridge University Conservative Association (CUCA) when someone knocked on his door to ask for his vote in the upcoming elections. Hands agreed, and began attending some of the meetings.



Cambridge has a poor track record of converting politicians into prime ministers

He describes how he got sucked in after that, even if he didn't know where he would end up: "I enjoyed being involved in student politics [...] but I wasn't really thinking at that point that I was going to be an MP, a government minister or even a parliamentary candidate." Hands goes on to say that the impressiveness of CUCA's speakers prompted further involvement, and remembers being particularly excited by the idea that "there would [often] be a member of Margaret Thatcher's cabinet speaking to you."

As the terms rolled by, Hands continued to be an active member of the society, eventually becoming chair over its 800 members (at the time).

While chair, Hands invited many influential politicians of the day to give talks at the University, which gradually encouraged him to consider the idea of a political career of his own more seriously. Yet it wasn't just contemporary politicians Hands met while at Cambridge; he was also becoming acquainted with what he describes as his own "Cambridge mafia of the 1980s".

"As it happens, the tops of all the [Cambridge] political organisations at the time went on to be moderately famous," Hands tells me. He's not exaggerating: at the end of the 1980s, Lord Stephen Greenhalgh was Union president; senior Conservative MP Greg Clark was an executive member of the Cambridge Social Democratic Party; former transport adviser to Boris Johnson Andrew Gilligan was News editor of *Varsity* and a member of the Cambridge University Labour Club (CULC); and Robert Chote, chair of the UK statistics authority, was president of the Cambridge University Liberal Association (CULA).

Hands was also an active member of the Cambridge Union, which he believes was very beneficial in helping him become an MP. While his involvement in the Union was as similarly unplanned as his foray into student politics (he did his first debate because no one else wanted to do it), his time at

the Union allowed him to speak to more influential politicians and develop his public speaking skills.

Yet not everyone from Cambridge who would go on to become an MP built up the same confidence and contacts that Hands benefitted from. While Hands "really enjoyed" his time at Cambridge, Daniel Zeichner, the Labour MP who now represents the constituency of Cambridge, had a far less positive experience. Studying at the University a decade before Hands, Zeichner tells a very different story:

"I think Cambridge is a much better city and the universities are much better now than they were in the 1970s. I was from a lower-middle class background and my partner was from a middle-middle class background, and neither of us felt terribly comfortable. So not comfortable did we feel, that we moved out of college about as quickly as we could."

The source of his unease? "I don't think it was the extremes of the Pitt Club and the more traditional fringe [...] But most people weren't similar to us, so

our way of dealing with that was to get our heads down, do the academic work."

Zeichner also studied History at Cambridge, and like Hands, he had no idea he would go into politics when he arrived at university. But, unlike Hands, Zeichner stayed away from student politics and believed that while the Cambridge Union played an important role in hearing from leading political figures, at the time it "represented all we didn't feel comfortable with".

Zeichner only kept a theoretical interest in politics as part of his degree, and suggests the reason that history is such a popular degree for MPs who attended Cambridge is because it concerns studying the exercise of power, and "looking back through most periods, you come to the conclusion you probably want to try and change things." It wasn't until Zeichner graduated in 1979, and when Margaret Thatcher became prime minister, that he became involved in the practical side of politics.

So it appears that Cambridge has no set pathway for its students to progress

into Westminster: some take advantage of the prestige and political opportunities the University and its political societies offer, whereas others focus solely on their academics and choose to pursue politics after graduation.



No matter who wins the next general election, Britain will be led by an Oxford graduate

Yet while Cambridge certainly gets many MPs like Zeichner and Hands into Westminster, it has a very poor track record of converting these politicians into prime ministers. The last PM to have attended Cambridge was Stanley Baldwin, who graduated from Cambridge in 1888. For much of the last couple of centuries, it has been Oxford that has dominated Downing Street, and only one of the seven prime ministers since the turn of the millennium, Gordon Brown, didn't attend its halls.

Moreover, whether it is the Conservatives, Labour, or the Liberal Democrats that win the next general election, Britain will still be led by an Oxford graduate: Rishi Sunak, Keir Starmer, and Ed Davey all completed undergraduate or postgraduate study at Britain's oldest university.

What is the cause of this dominance? Hands suggests it may have something to do with Oxford's infamous PPE course, graduates of which continue to make up an astonishing proportion of Britain's elite. Zeichner, on the other hand, believes the answer is simpler than that: "Power maintains itself," he states.

However, several rising stars across the political spectrum that are speculated to one day lead their parties, including Labour's Wes Streeting and the Conservative's Miriam Cates, are Cambridge graduates, signalling potential future disruption to Oxford's Downing Street supremacy.

But is Cambridge's influence on Westminster even a positive thing for the UK? Hands remains sanguine, believing the skills Cambridge graduates can provide will mean they can provide a positive influence on national politics. Zeichner, despite being the parliamentary representative for the University, is less optimistic: "We would be a better country if we recognised the huge talents coming through right across the country and other universities too."

While the future impact of Cambridge on national politics remains unclear, and while the admissions process to get into Cambridge continues to undergo changes, the unique and abundant academic and political opportunities available to students at the University means that it's almost certain that its lasting influence on Westminster will continue – whether for better, or for worse.

No Tory fogies

By Miranda Watson

PLANS ARE underway to reshape the "old fogey" image of the Young Conservatives, in favour of a fresh, sharper look, ready for the relaunch of the organisation at its annual conference at Eastbourne next month. Abandoning their rather worn slogan, "Britain's Youth, Britain's Future", the YC's are now aiming for a less formal organisation, geared at attracting a broader cross-section of the country's youth.

The media typically portray the YC's as a band of "Hooray Henriks", sporting brogues and Barbours. But Greg Hands, Chairman of the Cambridge University Conservative Association, shuns such an image. "In general the YC's I've come across could not fit such a description. They come from all walks of life, all parts of the country, and all backgrounds," he said. Gillian Wilson of CUSU, recently voted onto the NUS by over 200 votes, certainly does not fit the "old fogey" image. A "scruffy" dresser from Glasgow, she says she is often accused by left-wingers of "not looking like a Conservative". She despises such stereotyping, "I know at least 500 people in the CUCA that aren't old fogies," she said. She described the typical Conservative student in her hometown as having "A cosh in one hand and a bottle in the other."



What! No tie? – CUCA Chairman Greg Hands Jon May

In line with the YC Chairman Nicholas Robinson's goal of a "go-head, influential and incisive" organisation, Greg Hands feels the YC's are taking on a more activist image, with members taking on a wider range of views and playing a more active role in campaigning and canvassing. An internal report, published last month, *Marketing the Young Conservatives* said the YC's were commonly seen to act as "mindless reactionary support for right-wing politics", a view perhaps provoked by the infiltration of extremists from the Federation of Conservative Students, recently disbanded for being too right-wing.

It's a scandal on the dancefloor...

From gatecrashers to window-smashers, Ella Hawes recaps Cambridge's May Ball scandals through the decades

For as long as there have been students walking the streets of Cambridge, there have been students behaving badly. At no point in the year is this more true than in the hallowed, glorious time of May Week, when the agony of exams is over and a seven-day bender concludes the academic year. But what about when there is just a little too much fun, when poor choices lead to carnage, and over-eager committees get a little too edgy?

“The police are perhaps the most common gatecrashers of all

Step back in time with me to the 1920s. A May Ball ticket sets you back £2 or less (roughly £30 in today's money when adjusted for inflation). The best bands travel down from the London clubs to perform all night for couples lining up in the ballrooms. Champagne flows freely, not a lukewarm can of Stella in sight.

Then in 1931, Trinity made the unprecedented step of outlawing gatecrashing, putting a stop to the long long-standing tradition of free movement between balls in the early hours, a ball crawl, if you will. But with the ending of one tradition, another was born. Gatecrashing has now become a ubiquitous feature of May Week, with *Varsity* even publishing a how-to guide for the prospective crasher all the way back in 1965. The article's advice included: bringing a corkscrew and a cigarette lighter to ingratiate yourself with other guests, along with wire-cutters and a lock pick, and not wearing clothing that might impede a swift escape.

It appeared that a certain student back in 1992 took this advice to heart, rocking up uninvited to a Pembroke May Week event “naked except for a pair of boots”. Astonishingly, they let him in anyway, because they

“didn't think he should stand around in the street” in his current state. This inspired several other gatecrashers to try out his unique method, stripping off in the hope of gaining entry. When their nudity failed to gain admittance, the situation devolved into violence, and finally the police were called.

Countless brawls and scraps, fights and quarrels have occurred over the decades, with students often winding up in Addenbrooke's when alcohol (and testosterone) levels start running too high. There was a simpler time when these matters were handled with a touch more class, as in 1932, when a disagreement fuelled by exam stress led not to a punch-up but a duel, with rapiers drawn at dawn on the Girton grounds. Luckily, the police intervened before satisfaction was had.

In fact, the police are perhaps the most common



▲ VARSITY ARCHIVES

mon gatecrashers of all, inevitably winding up at a ball or two during May Week. In the 80s, Jesus May Ball had its licence revoked for a year following the performance of Gary Glitter. Thankfully,

“The University even produced branded condoms

his only crime that night was noise disturbance, waking up residents three miles away and leading to much tighter noise control.

The rise of famous faces appearing at the balls began in the 70s and 80s, as many balls hoped to rectify poor ticket sales and frequent cancellations of events. This was partly caused by the overwhelmingly male student population, with colleges struggling to hype up boys to attend events without the hope of snaring a date. Women found the opposite issue a few decades before, as instead of being inundated with invites, they were forced to leave the city altogether. Unless the young blue-stockings had family members in Cambridge to chaperone them to the balls or had “made very special friendships during the year” as one 1931 article put it, they were expected to leave the city before the start of May Week and were not allowed to join in the fun at all. By the 90s, the balls were largely in the iteration we know and love today. Women roamed the streets unchaperoned (at last!), while semi-naked men were an element of set dressing at several balls. In 1994, the

University even made the precaution of producing branded condoms to hand out for May Week, coming in three different colours with a dainty University crest at the tip, with the *Varsity* offices handing them out on a “first come, first served basis”, no pun intended.

In this decade, themes also became a prevalent feature of most colleges' May Balls, but with this excitement came a whole new category of foolishness from committees. In recent years, we've seen the overtly racist and offensive (The British Empire, Emma, 2009; The Beautiful South, Eddies, 2014) to the unfortunately timed (Pembroke's Underwater theme coinciding with the drowning of an alumnus, 2023).

“Jesus May Ball had its licence revoked for a year following the Gary Glitter performance

The most recent scandal of this ilk was Churchill's curious theme choice of Aftermath for this year's ball, featuring a launch party decked out in festive warzone chic, despite sensitivities relating to the current political climate. Shockingly, this is by no means the first time that the management of a ball has made this misjudgment. Back in 1990, Catz chose the theme of ‘The Blitz’, until a massive outcry led to the theme being overturned. The president of the event claimed it was “very strange” that people were offended, as although “people died [...] you've got to show the good side of these things.”

Perhaps the most unsettling use of war as a form of entertainment was

during 1939. Snuggled alongside articles about compulsory conscription for Oxbridge boys and flight training in Cambridgeshire, *Varsity* chose to run an advertisement for champagne, which boasted a wonderful price due to the catastrophic state of the French economy.

Even though the balls were suspended during the world war, this did not prevent students from finding other ways to celebrate post-exams. In 1940, one student got a little carried away and “smashed a couple of frosted glass windows with his hands” and wound up in hospital. Instead of a dean-ing or a caution from the police, the boy's father “decided that he shall enlist voluntarily and leave the University”. The stakes were considerably lower in 1962 when a remarkably similar incident saw a student and his friend somersault through a window while pub crawling to celebrate the end of exams. But it really wasn't as bad as it sounds; if you don't count the 36 stitches in Addies, the student made it out relatively unscathed, telling *Varsity*, “The next thing I can remember was being in the Criterion having another pint.”

Some students took their May Week vandalism in a more creative direction. Allegedly, one John's student back in 1952 decided to turn his bedroom into “a sumptuous garden – painting the ceiling blue and carpeting the floor with real turf which was duly watered every day.” A week later, the weight of the bedroom jungle and its daily watering became too much, and the room collapsed into the floor below.

Although the tradition of end-of-year pranks has largely slipped into the mists of time, I think it's quite clear that we haven't really grown up very much in the last century. It's fair to say that as long as there are balls to attend and free booze to drink, there will be students making silly choices, and having far too much fun.



▲ WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

Comment

Got an opinion
you want to
share?

Send us your pitch to:
comment@varsity.co.uk



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

May Ball committees, your theme won't change the world

You're not the new James Joyce, or da Vinci, or even the new Foucault. But I understand your plight. Each committee before you has been slandered on your college confessions page, and your May Ball, which is essentially emotionally equivalent to your firstborn child, has been historically described as "mid". It's your job to change that. You have more money than you can conceptualise to play with and you know that most of your college will attend. They also all know exactly who you are, thanks to the "meet the committee" Instagram post which everyone has surely swiped the whole way through. The pressure's on.

Of course, we all know that pressure makes diamonds out of coal. And you, having gone through archives of May Balls since before the invention of the lightbulb, have to come up with some diamonds. Or at least, that's how it feels. But I promise that you've been misled.

Nobody cares about you repeating a theme from five years ago, except possibly for a few alumni who honestly need to get a grip and stop romanticising their university days anyway. You can even stretch to ten years ago – ten decent themes on rotation for centuries with mild adaptations for the times and the budgets are absolutely permissible.

There is no reason for you to come up with something that nobody has ever thought of before. In fact, it might be better if you don't. After all, there's a reason why some themes have never been implemented.

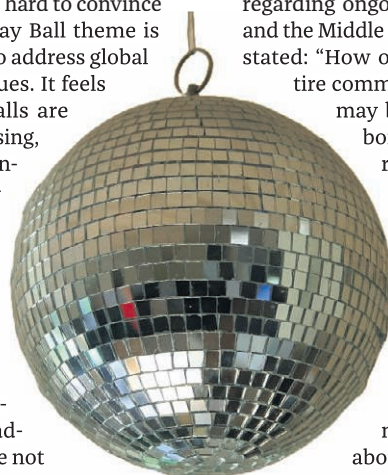
In particular, it's hard to convince students that a May Ball theme is the perfect space to address global and existential issues. It feels like every year balls are increasingly polarising, feeling overly expensive and gluttonous, reminiscent of performative wealth of decades long past. Many students take part in these events with a degree of ambivalence, sheepishly admitting that they're not big fans of the whole idea but everyone else does it and it's always quite fun if a touch embarrassing. Framed like this by event-goers, May Balls aren't the best place to perform self-awareness.

Following their announcement of this year's theme of 'Aftermath' via a video apparently depicting the fall of

the Berlin Wall and humans fighting robots, Churchill has been dealing with criticism from students who have fairly pointed out that advertising for a night of free cocktails shouldn't use imagery reminiscent of news stories regarding ongoing conflict in Ukraine and the Middle East. One ChurchFesser stated: "How out of tune does an entire committee have to be for the

may ball's theme to include bombs, drone strikes and rubble?!" The committee has committed to changing the name of the theme and has recognised that the video was ill-judged. But the whole affair clearly demonstrates that May Ball themes are not the place to make commentary about a world which Cambridge students are disproportionately sheltered from. At best out of touch and at worst deeply offensive, attempts to make May Balls self-aware seem to fail at launch stage.

It could even be argued that themes themselves make little difference to the experience of the night, but make life



KAZDEN CATTAPAN / FLICKR

“There's a reason why some themes have never been implemented”

much harder for committees. Requiring specific decor which can't be used again is unsustainable and absurdly expensive. Renaming perfectly normal cocktails to reference Ancient Greek gods or niche categories of jungle plants causes confusion and increased order time, exacerbating committees' universal worst fear: complaints about queues. With the exception of King's Affair, which leans into the whole "theme" concept so deeply that it even pre-themed its theme launch party, students barely bother with the themes of the Balls they attend anyway. Themes don't exactly sell more tickets – Trinity and John's certainly sell fine without them. I'd argue that themes often work the other way round, as a bad theme can convince on-the-fence potential attendees not to bother.

I love a themed event – in fact, I defended themes as a concept back in September. But when the fun of giving dress inspiration and silly food names becomes a devastating annual pressure to be the committee which comes up with something genius – and occasionally leads to embarrassing controversy due to failed attempts at self-awareness – it might be time to pick a concept which worked perfectly fine ten years ago and will be perfectly fine again this year.



Maddy Browne is a second-year
English student at
Pembroke College

Why I don't want a 'boyfriend'

It all started with a TED talk. Before I had even been in a relationship, I knew it wouldn't look quite like what I had once expected. First of all, the 'handsome prince' at the end of the fairytale was just as likely to be a 'handsome princess'. This would, in turn, bring up questions about what the rest of the fairy tale might look like. After watching Misty Gedlinske's TED talk, 'Bisexuality: the invisible letter "B"', I realised how important it would be for me to maintain a connection to my sexuality, regardless of who I was with. After getting together with Jack, this was something I was confronted with in real time.

As well as talking more generally about bi-erasure (despite us making up 52% of the LGBTQ+ community!) Gedlinske's TED Talk also drew attention to an important phrase. She was in an opposite-sex marriage, not a straight one. This simple change in wording meant all the difference. Suddenly it was not assumed that a man and a woman in a relationship were also heterosexual. But it also represented a bigger shift: I would never have to feel like I was in a straight relationship, and it was liberating.

The only catch was that, when I started talking to people about "my boy-

“It's OK if the words we use to describe those we love don't quite fit”

friend", it felt odd. The feeling was more than potentially passing as 'straight', within the privilege that also comes with passing. (This is at a university where me and my friends joke that you'd be better off assuming that everyone is bi than everyone is straight.) The word failed to encompass the queer relationship that we have. Somehow the words 'boyfriend' and 'girlfriend' did not do it justice, as reflected in my sense of sexuality and in the attitudes we both have towards the relationship.

Using 'partner' or 'spouse' as alternatives also felt too old, or too committed, as it's what my parents call my respective step-parents. On one hand, using 'partner' does normalise the word for queer couples and individuals who need gender-neutral language, as a historically inclusive alternative. On the other hand, I didn't want to feel like I was queerbaiting, ironically enough. There is a sense from queer people that there is an argument to be had for both sides, within wider debates about allyship.

I still felt like I was 'lying by omission', whichever word I chose. For Gedlinske, this is how she described being in the closet. Now I am out, there seems to be a sense that there is still something missing, as if the baseline is no longer

straight, but still binary. The words still failed to match up.

As I mentioned before, queerness can come from attitude as well as identity. So, the decisions that Jack and I make within our relationship can move us away from the societal expectations and words that we might find stifling – not rejecting them by default but re-examining them so as to find the choices that best suit individual needs. These choices are often really intangible, and irrevocably tied up with defying patriarchal expectations (or, simply maintaining a healthy relationship). Do we split everything, try and perform equal emotional labour, and be especially vocal about each other's needs because this defies gender stereotypes? Or is this just creating healthy boundaries?

Or, is this part of something defined by Nick Walker as 'neuroqueering'? For Jack, the words and the choices also represent parallel ideas about passing as neurotypical and defying similar norms. We are not in a neurotypical relationship, either; we need to be able to understand this relationship outside of societal norms, on both accounts. As Walker explains at the end of her book, *Neuroqueer Heresies*, "queering neuronormativity" is a lot like "queering heteronormativity".

The practice can be vitally affirming to neurodivergent individuals whose needs necessitate behaviours outside of neurotypical norms. Both processes are intrinsically linked, when each "queering", each "active subversion" enacts the other at the same time. It is not surprising then that autistic people are more likely to identify as LGBTQ+, and so the categories overlap even more. These are conversations about needs, and Jack and I have been having them more and more, as we realise what works for us and figure out what doesn't.

I'm afraid I don't have a grand solution for when it doesn't quite work. In the end, it's OK if the words we use to describe those we love 'don't quite fit', or are more complicated than we realise. It's OK to need affirmation in non-normative ways. The most important thing is acknowledging the disconnect in the first place.

Of course, we can also come up with our own. In one of my favourite TV shows, *One Day At a Time*, one of the characters starts dating a non-binary person called Syd, who becomes her "Syd-nificant other". If you have any heartwarming pun-related names, I'm all ears. In the meantime, I'll be watching *Queer Eye* with Jack.

Ruby Cline

Maddy Browne



I'm sick of Cambridge's workload problem

I look at the alarm clock on my bedside table; it is witching hour and a concoction of smells is brewing – my tonsils are the size of golf balls and I have, in my delirium, become a bio-hazard. In the bathroom, I jump before realising the strange man in the mirror is in fact me. The 10 metre walk back to my bed is a marathon I almost fail to complete. In the morning (1pm) I wake to discover 13 new unread emails. The first is from my supervisor. It has the subject line “Checking in”. Shit.

Towards the end of January, before the bouts of flu, tonsillitis and whatever is currently stirring in my chest decided to humble me (my susceptibility to disease has become a running joke among my friends), I found myself, on official JCR business, at the Workload forum hosted by the pro-vice-chancellor (PVC) for education. I had gone in expecting to be able to write a piece questioning the need for the event at all: "as if you need a forum to establish that there is a workload problem" etc. But, I was pleasantly surprised by the nuance with which students' concerns were interrogated and the sincerity I felt from the PVC when he said he was committed to pursuing a solution to the issue.

I was placed on a table with Medics, Vets, Psychologists and fellow bio NatScis. Our discussion thus primarily revolved around the absurdity of a 6-day lecture schedule and the 7pm supervisions we are expected to take on the chin without so much as batting an eyelash. There was a catharsis in confirming our struggle was not a solitary experience; when the time came to share our thoughts with the rest of the room, it seemed also to transcend faculties and

“It seems the one-size-fits-all intermit plaster is slammed onto the wound”

schools. What came up, time and time again, aside from a general sentiment of being overwhelmed, was the idea of *the crash*.

The crash, dear reader, is the week you spend in bed catching up on sleep, sanity and the will to live upon arriving home at the end of the term. *The crash*, we agreed, was a symptom of an institutional issue with the pace of life at Cambridge – a culture established at the outset by the half-week of Freshers' crammed with JCR talks, family nights and the arrival of your first reading list as you mess up your signature in the matriculation book. The epicentre of this problematic pacing, we agreed, was a workload which turns terms into an 8-week ultra marathon.

An opinion poll conducted at the forum found that 55% felt that the volume of work demanded of them was the number one cause of an unmanageable workload. Other issues cited were an inability to disconnect from work and the impossibility of juggling the extracurricular opportunities Cambridge has to offer with academics. Throwing a fresher's flu that lingers until Week Four of Michaelmas into the mix is bound to end in a car crash. One might even say, in these instances, that *the crash* has fought its way into term time.

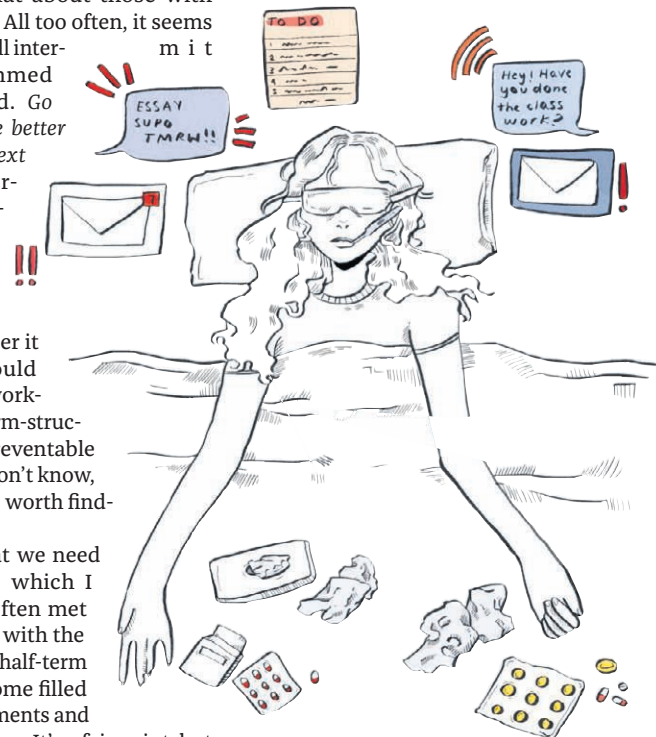
I have friends who try to suppress the symptoms of whatever illness they are suffering from and force themselves to camp out in a library. They cannot afford *the crash* they say. I am less inclined to subject myself to such torture, I would sooner tell my supervisors I'll catch up over the vacation. The problem with this strategy comes when you discover that having been subjected to forced rest during term doesn't preclude you

from needing it after Week Eight as the Cambridge Gods intended. The adage that the difference between a Third and a First is working during the holidays rings through your head but you need sleep and an academic detox, and before you know it it is a new term. *The crash* wins this round.

Of course, catering for those whose tonsils seem to rejoice in growing tenfold probably ought not be the University's priority, but, what about those with chronic illnesses? All too often, it seems the one-size-fits-all inter-plaster is slammed onto the wound. Go home, we'll make better arrangements next time. While inter-mitting, as an option, is incredibly valuable, the potential costs, both financially and socially, render it unattractive. Could changes to the workload and/or the term-structure help avoid preventable intermissions? I don't know, but wouldn't it be worth finding out?

The notion that we need a reading week, which I subscribe to, is often met by the University with the response that any half-term break would become filled with more assignments and not fulfil its purpose. It's a fair point, but surely one that could be resolved via policy against such actions. An equally 'radical' solution of extending terms and

spreading out work, including that normally reserved for holidays, would satisfy me. Perhaps then a vacation could be just that, and maybe those whose tonsils decided to screw them over in term might have to lose a few days of it to catching up but at least they wouldn't be juggling this with a million other assignments, *the crash*, and the voice in their head telling them they're destined for a Third.



Has Starmer gone one U-turn too far?

In a report published last month, the Climate Change Committee – a watchdog that advises the UK government on climate policy – warned that the UK is ever further from reaching its climate commitments, and is sending “mixed messages” to the international community. And yet, Keir Starmer, the likely next prime minister of the UK, has recently withdrawn his commitment to spending £28 billion a year on green investment. As a lifelong Labour supporter, and someone who fully believes that a Tory win in the next general election would be national suicide, this has made me seriously consider leaving the party.

Labour's £28 billion plan was exactly what Britain needed: genuine commitment to climate action that would have created jobs across the country in various sectors, tackled fuel poverty through insulated homes, and increased the UK's usage of wind and solar energy. The so-called 'Green Prosperity Plan' promised to redress some of the UK's chronically underfunded public transport, and strengthen the country's increasingly threatened flood defences. It was a rare moment of vision for Labour leader Keir Starmer, but once again he has lurched to the right, not only betraying the left-wing voters the party is supposed to represent, but also the 77% of the UK

population who are “concerned” about climate change.

I am a lifelong Labour supporter, and have been a member of the party for several years. There has never been anything other than a Conservative government during my living memory, and the 2024 general election will be my first chance to vote to change that. And yet, for many young people like me, the prospect of a Labour government increasingly seems less like something to celebrate and more of a necessary evil. No matter how weak and watered-down Starmer's policies seemed, I always believed that it was worth remaining a member of the party to prevent the Tories from winning yet another disastrous term in government, because of the damage they would continue to inflict on a country that is already on the verge of collapse. Now I'm not so sure.

Though I am increasingly considering leaving the party, I still think a Conservative victory would be far worse than Starmer's lack of ambition. However, I don't know if I could vote for a party that is looking increasingly like a parody of Johnson's "Mr U-Turn".

In all fairness to Starmer, he remains committed to £15 billion a year in green funding, which is not nothing. Regardless, it remains far short of the £26-£30 billion of green investment that studies

“This has made me seriously consider leaving the party”

indicate is necessary for the UK to reach its net zero commitments. It also does nothing to actively fix the damage that the last few years of Tory chaos have done to the UK's international standing. If the country that just two years ago held COP26 and agreed to 'phase down' fossil fuels can't even commit to reasonable amounts of funding for its own green investment, it's not a good look. If one of the world's wealthiest countries can't do it, who can?

National climate leadership is more crucial than ever before, particularly in an age where, despite the near-universal ratification of the Paris agreement, just last year the planet reached the 1.5°C of warming that it was supposed to prevent. Not only that, but the looming election of Donald Trump in the US looks like it will spell the end for American support for climate negotiations: the age of COP is dead.

This could be Starmer's success story. The world desperately needs genuine commitment to climate action; less finger pointing at whose emissions records are worse and more stepping up to address them. Starmer could lead Britain towards a greener future and spearhead the international attempts at halting climate change. It is clearly within his reach – as his original green pledge showed – but the more he rolls

back on his environmental promises, the less attractive the UK becomes as a destination for the same green investment he claims to want.

We have done this before. One of the most successful agreements in UN history was an environmental agreement ratified in 1987: the Montreal protocol. Under this protocol, substances that were known to be contributing to the depletion of the ozone layer were banned. By 2012, the production of these substances had been reduced by 98%, and the ozone hole is predicted to return to its 1980 size by 2040. This success shows that concrete progress can be reached on environmental issues, but U-turning on policies like the Green Investment Fund does nothing but make this success more unattainable.

Starmer needs to commit to a genuine vision and ambition that the UK has not seen in decades. Claiming that the Tories have crashed the economy is all well and good, but it is not an excuse for climate inaction. I will probably still vote for Labour in the next election, solely because under the first past the post system there is no one else to vote for. But Starmer cannot act as if electoral victory is a guarantee, especially if he cannot stick to any policies that will actually make Britain a better place.

Science

Is it over for the hangover?

Lucy Hawkins imbibes in a nutty alternative to alcohol

All of the benefits of alcohol without any of the drawbacks – seems too good to be true, right? Well, that's what Professor David Nutt and his team are promising with his drink Sentia.

David Nutt is a professor of neuropsychopharmacology, specialising in the research of drugs which affect conditions such as anxiety and addiction. He has an impressive list of credentials, including serving on the government's Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs (ACMD) – a position he and a number of his colleagues resigned from in 2007, following disagreements over the disconnect between the legal

status of certain drugs and their safety. Since then, he has gone on to chair Drug Science, a non-profit organisation which provides impartial, evidence-based advice on drugs. He believes that alcohol is the most dangerous drug in the UK.

Alcohol is the most common reason for death in men under the age of 50, and the statistics for women are fast catching up. In Britain three young people die a week from alcohol poisoning, not to mention the many more that die from alcohol related car accidents, violence, or other injuries.

These tragedies are what drove Professor Nutt and his team to develop Sentia. In May 2006, they

“

The taste was pleasant, but none of them reported a buzz

set out to find a drink that would mimic the positive effects of alcohol, but which wouldn't be metabolised by the body into acetaldehyde – a brain-damaging neurotoxin. Any student will probably be familiar with alcohol's positive effects – including increased sociability, relaxation, and an anxiety relieving effect. This is due to alcohol's impact on the prefrontal cortex. This part of the brain has two main neurotransmitters: glutamate and GABA. Glutamate can be thought of as the 'on switch' of the brain, as it's a neurotransmitter which promotes cell firing: it stimulates learning and memory but can also in excess cause anxiety and seizures. GABA can be thought of as an 'off switch', as when GABA binds to its receptor, the cell is less likely to fire, causing sedation, calming and muscle relaxation. When alcohol enters the brain, it blocks glutamate receptors, preventing glutamate from binding and exerting its effects. This shifts the delicate balance of glutamate and GABA in the brain, producing alcohol's effects. Glutamate's role in memory function is disrupted by alcohol, which is why 'blackouts' are so com-

mon. Sentia mimics these effects as its ingredients weakly bind to GABA receptors. This weaker form of binding makes it impossible for Sentia to swamp GABA receptors and, therefore, far less harmful, as in theory you cannot overdose on it. However, this also means that with Sentia, only a "buzz" is possible, and you cannot get drunk. Professor Nutt does not see this as a downside, however, as he says himself, he is "not trying to find an alcohol equivalent," but instead provide an alternative for sober and sober-curious people, which has some of the positive effects of alcohol.

Prof Nutt and his team at Sentia Labs are now trying to develop a patented molecule Alcarelle, which would work the same way as Sentia. Alcarelle could be sold to drinks manufacturers, who could use it to develop their own GABA enhancing drinks. However, the development and patenting of a molecule involves far more challenges than Sentia did. This is because Sentia is a mixture of herbs that are all already approved, whereas Alcarelle would be a new drug. Far more stages of clinical testing and licensing would be required for it, which will take years. As it stands, Professor Nutt and his team aims to get regulatory approval from the FDA sometime in 2026, five years after Sentia's launch in January 2021.

I recruited some friends to try Sentia for me, and the feedback was mixed. Overall, the taste was described as pleasant, however many of them didn't report the promised "buzz-like" sensation. This could have been because they were only given the equivalent of one shot, so the effect was unlikely to be drastic. I see potential for Sentia and Alcarelle; however, some of my friends remain unconvinced. Will Professor Nutt revolutionise the beverage world? That remains to be seen.

Quickfire

How far does Prof Nutt see Sentia going? Is this the 'beginning of the end' for alcohol?

Professor Nutt is more interested in giving people a choice. Some people feel like they are missing out because they don't drink – he's more interested in giving them an alternative so they feel like they can join in.

Is there any risk of addiction with Alcarelle?

This is much less likely, due to it only binding to GABA receptors partially. However, this will be studied further in the clinical trials.

Is it safe to drive after consuming Sentia?

It's not illegal, but Professor Nutt advises strongly against it. However, as Sentia wears off far more quickly (in 45-60 minutes), theoretically you will be safer to drive sooner after consuming Sentia than you would be with alcohol.

What is your opinion on recovering alcoholics drinking Sentia?

Although no studies have been done, anecdotal evidence suggests it's not a trigger, and is even a positive if they feel they can join in again. However, *Varsity* would not recommend it for anyone who identifies as an alcoholic before you consult with appropriate medical professionals first.

Research Roundup Ananya Vijay reports on the latest scientific discoveries in Cambridge

Algae that's BEEP-ing good for the environment

The requirement to reduce our reliance on fossil fuels is unequivocal. Biomimicry is often synonymous with sustainability and, as a result, researchers at the University of Cambridge investigated the photosynthetic processes of species in the marine world as part of the Bio-inspired and Bionic Materials for Enhanced Photosynthesis (BEEP) project.

The vivid colours of materials – such as butterfly wings and peacock feathers – are not caused by the presence of pigments – instead, their colour is obtained from the intricacies of their internal structure. When light shines on these materials, specific frequencies of light are reflected by nanostructures on the surface, leading to the sensation of colour.

Researchers involved in the BEEP pro-

ject studied marine algal species with these special nanostructures, which transmit specific wavelengths of light and undergo structural changes to allow light to pass into the cell. While the specific function of these structures is still unknown, scientists speculate that they could enhance energy harvesting potential. With further understanding, the scope for designing new materials for bionic systems and bio-photoreactors is boundless.

A prototype bio-photoreactor was then developed, consisting of a bio-compatible hydrogel encouraging the growth of structurally coloured bacteria and microalgae. The benefits of the interplay between these organisms are twofold: both the volume of biomass and microalgal growth are increased, which could have positive implications for alternative, more sustainable energy production, namely the biofuel industry.

Maria Murace, a BEEP PhD candidate

at Cambridge states that a comprehensive understanding of the structures leading to colour perception can also lead to developing "green and sustainable alternatives" to "conventional paints and toxic dyes" used in industry. In conclusion, the study of marine life on the microscale could have a resounding impact on the sustainability of our world on the macroscale.

A new Dawn? Cambridge gets UK's most powerful supercomputer

The most powerful supercomputer in the UK, "Dawn", has been established in Cambridge. A result of the collaboration between the Cambridge Open Zettascale Lab, tech companies such as Intel, the UK Atomic Energy Authority (UKAEA) and UK Research & Innovation, this supercomputer is being employed to create solutions in areas such as clean energy and personalised medicine.

Dawn takes starring role in the hunt for nuclear fusion

If hydrogen fusion in the Sun can be emulated on the Earth, this (in theory) would provide a near-infinite supply of clean energy. As a result, scientists are employing Dawn to design a fusion energy power plant. Utilising data gathered over the next 20 years, Dawn will be used to create a "digital twin" to model hydrogen fusion. Dr Rob Akers, director of computing programmes at UKAEA, argues that some of the difficulties of "bottling a star" will be mitigated by using AI and supercomputing. Perhaps the existence of a fusion power plant it is commonly perceived to be.

Digital doppelgangers

The notion of modelling "digital twins" and simulations is also explored in the context of medicine, pertaining to

humans this time. By creating a virtual clone of a person – incorporating the DNA, organs and cells, scientists believe that on a short time scale – drugs can be tested for compatibility with the body. Projecting further, the impact on long-term health by a change in lifestyle could also be investigated. Concurrently with the development of "digital twins" for humans comes the non-negligible issue of ethics, which may also impede progress in this field. However, the benefits of utilising supercomputers for medical applications are undisputed, Professor Coveney, director of the Centre for Computational Science at University College London argues that Dawn could also be used to speed up the process of evaluating candidate drugs for diseases such as Covid-19.



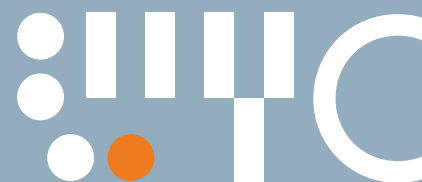
Optiver 

Accelerate your future

Ready to accelerate your growth in one of the most dynamic and fascinating industries there is?

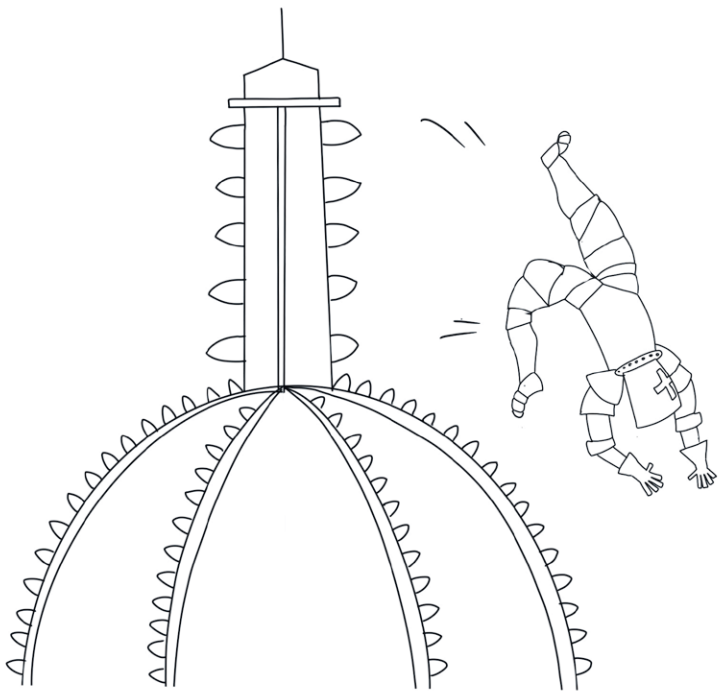
Discover Optiver, a leading global trading firm powered by technical innovation. For 35+ years, Optiver has been improving financial markets around the world, making them more transparent and efficient for all participants. With our focus on cutting-edge engineering, data science and research, we actively trade on 70+ exchanges, where we're trusted to always provide accurate buy and sell pricing – no matter the market conditions. Are you someone who embraces constant innovation and strategic thinking in the pursuit of excellence?

Scan to kickstart your career across tech, trading, and research.



The Smoking Area

Cartoon by Rosie Pettifer



THE KNIGHT CLIMBERS

VINTAGE VARSITY

Royal-tea

The grubby admission of Prince Edward to Cambridge

By Alex Myall

When a young Edward Windsor arrived at Jesus College in 1983, unlike the rest of the freshers, it was not his first time seeing the College or meeting his DoS. Vintage Varsity (or as we were then known 'Stop Press with Varsity') revealed Edward's 1981 visit to Jesus for "tea" with the admissions tutor and History fellow: he was subsequently admitted for History, with CDD A-Levels in English, History and Politics. It was obvious that for royals it was not the student that chose the college, but the college that chose the student.

This unfair admission was not quietly accepted at the time. In 1982 Varsity reported that "in a clear message of defiance to their college authorities over 100 Jesus undergraduates have signed a

petition against the possible admission of Prince Edward to the College". It also reported that there were rumblings in the fellowship of Jesus about this unfair admission, with one fellow describing their position as "shackled": perhaps a result of pressure from the Palace.

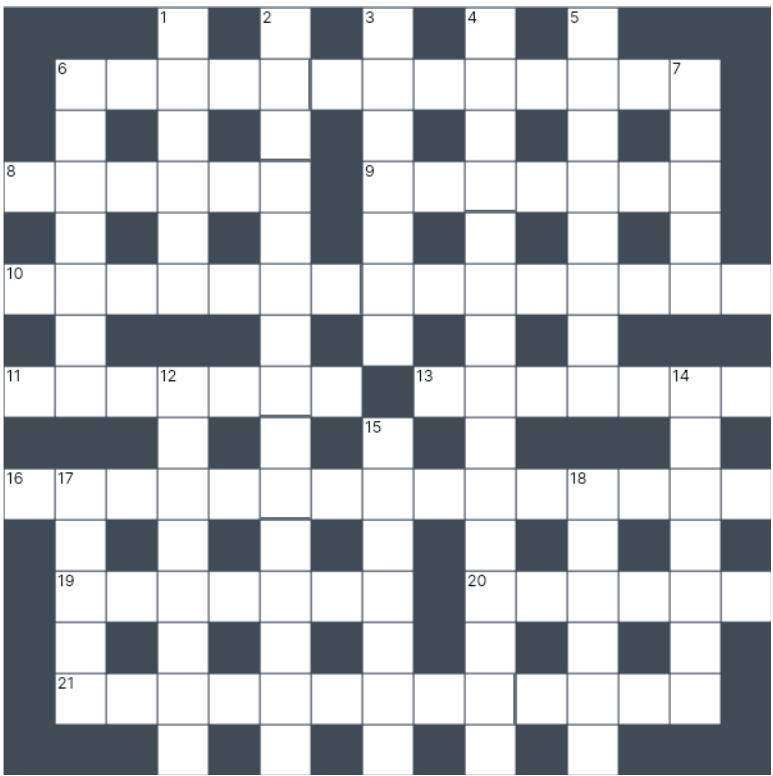
University-wide opposition also attempted to create a stir. A 'University Republican Society' was founded by four Emma students just 8 months before Edwards's arrival, as Varsity reported in January 1983. While they claimed that their society "had better things to do than oppose Edward Windsor", they did object to the "fact that [Edward] did not achieve the usually accepted academic entrance requirement". Varsity even went as far as asking the local police

chief superintendent if they were monitoring this society: he responded that he was "waiting to see if the Republican Society motivates itself to do anything that might be a security risk".

Edward's University controversy didn't stop there; his university funding was supported by the Marines to the tune of £12,000 on the basis that he would join and train for 5 years as an officer upon graduation. However, upon joining the Marines, he decided the life wasn't for him and promptly quit, meaning that the government had funded his Cambridge degree for nothing.

The real question is if Oxbridge College authorities will once again be willing to bend the rules for the next generation of princes (and even princesses) that may seek Cambridge as their new home. Will University and college higher-ups again bow down to grubby deals with the Palace to swell their lists of notable alumni? Or perhaps the next generation of royals might just be smarter? Time will tell.

Varsity Crossword



Quick by Sophocles

Across

- 6 Language of Chaucer (6,7)
- 8 Bertie Wooster's favourite greeting (4,2)
- 9 Taste of pastis and absinthe (7)
- 10 Dickens' novella (1,9,5)
- 11 Observable (2,5)
- 13 Stand pat (4,3)
- 16 Weekly broadsheet (6,9)
- 19 Of a type (7)
- 20 Late Baroque style of art and architecture (6)
- 21 Centres of black holes (13)

Down

- 1 Ian Hislop of Private Eye (6)
- 2 E. M. Forster, Virginia Woolf, the Strachey's etc. (10,5)
- 3 Trotsky's side of the Civil War (3,4)
- 4 Cutting obliquely (7,3,5)
- 5 Bookish (8)
- 6 Hairstyle of Native American group, supposedly (7)
- 7 Watery prefix (5)
- 12 Trainee priest (8)
- 14 What a therapist and a traveller does (7)
- 15 British infantryman (7)
- 17 Desires (5)
- 18 Rebound (6)

ANSWERS TO PUZZLES ON INSTAGRAM @VARSITYCAMBRIDGE
DO YOU WANT TO SET A CROSSWORD, NUMBER PUZZLE, OR SOMETHING ELSE? EMAIL MJU29@CAM.AC.UK TO GET INVOLVED.

Easy Sudoku

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

Hard Sudoku

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

EDITORS Michael Hennessey & Daniel Hilton editor@varsity.co.uk
DEPUTY EDITORS Eric Williams, Romilly Norfolk & Jude Crawley deputyeditor@varsity.co.uk
VULTURE EDITORS Grace Cobb & Alice Mainwood magazine@varsity.co.uk
NEWS Eleanor Mann & Felix Armstrong (Senior), Arwen Godingen, Tommy Castellani, Patrick Dolan & Wilf Vall (Deputy) news@varsity.co.uk
INVESTIGATIONS Ella McCartney investigations@varsity.co.uk
COMMENT Katie Heggis, Omar Burhanuddin & Gwenno Robinson opinion@varsity.co.uk
FEATURES Joshua Shortman, Lauren Welsby-Riley & Isabella Dowden features@varsity.co.uk
INTERVIEWS Sophie Denny & Amelie Bromnick interviews@varsity.co.uk
SCIENCE Aisling Sheppard & Sam Hudson science@varsity.co.uk
SPORT Edward Marsh, Alex Davies & Isabelle Watts sport@varsity.co.uk
LIFESTYLE Emily Lawson-Todd & Leo Kang lifestyle@varsity.co.uk

ARTS Laila Hussey & Flóra Kiss arts@varsity.co.uk
FASHION Annia Krzoska & Emily McDonagh fashion@varsity.co.uk
FILM & TV Georgia Finucane & Alex Brian filmandtv@varsity.co.uk
MUSIC Dylan Sudworth & Jonathan Baddon music@varsity.co.uk
THEATRE Eva Weinstein, Molly Scales & Mary Cummins theatre@varsity.co.uk
HEAD OF VISUAL Anna Teke
CHIEF SUB-EDITOR Rafal Wilowski subeditor@varsity.co.uk
ASSOCIATE EDITORS Isabel Dempsey, Taneesha Datta, Hannah Gillott, Erik Olsson, Famke Veenstra-Ashmore & Nick Bartlett associate@varsity.co.uk
BUSINESS MANAGER Mark Curtis business@varsity.co.uk
VARSOC PRESIDENT Michael Hennessey president@varsity.co.uk
VARSITY BOARD Dr Michael Franklin (Chairman), Dr Tim Harris, Michael Derringer, Mark Curtis (Company Secretary), Elizabeth Howcroft, Michael Hennessey, Famke Veenstra-Ashmore & Nick Bartlett (Directors)

Interested in writing for Varsity? Join our Facebook writers' group



© VARSITY PUBLICATIONS LTD, 2024. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means electronic, mechanical photocopying, recording or otherwise without prior permission of the publisher. Varsity, 16 Mill Lane, Cambridge CB2 1RX. Telephone 01223 337575. Varsity is published by Varsity Publications Ltd. Varsity Publications also publishes *The Mays*. Printed at Iliffe Print Cambridge - Winship Road, Milton, Cambridge CB24 6PP on 42.5gsm newsprint. Registered as a newspaper at the Post Office. ISSN 1758-4442



vulture.

The man, the myth, the mullet

Esther Arthurson traces the genealogy of the mullet and wonders whether the mullet maketh the man or man maketh the mullet

It is rare that something makes me wish I had never been born. However, hundreds of such reasons are currently walking our streets. Ladies and gentlemen. I regret to inform you: the mullet is back.

Made popular by the Beastie Boys in 1994, this particular form of aesthetic torment can be traced back to the 60s and beyond, including during Tom Jones' performance of 'It's Not Unusual'. Unfortunately, he was right; the tresses trend truly caught on, booming into hairstyle history in the 70s when musical idols from David Bowie to Paul McCartney adopted the #shaggy-not-sorry look. Dolly Parton and Billy Ray Cyrus dragged the 'do into the 90s, the decade in which it (finally) began to die out. (Rumour has it that in Australia, due to isolation barriers and speciation, mullets are still a compulsory form of national service.) On a more serious note, the mullet was (and, I believe, still is) prohibited in Iran in 2010 due to its association with "decadent western haircuts". While I fully support the right to self-expression, I must admit that waving farewell to this floppy monstrosity on a national level is not unappealing.

On a note closer to home, a discovery on Wimpole Estate, Cambridgeshire, in 2018 has led historians to posit the potential category of (according to Wikipedia) 'Mullets in Antiquity.' The excavation of a first Century CE metal figure during a car-park renovation has provided incriminating evidence that our ancestors were be-mulleted as far back as the Roman occupation.

Mullet CPR occurred during lockdown, with the added advantage of said mulleteers being confined to their houses – and rightly so (I never thought I'd say this, but bring back lockdown). Now they've



“

I must admit that waving farewell to this floppy monstrosity is not unappealing

wondered why the Tangled soundtrack had been emanating through my walls recently, and now I guess I know why – “flower gleam and glow” and all that.

My next question is whether he feels spiritually connected to fellow mulleteers, past and present. This really seems to confuse him: “Not really. Most of them are dicks. [Long pause while he thinks – an arduous process. We can only assume that the mullet has drained him of his mental powers like some sort of parasite.] No, I do actually. I see someone in the street with a mullet and think: ah, one of us. It's like a religion, almost.” Make of this what you will, but let's hope he follows in R.E.M.'s footsteps some time soon.

Following up, I request his thoughts on whether one can truly separate a man from his mullet. This is his verbatim response: “Michael Jackson was a good musician, but maybe not the best bloke. I am a good person, but I have a mullet.” I'm not sure I quite follow the sophisticated logic at play, but I nod along regardless.

Our interview is cut short by the arrival of some Stella-shooting cavemen in tank-tops, demanding I release their brother, so that'll be all for today. May the mullet be ever in your favour.

◀ MARTHA VINE

How (not) to flirt in a second language

Sofia Abbattista wonders if her flirty banter will ever pass the language barrier and whether we should really talk about Heidegger on a date

I've often been told that a Year Abroad should be one of the most exciting times of my life: theoretically, it should be filled with entertaining encounters and juicy love stories (which I bet are shared with fourth-year MMLers, usually only too happy to share the experiences they had last year). As a foreigner in England, I was told I was also supposed to be charming and fascinating – according to my friend Martina back in Milan: “Babes, imagine the rizz you'll have once you're there!”, she told me when I left home, to underline the random alignment between my single era and my Erasmus-in-Cambridge era. However, there are some practical skills, necessary to navigate the wild local dating pool, that Martina and I didn't take into consideration at the time. The biggest one is: how the heck do I flirt in a foreign country, in a second language, and, ultimately, in

Cambridge?

Chances are, you'll struggle to grasp not only your target language slang but also how the native-language flirting flows. That's the case with a Hinge date I had at the beginning of Lent. After I managed to unlock the first language barrier level – that is sending flirty and academic (because it's still Cambridge) Insta messages – I got a date! “Market lunch and a stroll”, they suggested (I immediately Googled the word ‘stroll’). Needless to say, in full noon daylight, without even a pint to loosen the inhibition, I probably sounded more like an HR interviewer with an Italian accent, than a chill gal on Erasmus.

Then, there is the trouble of humour. While some jokes might make sense in your native language, there's a chance they might not land so well in English. If you've ever watched *Modern Family*, maybe you'll remember the episode when Sofia Vergara's

character Gloria says: “You'll never know how funny I am in Spanish!”, and that rings so true as a girl abroad. There's a whole percentage of banter that, in some cases, gets really lost in translation, and you know that this has happened when your date starts to look at you while asking politely ‘Pardon?’.

And all of this takes place in Cambridge! As my flatmate said: “There are some really intense people here”, and you can certainly find them on dates, talking incessantly about specific and dense intellectually focused topics. Let's say that, maybe, you left your college wondering about what to discuss, but then your date started lecturing you about the maths involved in astronomical dark matter, or they tried to explain to you the syntactic system of Celtic languages. Arguably, these chats mostly prompt you to think about a list of academic (but also fun) topics you could bring up to sound witty and in-

teresting. However, even if they were in Italian I'd probably struggle to understand. In fact, I was once having a pint with a few friends from home, and for some reason we started talking about the concept of authenticity according to Heidegger's philosophy. After a while, I gladly suggested a new topic of conversation: looking for writers' pictures as if they were on Tinder and asking them if they would swipe left or right (they would have probably known how to handle the Cantabrigian way of flirting).

Perhaps Cambridge rizz comes with a full package of English language skills, supposed to be flexed in intellectual conversations and British banter (which I still have to learn).

Help me, Auntie Abbie! I'm in love with my seminar leader and I don't know what to do

My flatmate has a vitamin C deficiency, how do I sneak her some orange juice?

My first suggestion would be to give her the orange juice intravenously, but you sound like you have a cc-ment (cc-ment?) and care about her wellbeing too much to try an *ad hoc* vein puncture. However, if they have a sweet tooth and a hunger that they have to feed then perhaps you should offer to n- (n-?) dish with orange juice in it, like a fruit salad, or if her salad-dodging is of epic proportions, then something which actually tastes nice, like an orange cake.



▲ LUCAS GEORGE
WENDT / UNSPLASH

I'm on the T- (T-?) BNOC list but I don't want to be associated with th- (th-?) what should I do?

Do you know how many you have to be to complain about being popular enough on the basis of sectarian hatred for a student newspaper? All year students across this bloody city network, obsessively check Crushbridge and do pointless jobs on society committees for the chance of a mere crumb

of validation from their peers. Yet here you are with, if not a full loaf, then at least a breadcake of attention and you're moaning because you've decided clickbait articles and soft-peddled interviews are not to the standards of your precious broadsheet. I mean honestly, if you hold such strong opinions about a student newspaper, you should probably be more worried about getting a life, or about how long it's been since you touched someone else than the BNOC list.

How do I stop my coupled up friends showing affection in a way that makes me want to lose my lunch?

As a fellow long term third wheel, I sympathise greatly with your dilemma. The first strategy I used was to pretend that my two dear friends were not actually holding hands or touching each others legs underneath the table but were in fact just particularly inanimate speakers. This often fails though, because I, like you and most of the rest of the population, have functioning eyes. This led me on to my second strategy, hang around them so much that you become akin to their child. This is generally a passion killer, and I've found it works exceptionally well for most long-term couples. Don't demean

yourself in this process, baby talk is not needed or wanted in this situation, but talk to at least one of them with a reverence which sets off the paternal twinkle in their eye.

I have a crush on my seminar leader. He looks like a middle aged Tory MP but I can't stop fantasising about him - how do I break up his marriage?

This is horrendous, don't you know that marriage is a sacrament and cannot be broken? It says something about modern society that someone would risk feeling the wrath of God over a crush which is at best solely intellectual and at worse some sort of Freudian wet dream. Intellectual crushes are all well and good when you're bonding over niche cultural events and the deficiencies of postmodernism, but they always end in tears. Stop fantasising about him and go out with a STEM student who is blissfully unaware of Foucault.

My friend has just got the worst mullet known to mankind. I don't want to hurt his feelings but I wretch every time I'm near him - what should I do?

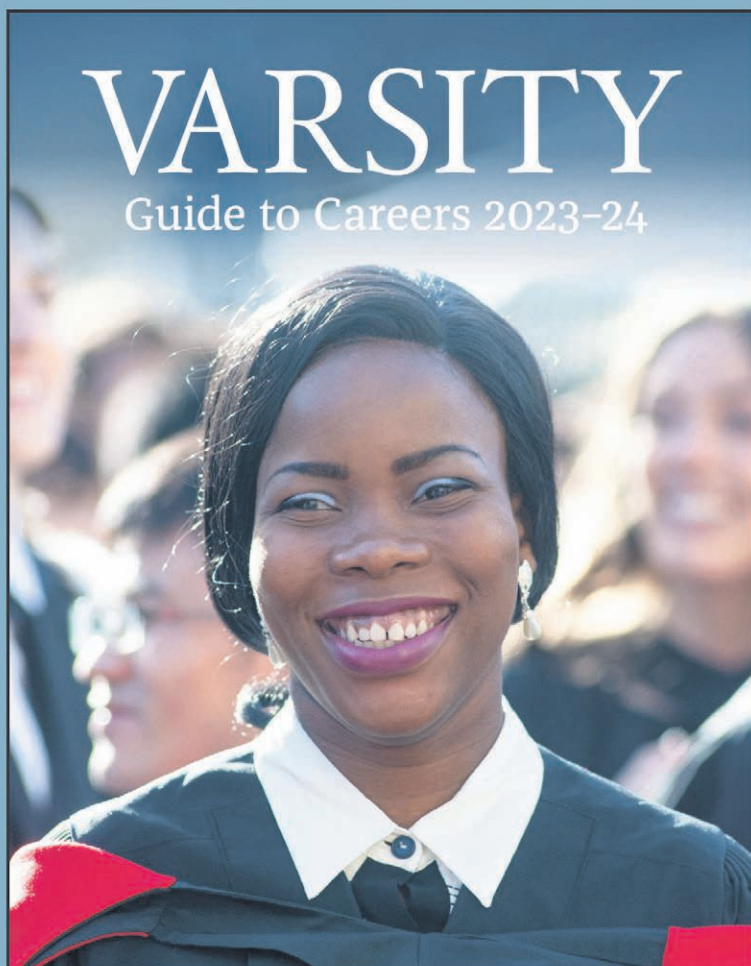
Sit him down and ask him a series of searching, personal questions about the decisions he has made to get to this point. If he doesn't relent to

emotional manipulation, gather your strongest acquaintances and forcibly restrain him whilst your most gentle friend shaves his head and sings a lullaby. Look, I know this sounds horrendously drastic but there's really no excuse on God's green earth that can justify having a mullet in this day and age. You're not Ziggy Stardust or a member of the Beastie Boys - grow up!



▲ ABBIE HASTIE

The Varsity Guide to Careers



If you missed the print edition you can download a free copy here: www.varsity.co.uk/paper-edition

J. S. Wilson & Son Bookbinders Ltd

Cambridge Established 1830



Thesis Binding • Conservation

Leather Binding • Journal Binding

Tel (01223) 212420

www.jswilsonandson.co.uk

Behind the scenes of Let's Be Bad

Ava Fitzhugh sits down with the creative team of CUMTS Gala to learn what it takes to put together a musical theatre extravaganza

It's two weeks until Cambridge University Musical Theatre Society's *Gala* opening night and in walks Jake Solway, unexpectedly beaming despite the circumstances. Two weeks in Cambridge feels like two days, so forgive me for my surprise. Annabel King follows, laden with bags full of sheet music. "It's the band call today," she explains. "And I think my arms are going to drop off." Maybe it's the combination of the eternal

panto, but I certainly did," Solway contributed. "Is it the panto baton?" suggests King. "Of course it is the panto baton," Solway replies. "The lucky baton is essential for any conductor," they inform me. Safe to say, they're starting to fit

tradition for the overture to consist of other songs from the musicals about to be sung. Audiences go wild, drunken heckling is commonplace and I heard there was even some vomit involved last year. "I am an excellent incidental

writer and overture extraordinaire," he jokingly boasts. "It will be an overture like no other."

On a more

“And there are two trombones. Who has two trombones?”

every individual harmony line, makes backing tracks for choreographers, and accompanies most rehearsals. "Having such a great team of experienced musicians around me has really helped manage the stress of musical directing a large-scale, non-student-written show. Jonathan Parapadakis, our other orchestrator, did *Gala* last year so already has the experience under his belt."

It makes sense that this is a team undertaking; collaboration is a key word for this year's *Gala* with Bolin Dai, the AMD, attending rehearsals even in King's absence. Dai has a wealth of experience herself, musical directing another notoriously challenging musical 'Sunday in the Park with George' with Parapadakis at the ADC last year.

There is a sense of camaraderie as King and Solway describe the fantastic plethora of musicians forming the band. Solway animatedly lets me know that: "Some of the band are playing ten instruments. It is absolutely insane." An aspect unique to *Gala* is that the orchestra is located front and centre for all to see. King winces slightly as she tells me this: "It scares me slightly but it's also very exciting to feel the same as the cast looking out to the audience. They really do hear everything in the auditorium. It does mean I get to perform. Conducting is a kind of choreography itself and, who knows, maybe there will be a surprise Annabel-shaped performance..."

"And there are two trombones. Who has two trombones? It's going to be brilliant." By this point, I am beginning to get the impression that Solway's night out might still be in his system.

King gave me one last thought to end on.

"*Gala* is a collection of the most talented cast and musicians in Cambridge. Come find out yourselves."

“It is renowned for being a colossal commitment, particularly for those musically involved

optimist in Solway and the realism of King, but I can already tell these two are a musical match made in heaven.

Gala is the biggest musical theatre extravaganza in the CUMTS calendar, a Week Five ADC late show and an opportunity for Cambridge's finest performers to participate in a cabaret-style night, complete with orchestra, glitz and glamour. It is renowned for being a colossal commitment, particularly for those musically involved. King may or may not have appeared as though her blood pressure was in the high hundreds.

Despite the demanding nature of *Gala* night, the show could not be in safer hands. King previously musical directed the 2023 CUADC/Footlights Panto 'Dick Whittington and his Cat', where Solway made his Cambridge arranging debut with its student-written score. "I have more of an expectation as to what being an MD really is now. We are in a prominent position, figuratively and literally taking centre stage," King tells me.

"I love panto. My degree didn't love



some of the crazy conductor stereotypes.

"Arranging *Gala* has been a tall order," Solway tells me. The musical team consisting of King, Solway, Bolin Dai, Jonathan Parapadakis and Matthew Mayes, were given the set list in early December to start arranging immediately. "The hardest part is writing in dance breaks or cuts," he tells me. "They can often sound messy or out of place. Where the arranger gets real freedom is the overture."

With the *Gala* setlist a secret until opening night, it is

with creative director/head choreographer Gina Stock and director Mia Grant. "I am in awe of Gina and Mia, whose creative visions I am inspired by and without whom the show would not go on. Preparing is a very long process and there are aspects I never realised. The difference between assistant musical directing and MDing is huge."

King turns up to as many rehearsals as the cast, records herself singing

practical note, King leads most of the organisation, heavily involved on an administrative level

PAUL ASHLEY ▶



Mosh pit music you could cry to

Oliver Cooney finds emotional depth amidst the screaming on IDLES' latest project

It's 2018. My clothes stink of Strongbow dark fruits and the cigarette I stole from someone too old to be hanging out with secondary school students. Sweaty from the mosh pit, awaiting the next band, a pounding drum ripples through the crowd. It's the opening of 'Never Fight a Man With a Perm.' Its siren-like riff and call-to-war vocals instantly intrigued me, and overrode the embarrassment of Shazaming a track at a live gig. This was how I discovered Bristol rock band, IDLES and their fifth studio album, *TANGK*, took me right back to that moment.

The record boasts IDLES' characteristic mosh pit sound, with lead singer Joe Talbot's gritty, regional yell throwing you into the crowd. The lead single, 'Gift Horse', illustrates this best, as Talbot roars through gritted teeth catchy lines that I can already hear in worn-out teenage voices. The song sizzles with rebellious sentiments and a peppering of IDLES' plucky political focus as Talbot recants: "Ask us to sing your empire songs, she laughs, tells you where I'm from." However, where sociopolitical rage was often at the heart of their early work, this album shifts away from that, turning instead to love.

In 'Hall & Oates', Talbot is accompanied by the rest of the band as they yell: "I love my man." In IDLES' classic plain-talking fashion, the track spotlights brotherly affection as a heavy overdrive guitar explodes underneath. Lead guitarist, Mark Bowen, has always had an ear for riffs bursting with ag-

gression, and his work on this record is no exception. Deep, grumbling bass is a staple in *TANGK*, forming the backdrop against which Talbot details his search for a sweaty nightclub dance partner in 'Dancer'. Once again, devotion and adoration take the wheel, as Talbot chants: 'I give myself to you as long as you move on the floor.'

Yet, between these high-energy anchor points, the album sinks to emotional depths where its thematic soul can really be found. 'Grace', trades shouty grit for a softness, found both in Talbot's singing and the gentleness of Jon Beavis' drumming. Released as a single alongside 'Dancer' and 'Gift Horse', this track established the album as something beyond what we expect from IDLES. The lyricism pivots from the straight-talking, no fluff approach of previously mentioned tracks, becoming instead more artistic with lines like "please caress my swollen heart" and the tagline of the album: "love

is the thing." This mantra is repeated in the spoken word outro to 'POP POP POP', which layers multiple, out-of-sync voices before coalescing on a single word: "love."

My introduction to IDLES was 2018's rage-filled *Joy as an Act of Resistance*, where Talbot's song writing lurched out from his anger at the world. *TANGK* is different. Fondness and romanticism fuel this record, opening up a softer side, complete with an emotional piano ballad, 'A Gospel'.

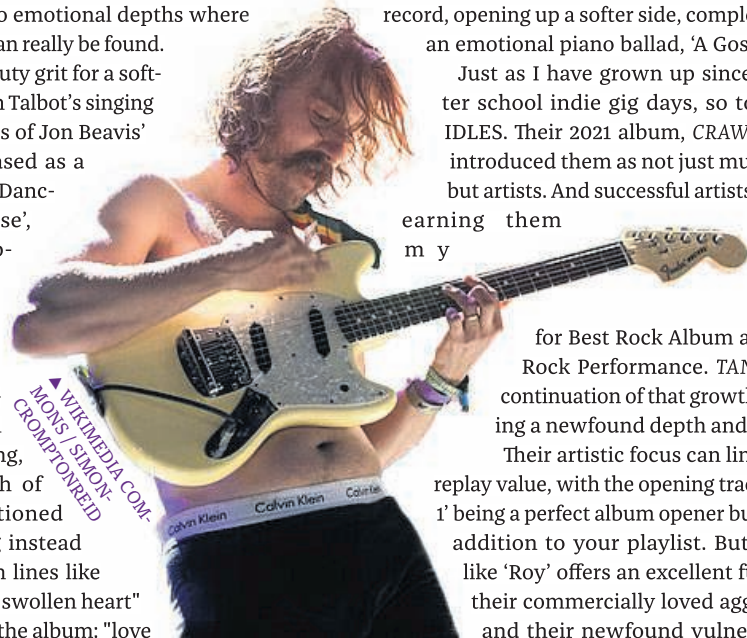
Just as I have grown up since my after school indie gig days, so too have IDLES. Their 2021 album, *CRAWLER*, re-introduced them as not just musicians, but artists. And successful artists at that, earning them my

Grammy nominations for Best Rock Album and Best Rock Performance. *TANGK* is a continuation of that growth, bringing a newfound depth and variety. Their artistic focus can limit their replay value, with the opening track 'IDEA 1' being a perfect album opener but a poor addition to your playlist. But a song like 'Roy' offers an excellent fusion of their commercially loved aggression and their newfound vulnerability.

Almost unrecognisable as Talbot, the softer verses cushion his undeniable power for projection, as he desperately yells: "Baby, I'm a smart man but I'm dumb for you." This is bolstered by the shift from intermittent plucking to a fizzling reverb and the frantic drums. IDLES demonstrate their desire to expand beyond the agitated rock of their youth, introducing emotional ballads alongside it.

Yet how exactly this mature IDLES will sound is unclear. In the delicate final track, 'Monolith', you can feel the influence of producer Nigel Goodrich who has worked extensively with Radiohead. A regular, four note sequence anchors slow ambient shifts backing before fading to a saxophone to close the album. Despite heartfelt lyrics epitomising the record's vulnerability, its sound is disconnected from the rock-rap fusion of 'POP POP POP' or the explosive dynamism of 'Jungle'. Though all are strong individual tracks, their relationship to one another is weaker.

IDLES, themselves, remain the antithesis of weakness. *TANGK* is an illustration of the band's powerhouse status in producing high-energy, distinctive rock. Yet their talent for vulnerability blossoms in the poetic lyricism and musical beauty of the album as well. Far from the support act you google when you get home, IDLES have matured into the band you set out to see, with *TANGK* illustrating a versatility deserving of an entire setlist.



Order yours today!

The Varsity Tote Bag



Just £3.99 plus postage.

All items subject to availability. Above prices exclude postage & packaging. All major credit and debit cards accepted

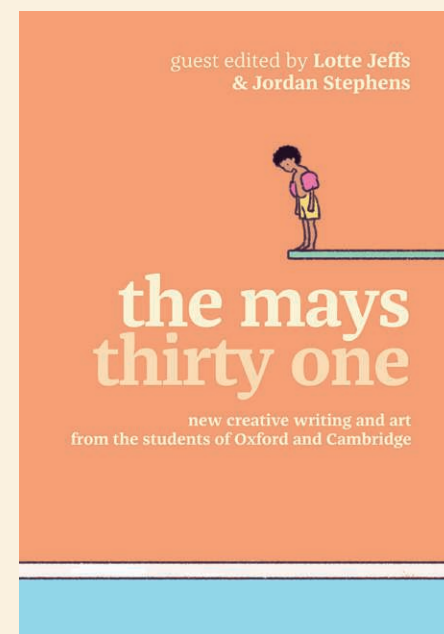
www.varsity.co.uk/shop

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



THE MAYS 31

The best new writing and art from the students of Cambridge University & Oxford University



Available to order now
from www.varsity.co.uk/shop



For more information visit www.themaysanthology.co.uk



Arts

On the Chopping Block

Lucy Ansell interviews **William Balthazar Rose** about his recent exhibition at Clare Hall

Tired of consuming only lectures and reading lists? If you're feeling peckish for some appetising art, I recently spoke to William Balthazar Rose, whose internationally renowned series 'On the Chopping Block' (recently showcased at Clare Hall) certainly provided some food for thought.

Artist William Balthazar Rose, born in Cambridge, was previously an architect before devoting himself to painting full time in 1990. He is best known for his 'Cooks' series, and viewing these titbits of an existential crisis, it's not difficult to see why.

When viewing the exhibition, I found that the Shakespearean line "uneasy lies the head that wears a crown" came into my mind. For one simply cannot glance over the iconic Chef's toque Rose depicts. Cutting against and dominating the pictures, the pointed hats demand attention. However, in paintings such as 'What Do You Do with That?' (2023) they don't look easy to carry; instead Rose paints them to be rigid and rather heavy.

In this series, Rose follows the rich narrative of the cook's profession to elegant yet critically pointed ends. Although Rose's figurative style is (g)astronomically delightful, many of his paintings are deliberately hard to digest. They invite onlookers into a culinary world which highlights inequality and isolation, often showcasing an abuse of power from authority figures. They explore the dark side of a kitchen

culture which can be stressful and ruthless, and is predominantly organised around a hierarchical system. As Rose states, "cooks have their own laws". Anyone who has watched Disney's *The Bear* will recognise how these macabre presentations of back-stabbing chefs ring true.

Previously an architect, Rose attends carefully to spatial placement in order to "reinforce narrative". Speaking to Rose, he stated how the "exhibition should be read as a text, and the placement of images considered in the light of the inner narratives of each painting. It is a story as an entirety." In paintings such as 'What Do You Do with That?' (2023), I see how the depictions of the rigid and heavy toques could be symbolic for Rose's own experience of the "challenging exclusivity of professional disciplines", which he suffered from when he felt the alienation of being a hybrid architect-painter.

In an essay he wrote specially for the Clare Hall exhibition, Rose explains how he utilises the tools of the cook's profession to articulate symbolically ethical nuances of the human condition. He notes how eating is indicative of social inequality, as "we are forced to suffer division: some are rich, some eat, and some starve." In our current cost of living crisis, Rose's work skillfully presents to its viewers its own fictional 'food chain'. The chefs who hold knives hold the power to control and divide, and those on the chopping block suffer alienation and mental isolation, as well as physical separation.

Ultimately, I felt that Rose's work speaks most powerfully to the notion of creative burden, a threat all Cambridge students will relate to. Although it is often deemed humble, cooking, especially fine dining, is undeniably an art form. And like chefs, we

students serve up our supervisors essays which are either savoured delicately, or regurgitated back up in cutting 'academic discussion'. Studying is not always a piece of cake, and paintings such as 'Does the utter essay' (2020-23) capture anxiety of turning in a shoddy

What also strikes me in Rose's paintings is the question of self-nourishment. While astutely presenting what he identifies as the compromise of the chef, who grapples between making a livelihood and producing an artistic, edible commodity, Rose investigates this element of self-sacrifice further. By showing behind the scenes stills of the chefs, Rose creates a painted space to ask the intimate query: who provides for the provider? With burn-out, mental fatigue and the absence of a reading week being a common experience at our university, perhaps this will resonate with you. Rose's exhibition prompted its audience to introspectively examine how we as students can balance creation, livelihood, and the



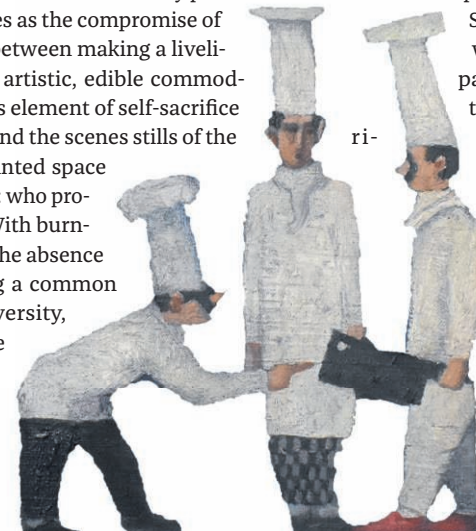
demands of our degrees into a hectic eight week term. Like these cooks, sometimes I think, can we ever have our cake and eat it too?

However, Rose's pictures are not all grim, gourmet scenes of oppression. They are fanciful, playful, and the miniature chefs who huddle together so seriously look oddly endearing. You can sense hints of hope, trust and humour in Rose's culinary world by the way the cooks stand tall and proud, fussing over each other and their cakes. For this reason, one of my favourite of his paintings has to be 'Did He Eat Too Much?' (2020/23). The painting encapsulates the series' tragi-comic nature, with a cook lying on the floor, surrounded by others.

Rose emphasised to me how his "work is a commentary upon the alchemy of painting and the potential failure of the artist."

Sometimes things break down, we bake a bad cake, and Rose's paintings manage to navigate this delicate recipe of life's sacrifice, work and gâteau. But, as Rose further commented:

"Perhaps [this] failure is necessary, perhaps we need to confront failure and understand failure." After looking at these existential sweet treats, I can say that I fully agree. They remind us that nothing worth doing was ever a piece of cake, and studying should not be so.



▲ CLARE HALL & LUCY ANSELL

Film in focus



FARIS QURESHI ▲

Esmé Cockain

"Film photography is the most Marxist thing I do", Faris Qureshi (second year MML) tells me as he shows me the darkroom tucked away in the basement of his Caius accommodation, a place that, until now, I never knew existed. The ever so slightly dingy room is a space for artistic collaboration; above the glowing red light, scraps of paper covered in handwritten instructions are duct-taped haphazardly on the black walls. Various prints, curiously striped in an attempt to test different exposures, have been left behind by students over the years and now form a little makeshift gallery.

For Faris, the process of taking photos has become remote and reflexive in the digital age. Just as Marx's theory of alienation criticises the separation of the worker from the product of their labour, we don't understand what happens inside of our phones when we take photos, and we don't ever stop to give it much thought. We become alienated from the products that we make. But with film photography, you retain control over the entire process. Making your own print, for example, is a hands-on procedure that involves exposing photo paper under an enlarger, dipping it in trays of various chemical solutions, and then finally washing it and hanging it to dry. At the end of this tricky process, you are left with something handmade and tangible; something that feels so much more precious than the plethora



of photos currently taking up all the storage on my iPhone.

Even taking the picture itself is a tactile experience. The camera has a comforting weight as it hangs around your neck, and the act of winding the film, setting the focus, and hearing the shutter click is endlessly satisfying. This is a process that forces you to be intentional. You can't take a burst and choose the best one after, and you can't even review an image and retake it: every shot is deliberate. You have to slow down, think, and really look. In that way, it becomes a practice of mindfulness.

But what else can explain the current resurgence of film in our digital world? Why are people still choosing to

In art museums, permanence matters

Saranka Maheswaran asks what institutional collections can do to uplift marginalised voices

Permanence can allude to something being static and still. Yet art on permanent view is subject to constant transformation as it finds itself bestowed with new meaning and renewed of the old. Permanence is important to the reception of art – but also to its creation and teaching.

The ‘Black Atlantic: Power, People, Resistance’ exhibition at the Fitzwilliam Museum, on display from October 2023 to January of this year, explored the role slavery plays within the infrastructure of the museum and the resistance to it through a combination of older and contemporary artworks. Robert Farris Thompson, previously a History of Art professor at Yale University, coined the term ‘Black Atlantic’ in reference to the spread of creativity of the African diaspora as they battled transatlantic enslavement and the consequences of empire.

Richard Fitzwilliam, who founded the museum, emerged from a family line that actively profited from the horrifying consequences of slavery. His grandfather, Matthew Decker, was part of the group who established the South Sea Company that trafficked African people to the Spanish colonial Americas. It was through this lucrative venture that the donation of the museum to the University was made possible. This should be a reality that is acknowledged always by the museum: not momentarily for the sake of an exhibition, but as a constant lens to understand the power structures that have been at play and to allow the public a platform in

which critical analysis is possible.

The exhibition was incredibly important not only in uncovering the legacies of slavery, but also in exploring contemporary

artists who resist the oppression faced by slaves as well as Black people today. As Amira Mumin, a HSPS student, commented, the exhibition was “positively disruptive in diversifying traditionally Eurocentric spaces, especially being done so at the hands of a Black curator”. The exhibition was co-curated by Dr Jake Subryan Richards and Dr Victoria Avery; they combined their respective knowledge in the history of empire and art to produce the

collection.

A piece which reflects how important permanence is not only to the study of art but to its creation also. Barbara Walker is a featured artist of the collection and is known well for work that returns recognition and visibility back to the Black experience in different ways.

Several pieces of Walker’s art had been included in the exhibition ‘Marking the Moment 3’ (2022). This series overlays copies of well-preserved European art work with graphite drawings on mylar paper. The artwork chosen features a Black person whom the artist has drawn less attention to. It is this figure that Walker returns awareness to by highlighting them in her graphite drawing. In this particular piece it is a reimagining of a work by Titian of an Italian noblewoman and an anonymous Black child attendant. By using mylar paper, Walker

can hone in on the child, who could have otherwise been ignored in favour of the white noblewoman, distorting the racialised gaze. It is because the works of Titian have been provided a permanent space that Walker was able to offer an alternative interpretation of it today, adding to a developing and ongoing narrative about the piece. Permanence is vital for effective discussion in art.

The exhibition was beautifully curated and illustrative of the experiences of art-making and slavery while in conversation with modern day forms of resistance. However, the Fitzwilliam Museum and the wider University need to do more on a permanent basis to recognise the devastating legacy of transatlantic slavery. Toga Ibrahim, an English student, highlighted how she “felt the triumph of the exhibition ... was in a kind of acceptance that the exhibition will always be limited with what it can do within the confines of the museum.”

Exhibitions are fleeting which means the accessibility to study these works is reduced also. It is important that these ideas are open to the public to be studied and understood because it is only through access to these histories that an active move towards anti-racist attitudes can be rendered possible.

Director of the museum Luke Syson commented on how longevity and permanence can be bought to the fore of diversity within art, noting “other factors in play too: who is working at the museum, how we relinquish control over our narrative, and sustain multiple interpretations and participation; how we provide a safe space for conversation that can be difficult and affecting.” Permanence is important in what is shared, but we cannot expect that sharing alone will lead to enduring discourse. Provid-

ing a third space for these discussions on a lasting basis is just as important.

A way in which this third space is actualised is through the education which the University provides in the History of Art Department. Professor Emeritus Jean Michael Massing, who retired in 2017, was the last professor whose expertise lied in African art. Currently, the Department is missing out on potentially vital research and education on African art as well as broadening discourse among students and inspiring greater interest into its study.

The director of the Centre of African Studies in Cambridge, Dr Bronwen Everill, spoke to me about how concepts of permanence often coincide with a matter of funding. “The things that are permanent are the things that are funded.

With the arts and the humanities, especially in the current moment, there aren’t a lot of people who see it as urgent. They see questions in science ... being the place where there is an urgent need for funding.”

The University should be doing more to ensure that funding is

available for the humanities, especially for the arts. Dr Everill pointed out that the Centre of African studies is a great place to study more about African art with it being “open to the public [with] a great library” open to students. There are pockets of permanence within Cambridge; however, it is something we need to commit to with greater vigour when considering the arts.



PHOTOS BY
LEWIS
RONALD &
FITZWILLIAM
MUSEUM

dedicate their time to this craft when taking pictures on your phone provides instant gratification? Technology has endeavoured to create tools that realistically capture the world, depicting it exactly how we see it, with every single detail intact. In fact, cameras today create images even clearer and sharper than what our eyes can offer us. But now, funnily enough, our generation has decided that these pristine images aren’t always what we want. A scroll through Instagram will testify that young people are seeking out the messy and heartfelt: blurry, grainy images with a nostalgic glow that phones struggle to replicate. Film photographs somehow feel softer, more organic. Light leaks, colour shifts, vignette, grain and blur all contribute to that warm, fuzzy aura for which film is



known and loved. They seem to have a certain brightness to them, an ability to make the everyday seem special, and Faris’ photos are a shining example of this quality.

It’s clearly not just me who has fallen in love with the imperfections of film: this vintage aesthetic has even spilled over from photography into graphics and advertising. The fact that film cameras have snuck their way onto the shelves of ultra-trendy shops like Urban Outfitters speaks to the extent of their current popularity among Gen Z. Even digital photographers are attempting to recreate the visual appeal of film during the editing process, artificially adding in texture and colour tints. This retro phenomenon is indicative of a certain tendency among our generation: a subconscious longing for an analogue

age that we have never experienced, a sense of nostalgia for a simpler time before our existence.

I’m not telling you to put down your phone and pick up a camera. This article isn’t about dismissing one medium in favour of another. While film photography requires a delicate and slightly unpredictable process, as well as the expense of buying and developing the film, the convenience and effortlessness of smartphone photography is undeniable. It allows us to document all the tiny precious moments in our lives with ease. But this serves as a gentle invitation to consider film photography as a complementary and rewarding endeavour. After all, in the blurry rush of our digital lives, the allure of the analogue has become increasingly compelling.

Double wheel, what's the deal?

Annia Krzoska speaks to Catz Boat Club about their eccentric stash

With its reputation for loving the wheel a 'bit too much', it's no surprise that St Catharine's College Boat Club (SCCBC) has produced some strange pieces of stash. Despite the wheel being a medieval torture device, students, especially the Boat Club, show their college pride by plastering it over every garment imaginable and often in the most obnoxious way possible. As a member of SCCBC, I am well acquainted with the double-wheel leggings and the wheel bucket hats that have become (in)famous on the River Cam for their place as iconic fashion monstrosities. Intrigued by our love for the wheel, I talked with the SCCBC kit secretary about why this society is so obsessed with such an eccentric stash style.

Undoubtedly, the strangest garments produced by SCCBC are the double wheel leggings and wheel one-piece, which can be paired together to produce a look that makes double denim look like high fashion. When speaking to current kit secretary John, he taught me the history of this design, which supposedly began in a far more organised lattice pattern that could almost pass as "normal". John's pitch for kit secretary was to boost the popularity of these leggings, which he achieved by making them "more chaotic and disgusting". He promised that "I'm going to make these leggings worse," increasing the number at the same time. John was modest about his artistic abilities, supplementing his mock-up to Powerhouse with the firm request that they "paste as many wheels on as they can", promising that "people will almost certainly buy." These Powerhouse leggings reached record sales, selling twelve to fifteen rounds in the first year.

John "used to confidently say that Catz is the

only college that has a torture device on its emblem," and, excluding the crucifix, he still believe it is unique among the Oxbridge colleges. Having such an odd symbol to represent your club opens many opportunities for standing out. As John argued, a unique set of rowing stash becomes a way to distinguish yourself by going "as bright" – and chaotic – "as possible."

With even its designer proclaiming their absurdity, why were these leggings so popular with the club? John argued that rowing fashion is often a "race to the bottom of distinguishing yourself". While on the river, you want to stand out, whether your crew appears "the most unique or the worst". John told me about some other strange stash pieces from other boat clubs; Downing Tribal's purple and black checkerboard leggings are not much better than the chaotic Catharine wheels. In John's words: "Neither of these leggings belong to polite society." From both mine and John's experience, this "race to the bottom" is part of the fun of rowing. Emma Sprints, the first race for novices, markets itself as a dress-up game where the most creative outfits are rewarded with a Rowbridge. As much as the stereotypes say otherwise, Cambridge rowers don't like to take themselves too seriously. Following this, funky garments become a fantastic form of self-expression to add some fun to a demanding sport.

Of course, plastering your college crest all over your body is also a great way of showing college pride. When rowing, you'll be certain that your "Yeah Catz" call was directed to the right crew and that the handsome stroke seat from another crew will know where to direct their Crushbridge. When rerunning for kit sec, John spread

the wheel further and further through each possible garment. The wheel leggings already matched the equally hideous wheel one-piece, and following a recent vote by the Seniors, he helped to produce wheel sliders and bucket hats. Unfortunately, a wheel tie was taking things a bit too far. John's request to Powerhouse for these hats and sliders was, once again, simple: "I want a truly disgusting number of wheels on them."

As this boat club has shown, eccentric fashion is usually the most fun to wear. Stash can reach such a level of disgusting that it may as well be haute couture. You might not wear your wheel bucket hat to Fitzbillies or a formal, but it would stand out on the river and the runway, so why not give it a buy?

St Catharine's is hardly the only college with strange rowing stash, although it is certainly distinctive. John told me about some of the sights he has witnessed over his many years on the river: a "bright green unisuit, pixelated unisuit," and even a "rubber duck unisuit" have shown their colours on the Cam. Ultimately, college sports are there for us to have fun. If we all wore the standard uniforms or plain black Primark leggings, we'd all look like we were taking ourselves too seriously (which we rarely do!). Why not show a bit of college pride and have some fun violating the norms of fashion while you're at it?



ANNIA KRZOSKA ▲

Inside the world of costume design

Jasmine Wong goes behind the scenes to explore the ADC's iconic costumes

Costume designing is often overlooked; we rarely pay attention to the pivotal role it plays in films, our favourite television shows, or even the plays you might have watched at the ADC Theatre. Yet after discussing the importance of correct costuming with a student costumier, the integral role it plays in building a character can't be overstated.

Meet Abi Beton, a first-year AMES student with an undeniable talent for costume design. Abi reflects on the general reception to costume design, "I would say that costumes are the sort of thing that if you get wrong, people notice. If you get it right, people just go, wow, it looks good."

How does one even get into costume design? As with many other niche hobbies, the answer is unsurprisingly lockdown — Abi first got started in costume design during the pandemic. With all the extra free time, she turned to cosplay and recreating costumes as a creative outlet.

Naturally, as a Cambridge student, she tells me that, "one of my costume philosophies is that I can't be bothered doing anything easy." She tells me that her imagining of *Six The Musical's* Anne Boleyn costume is one of her proudest recreations, "I wanted to go for the Six costumes because the fabrics are so hard, I never thought I'd be able to make it." It was challenging working with a fabric she'd never worked with before. The plastic material didn't allow much room for mistakes, and glueing

each and every rhinestone onto a pair of black boots from Vinted was a painstaking task. But the toil paid off in the end, with her Anne Boleyn costume getting featured on *Six The Musical's* official Instagram.

Being a costumier has influenced Abi's everyday fashion too, as she explains that "I think it's nice not to feel those boundaries there" between the imaginary and practical everyday fashion. Sometimes she even incorporates accessories or parts of her costumes in her everyday dress, like her billowy white button-up blouse that was once part of a pirate costume. When asked what her main consideration is when designing, Abi says, "what I try and think about is, has the character dressed themselves?" She then provided some examples of what she considers: "What they can afford in terms of fabrics, whether they're the sort of person who likes showing off a lot of skin, or what they prioritise when dresswing."

Fashion is often written off as superficial, but we very much (subconsciously or not) consider the same things that Abi thinks about when designing her characters' costumes when making our everyday outfit choices. "I think it's

really interesting how you pick your clothes based on who you want to be associated with and how you want to be seen. If you want to be perceived in a certain way, you wear the clothes that kind of reflect that." Looking at costume design prompts us to look even deeper and to understand that we dress the way we do for a reason — even if our everyday outfit is a seemingly mundane pair of jeans and a sweater.

Abi eventually hopes to make costume designing her career and has costumed plays in Cambridge, like *The Complete Works of Shakespeare (Abridged)* — an absurd sketch comedy that was performed in Michaelmas. Abi knew her director, Rosie, had wanted to go for a "Jacobean aesthetic", but found her main challenge to be fitting the costume design "within the vibe of a Shakespearean show" while balancing the scripts' and actors' inherent modernity. So to have something that "really made it pop and distinct", she went with a combination that might not occur to most of us; Neon-coloured socks, converse sneakers,

and a top with a Jacobean silhouette.

Costume design, by nature, also requires the costumier to consider the gendered line that fashion has historically sought to define, push, and blur. She was aiming for the characters to "all (have) sort of an androgynous look, because throughout the show they all played different genders." The androgynous and ambiguous look Abi achieved meant that Blossom Durr, the actress pictured above, was easily able to portray both the Nurse (while wearing a pair of fake boobs) and Othello.

However, it's not easy being a costumier in student productions. While ideas may be endless, the funds most definitely are not. This particular play had a tight £100 budget. A large part of being a costumier turns out to be sourcing materials within monetary constraints, "the tights were easy enough to get, but everything else was hard to find." Abi recalls "working with the ADC costume cupboard," where "they don't have that many costumes for each historical period." Also, because most plays tend to only have one person in charge of costuming, it can get quite solitary, "I think actually making costumes can be a bit lonely, because you sort of sit in your room and work on it yourself."

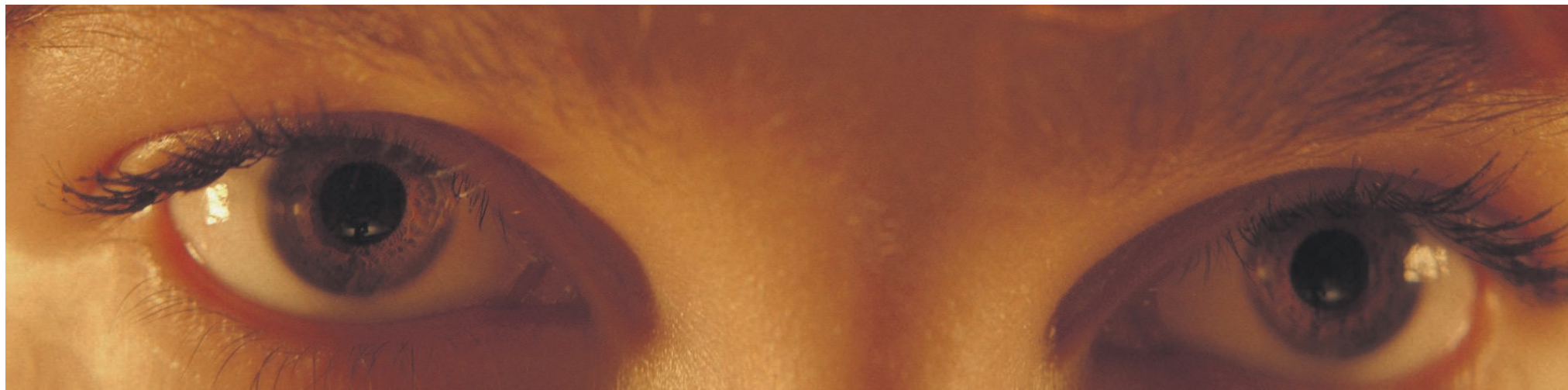
Currently, Abi is excitedly working with another costumier for the designs in a new play *Emma*, which you'll be able to catch in week 7 of this Lent term at the ADC. Whilst I can't reveal the exclusive insider information concerning the costuming concept for *Emma*, rest assured you will be amazed.



▲ PAUL ASHLEY

Pregnant golems and clay babies

Anna Geary chats to the students behind Watersprite-nominated film *Beresheith*



▲ FIN SCOTT

Beresheith is a captivating and sensory short experimental film made by Nicola Medicoff, Katie Wrench and Fin Scott in their final year of studying English at Cambridge. The film consists of three distinct scenes: an artist painstakingly moulds babies out of clay and is compelled to crush one between her hands; a young woman visiting a gallery observes the statue of a pregnant golem while listening to an audio guide stammer disconcertingly to a stop; the golem comes to life through stop motion animation and sculpts a baby from its own clay flesh. We spoke to the makers of *Beresheith*, a finalist in the experimental film category at Watersprite Film Festival, about clay-mation, slow cinema and maternity.

How did the project come about and what inspired the concept?

Nicola: There's a temple-like building owned by Caius College called Finella, which was the setting for the second scene in the film. The composer Robin Holloway, who was living there, told me about a past exhibition of Jacob Epstein's sculpture of a pregnant woman and I was intrigued by the image of the artwork in that space and the early 20th-century obsession with sculptures of petrified pregnancy. I went to Katie with my ideas and we worked on the script and visual concepts over the summer of our second year. Robin also lent us a book about golems – a capitalistic folkloric figure that is a servile ana-

logue of the human, which humans themselves can make. We were interested in these parallels and the idea that the golem's agency is what makes it scary. Rather than depicting a violent male golem, we created a golem that could reproduce itself.

How did you find the process of creating and editing a 16-minute film?

Fin: We shot the film throughout our final year and I edited it over the summer. It was originally meant to be 5 minutes long but we needed more time to establish the intimacy between the mother and the child she is making. It was challenging to work out the pacing because each scene could have been its own 5-minute film and there isn't really a narrative arc. I was interested in slow cinema and the delicacy of the moment: you think you can keep on cutting down a work and it will become thicker but sometimes that means you lose things. Sometimes moments need time to acquire their significance.

How did you find working with clay and incorporating stop motion animation into the film?

Katie: None of us had done any stop motion animation before. It was three hours of Fin working with the camera and 20 hours of "Oh my

God!"

Nicola: It was strange making the babies out of clay because we had to support their heads so they felt tangibly like babies. This made it painful to destroy one for the first scene. It was important for the narrative that they be made out of clay because even the tender imprints of the creator are somehow forming or deforming the child.

Fin: The quality of the clay is different in each scene. In the first, the clay is softer to make the child's expressions look rich. We used air drying clay so that, by the end, the mother looks like a rock face, having become drier, cracked and

withered, as if she has aged. This effect was magnified by the film's composer and



▲ FIN SCOTT

sound designer, Ben Nicolson, who incorporated cracking sounds into the final scene to give the impression of something moving that shouldn't be. (Katie adds that she and Nicola crunched celery in front of a microphone to create these sounds!)

Do you have a fixed idea of how the film, particularly the ending, should be interpreted?

Katie: We wanted the final scene to be ambiguous, so people would question whether it's as real as the first two. Spectators might ask, "Is this happening in the sculptor's imagination or is this speculative realism? Is this something that has or will happen?". Even we don't really know! It's significant that the clay creature cannot create more clay; it can only use its own body. The erasure of the face acts as an emblem of that loss. The film focuses on the idea of maternal sacrifice. People often ask us if it's about abortion because we made it after the overturning of Roe v Wade but it's really open to interpretation.

Nicola: We didn't have a specific thought of what it meant but wanted to create resonant images of motherhood. The bittersweet aspect of the ending is that, in creating this creature, the mother must withdraw herself. She only understands making a baby through destruction, self-sacrifice and violence. We're going to continue making weird sensory films but maybe with a bit more narrative next time!



Dream double features by Abby Reeves



Death Race 2000 (1975) and Redline (2009)

Total Length: 186 minutes (3 hours). *Redline* is a bombardment to the senses, giving you enough adrenaline for *Death Race*'s often non-sensical, damningly 70s style

Recommended if you like: "Girls/Fast Cars" by The Wombats

Thanks to the skyrocketing popularity of F1 racing, car films are more mainstream than ever before, and for good reason. Who doesn't love the high-octane adrenaline of a treacherous race? This form of escapism becomes extreme in these two films.

Redline, an animated film by Takeshi Koike, takes the premise to planetary proportions, with a highly illegal, interstellar car race. Readers may be shocked to learn that a dystopian world in which a totalitarian regime devises a game of death to placate the population was an idea lingering in the popular imagination long before

The Hunger Games. Indeed, the 70s saw a spate of such films, with premises ranging from the silly (*Rollerball* – men on roller skates and motor-bikes fighting to the death) to cult classics like *Death Race 2000*. The latter centres on a car race in which mowing down pedestrians earns you points – the older, the better.

It's a life-long truism that cars equal sex appeal (see *Titane*, *Crash*). There's an unavoidably erotic association between the throbbing engine of a racecar and the masculine phallus. The protagonists of both films seek to embody this carnal coolness. *Redline*'s JP is an underdog in the car world, entangled in a corrupt gambling scheme. He struts onto the scene sporting a signature leather jacket, his black quiff emanating a concoction of Elvis Presley and an extra



in *Grease*. He oozes style, in marked contrast to the protagonist of *Death Race* – a mysterious man named Frankenstein whose hordes of fans worship him due to his connection to the anonymous "president". Sylvester Stallone plays Machine Gun, a gross parody of himself who constantly chews gum alongside his female navigator, the white-fur smothered Poodle. Stallone projects far more sex appeal than the latex-clad Frankenstein, his car bonnet sporting a leering machete to skewer unsuspecting victims.

With all the subtlety of a sledgehammer, these films criticise the American imperial machine of patriotism. Both feature menacing figures called "the President". In *Redline*, Mr President is the authoritarian ruler of an entire planet, hell-bent on his own version of keeping the peace. This unsurprisingly results in mass violence as his attempts to

◀ SIPPAKORN YAMKASIKORNS

suppress the inter-terrestrial car race unleash a bio-weapon hidden under the Earth's crust. *Redline* sits within a long line of Japanese films that denounce America for proclaiming itself "keeper of the peace" while wielding nuclear weaponry.

From the anti-establishment movement of the 1970s emerged *Death Race 2000*. The film begins with trumpets blaring a rendition of 'The Star-Spangled Banner', while red, white and blue balloons are unleashed into the sky. Such die-hard patriotism is used to excuse the game's bloody premise. The races are designed to provide entertainment for the masses while the President gets on with fighting America's greatest enemy: France. The film ends with Frankenstein assassinating the President and assuming his role, immediately outlawing the death race. While peace ultimately triumphs, the commentator of the games gets the final say: "That's the way we love it: violent, violent, violent!"

Theatre

The dark truth behind Facebook's ADCbridge 3



Bex Goodchild investigates the theatre community's anonymous confessions page and its inevitable demise

There is probably a Facebook confession page for just about every college, subject, and society in Cambridge (sorry Edu Soc, you will get there eventually). With pages like Crushbridge, Susfess and Pelikind, some of the names get pretty creative. My personal favourites have to be Gonville and Caius' Spill the Baius, Girton's Girthfessions and the Law Faculty's Law Facul-Tea. Confession pages can be a place to share jokes, concerns, advice, and, of course, a few soppy love professions. While confession pages are usually all fun, games, and academic burnout, there is a dark side. I spoke to the admin of ADCbridge (referred to as Admin for anonymity), a recently-closed confession page for all things Cambridge theatre, and uncovered some truly disgusting revelations. The closure of ADCbridge was a lot more serious than I had originally thought. Some of these atrocious confessions should really have been left untyped.

Ironically, the most recent version of ADCbridge was called ADCbridge 3: Always Look on the Bright Side of Life. While the page promoted wholesome, light-hearted posts, its submissions became increasingly negative, Admin tells me. There had been at least two other ADCbridge accounts, both of which supposedly had run-ins with legal threats and libel cases made against them. ADCbridge 3 was created by Admin after the others were shut down. They explain to me that they hoped to create a positive space for people to freely share their concerns. They concede now that these aims were optimistic. They even received messages from previous admins warning them of the threats and harassment they had received while running the page – but this time would be different, right? Within only nine months, the page would be shut down at the beginning of November 2023.

Many ADCbridge submissions were never posted. Admin received submissions that bordered on sexual harassment, blatantly antisemitic opinions on how "Judaism has no place in theatre", and racist remarks about how "people should be happy with the roles they can get as a black actor." This goes beyond 'a difference of opinion' and enters the territory of hate

crimes. The particularly horrific 'confessions' were not posted. However, Admin still had to read them. Without an admin team like other pages, they had to bear the burden of the page themselves. Faced with particularly horrendous submissions, they often turned to close friends for support. This level of strain on the admins of confession pages is not healthy. Admin explains: "It got to the point where I was like, maybe this community isn't worth helping." They decided that the page was breeding the worst type of harmful narratives, a far stretch from what they had once thought would be a productive, safe space.

“
As a performer, there is a vulnerability that which doesn't necessarily exist in, say, rowing

The page wasn't all bad. Admin describes some of their favourite types of submission that praised and supported people in theatre. At ADCbridge's best, anonymity made posts feel sincere, their only intention being to make someone else feel good. Admin also expresses a love for the jokes and memes that were occasionally submitted. The less serious side of ADCbridge seemed to be lost nearer its end but these were some of the most important submissions. It is a true shame the negativity destroyed the glimmers of mutual admiration in this community. These hidden joys were, as Admin describes, "Cambridge theatre at its best... A beautiful, beautiful place filled with

support and love and appreciation of each other's artistic talents." Even the more sensitive debates, when approached correctly, were productive. Admin tells me they were proud to see the page creating active changes in the community such as ADC show selection and the Marlowe Showcase access issues. The page allowed people to share concerns without the fear of personal attack, making it a safe place for education and discussion. Is there any way we can save the positives of ADCbridge? Admin tells me after being away from the page, they have slightly more hope in the theatre community but bringing back the page seems like a bad move.

After the ADCbridge closure, more theatre-based posts have been appearing on other pages like Camfess and Queerfess. These are lovely to see, but the pages don't have the same understanding of the theatre scene as ADCbridge. Admin expresses concern about how submissions will be dealt with if the admin teams of these pages are outside the theatre world. Maybe the other big confession pages have managed to deal with the mental strain Admin experienced because there is a whole team of admins dealing with submissions rather than a single person. Could it also be an issue specific to theatre? Theatre is inherently 'cut-throat' and competitive which might result in more hostility. After at least three attempts at the page, maybe this Cambridge theatre Facebook utopia was doomed from the beginning.

When the interview ends, I am in utter shock at the extent of the harassment, discrimination, and negativity that lay behind the scenes of ADCbridge. Looking at Facebook, I can already see yet another iteration of the page being formed – ADCbridge 4: What could go wrong? Is it tempting fate? Is there a place for theatre confession pages? I would like to believe the majority of us have good intentions, but after hearing what Admin had to endure, I'm not so sure anymore. I'm not here to tell you what the right decision is, but maybe Admin's experience should act as a warning. Confession page or not, let's be decent people. Pretty please?

What's on?

Molly Scales looks at what's on in Cambridge's theatres for the rest of term

Bloody Knees, 9.30pm, 5-9 March, Pembroke New Cellars

Student-written dark sitcom *Bloody Knees* is coming to Pembroke New Cellars next week! The story is told via "a lush pastiche of snapshots that every young twenty-something can relate to", up to and including failed careers, a messy love life, drug abuse, and a longing for things to be as simple as they were in the early 2000s. *Bloody Knees* sounds like gen Z's *Peep Show*. It's *Waiting for Godot* for everyone who had a Nintendo.

KSOSES, 7pm, 5-9 March, Corpus Playroom

We've all felt like the only one in the group project with anything even approaching sanity. Now imagine that – in space. That's what Bill Dallas Lea, writer and co-director of *KSOSES* did. This 'stellar' play unfolds around four astronauts trapped in a training simulation. The bad news? They bring out the absolute worst in each other. To infinity and... well, the Corpus Playroom!

Ariel Hebditch: *Skeleton Out of the Closet*, 9.30pm, 5 March, Corpus Playroom

There are those who say stand-up comedy is a dying art. And they'd be exactly right! Ariel Hebditch's stand-up debut, *Skeleton Out of the Closet*, is an hour of jokes about the macabre, the maddening, and the downright murderous. Fresh from a disappointing job interview with the Grim Reaper, Ariel tackles werewolves, asexuality, how difficult it is to rebel when your parents are cooler than you are... It's murderously good fun!

Emma, 7pm, 5-9 March, Pembroke New Cellars

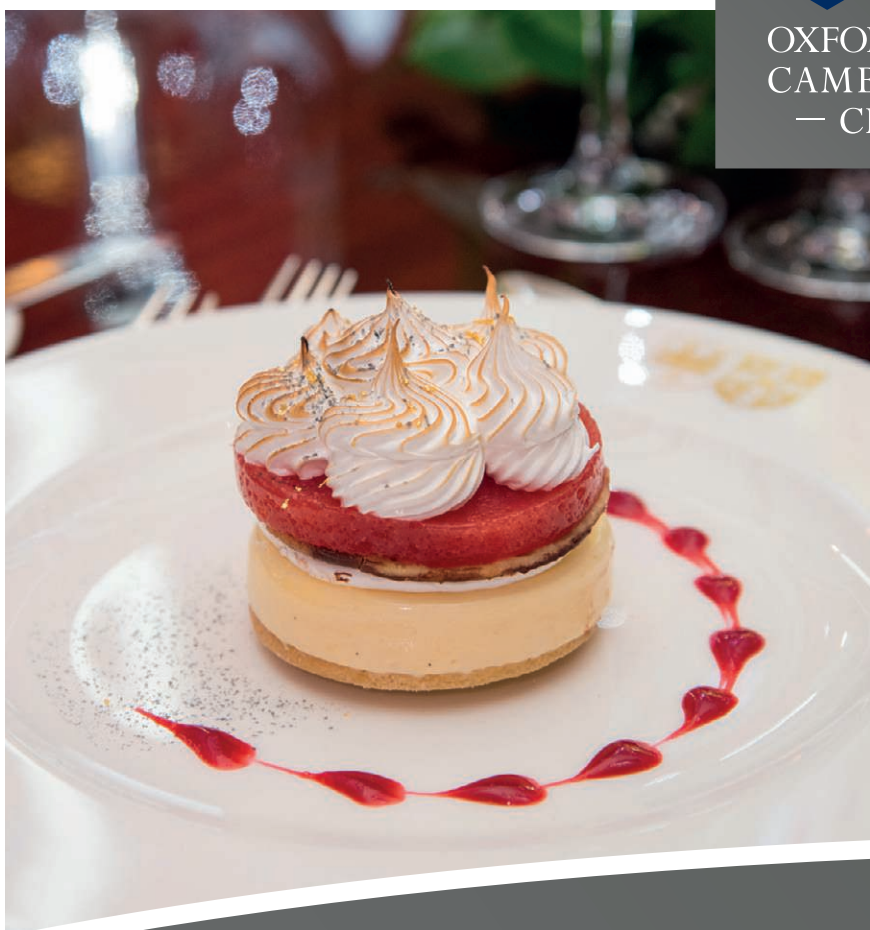
It is a truth universally acknowledged that everyone knows Jane Austen. But how well do you know Emma Watson? That's the question asked by writer and director of *Emma*, Sophie Orr. *Emma* examines the relationship between this lesser-known Austenian heroine and the writer as you've never seen her before. As reality and fiction blur, and Jane wonders if she'll ever make sense (and sensibility) again, only Emma stands a chance of saving her.

This is the Big One, 11pm, 6-8 March, ADC Theatre

Camdram is rather vague about what *This is the Big One* actually is. It's fairly certain it's the late show; it's mildly confident that it's at the ADC. But if you look past the vague descriptions, it's evident that *This is the Big One* is a show with a mission: to elevate student comedy from woeful to average. With a self-awareness rarely seen in uni comedy, Lizzy Riley's team promises to "raise the bar from being on the floor to being slightly-above the floor" – so be there, and get ready to limbo.



OXFORD AND
CAMBRIDGE
— CLUB —



Welcome to your Club

For nearly 200 years alumni have chosen to take up membership of a spacious and elegant private club in the heart of London. The Oxford and Cambridge Club in Pall Mall is the perfect place to meet for a drink, entertain friends and colleagues in magnificent surroundings, play squash, take a break, host a party or just find a quiet corner to prepare for a meeting. A thriving social scene, sports facilities, a lively calendar of events including talks, tastings, dinners and balls, an exceptionally well-stocked library, extensive wine cellars and more than 40 bedrooms mean our members use their club for recreation, relaxation and business - and now you can too.

For details on membership or a tour of the Club house on Pall Mall,
please visit www.oxfordandcambridgeclub.co.uk or call 020 7321 5110

  Oxford and Cambridge Club  @oandclub

Theatre



Alice Mainwood sits down with ADC photographer Charlotte Conybeare

“I love theatre, and I love photography”, Charlotte Conybeare - half second year English student and half ADC devotee - tells me. Most commonly finding roles that keep her behind the curtain, from lighting design to scriptwriting and directing, Charlotte has a pretty healthy Camdram profile. Not to mention her new role on the ADC committee as Club Publicist. But it was her love for both theatre and photography independently that led her

to her first, and most frequent credit: photographer.

“The world of Cambridge theatre can be a bit exclusive and hard to break into if you don’t know anyone there and missed the train of fresher’s shows”, Charlotte commended. She tells me about an acting-fuelled time at school, which then rapidly slipped away in the chaos of Fresher’s week. Skipping past the CUADC’s stall on Parker’s Piece to reach the Dominoes truck for a half a slice of slightly soggy but very much

free pizza is completely understandable. Before you have time to gawp at the ADC’s what’s on page, the fresher’s shows of Michaelmas are up, and ADC cliques are formed.

Charlotte had a brief stint as a lyricist for the Musical Theatre Society’s 24 hour musical in her first year, which inspired a brave, post-fresher’s venture behind the scenes at the ADC. Thus, we reach the start of Charlotte’s photographic career in Cambridge. She tells me that, although the first show she photographed

Behind the lens at the ADC

here never actually went ahead, it left her yearning to apply for more; a Camdram advert for show photographer for last Easter’s *The Seagull* solidified Charlotte’s entry into the world of the ADC. In spite of the higher time commitment forged by demand for “several rounds of headshots, quite a few rehearsal sessions and then the dress”, Charlotte tells me how much she loved working on the show. Not only that, but she was subjected to “inhaling chlorine and bitumen fumes for many hours due to the lake on stage”. I decided not to enquire further about any potential risk assessments done. I’m sure they were plentiful.

“The difficulty with the photographer role is that it’s not super established in the way directors or producers are”, Charlotte muses. “You wouldn’t dream of just asking a mate to direct a show without opening for applicants first, but with photography I’ve noticed that this does happen a lot”. The fragility of the photographer’s role acts in complete dichotomy with its necessity for publicity material. The posters adorning the rails and sideboard of Cambridge and the streams of Instagram content from Cambridge’s thespian community rely entirely on ADC photographers. Charlotte is hoping that in her

new role as Club Publicity officer, this can be reformed.

Over and over again, I notice how frequently Charlotte mentions the many different teams that she’s collaborated with on each of these shows. Most recently, she’s been working on the photography for Christ Chapel’s *Made of Light*, which they describe as “a real privilege”. The experience reiterated to Charlotte the potential to capture “an incredible team” and their work on a “wonderfully crafted and written show”.

Charlotte holds the role in great esteem, and is on a mission to make sure directors and producers, alongside Cambridge’s non-ADC-motivated inhabitants, take it equally seriously.

I’m told tales of manic last minute headshots, getting lost on her way to shoot locations, being pulled into operating spotlights on show night, and having to design a whole show’s soundscape in a matter of hours. Charlotte’s time behind the camera has facilitated an initiation into a community that grants opportunities few other societies in Cambridge can. “And getting people who hate having their photo taken say ‘that wasn’t too awful’ is sort of one of my favourite things”. With that, Charlotte joked that she was off to “russle up a week’s work in one afternoon” in an attempt to buy back some of the time she’s spent at the ADC this week.

Haircuts

Clipper Cut	from £17
Dry Cut	from £20
Wet Cut & Dry	from £22
Flat Top	from £22
Restyle	from £24
Long Hair	from £24
Skin Fade	from £23
Shave / Wet Cut & Dry	from £36

Beard

Trim	from £10
Wet Shave	from £18

Boys under 12

Monday to Thursday	
Dry Cut	from £16
Wet Cut & Dry	from £18

Uni Student Discount

Only accepted with a valid uni or NUS card

Monday to Thursday	from £18
Friday	from £19

Senior Citizens 67+

Monday to Thursday	from £16
--------------------	----------

Lui's

Barbershop

EST. 2001



Find us

5a Pembroke Street
Cambridge CB2 3QY

Follow us

@luisharbershop1
 luisharbershop2001

Contact us

Tel: 01223 566663
Online: luisharbershop.co.uk

ADVERTISE WITH US

To advertise in any of our print publications or online, please contact our Business Manager:

Email: business@varsity.co.uk

Telephone: 01223 337575

www.varsity.co.uk

Powering through 250 weeks of Parkrun

After five years of Saturday morning runs, **Aenghus Hughes** reflects on what Parkrun means to him

As a humanities student with no weekend lectures, it may seem odd to want to spend a Saturday morning doing anything other than lying in and relaxing. As I walk up to Ed-dington at half past eight with sleep still in my eyes and socks I'm fairly certain are on the wrong feet, I can't help but find myself agreeing. I find myself among the hundreds of thousands of people worldwide who make the weekly pilgrimage to their local park, forest, or, as in my case, playing fields, to run 5k at 9am every Saturday morning. It's not madness; it's parkrun. And, after about seven years in the game, today is my 250th.

The simple promise of a regular,

timed event has seen parkrun grow from Bushy Park in London to over 2,300 locations today. There are four in Cambridge alone: Fulbourn Hospital, Coldham's Common, Milton Country Park, and my destination today - Storey's Field. A lovely, flat set of paths around cricket and football pitches, up by Girton, that regularly ranks within the 20 fastest courses in the country. What more could you want bright and early in the morning?

As I arrive at the start, and see crowds of runners milling around, I immediately forget my previous grumbling. Parkrun is amazing, because it truly is for everyone. There are all sorts of people, from young kids to pensioners, warming up to run. No one cares about your speed, your fitness, or how state-of-the-art your kit is. All that matters is you're getting out and doing it. I'm reminded of one of parkrun's unofficial slogans: the only person you're competing against is yourself.

After a pre-run briefing I've heard so many times I could probably recite it back to you, it's over to the time-keepers: and we're off. The cacophony of trainers on concrete, supplemented by cheers of encouragement from onlookers, is weirdly comforting. It's the soundtrack to the broader parkrun community, one built on friendliness and inclusivity. I've been to 28 different parkruns, and the common thread that stretches through all of them is how welcoming all of the volunteers are.

This isn't to say the experience is one of boundless joy, though. There can't be many things more demoralising than the double-bugy, being pushed like it weighs nothing, that overtakes me

around the halfway mark. I make a mental note to try and keep pace with them, but quickly give up and watch them disappear into the distance. Alas, you can't win them all.

I power through, and before I realise it we're already into the final lap. This is where the endorphins really start to hit, and I really start to enjoy it. Parkrun is great for both your physical and mental wellbeing. Running regularly, especially in the morning, gives you the opportunity to clear your head and put any worries in perspective. If you're able to run 5,000 metres at the crack of dawn, you're definitely able to take on the rest of the day.

Entering the last half-mile of the course, all eyes

are on the finish. My carefully-curated running playlist spits out 'The Borders' by Sam Fender, and I match my cadence to the infectious drum beat. This is, unsurprisingly, my favourite part of parkrun. Whether you've just started or you've been at it for years, the final minutes feel like the culmination of all the effort you've put in: it's absolutely electric.

Finishing my 250th parkrun, there's the inevitable celebration. I feel overjoyed, and proud, and accomplished. The walk back to college feels much easier than the earlier trek out. While sitting down to brunch around midday, it dawns on me: there's no point in stopping now. 500 is a mere five years away. Same time again next week, then.

◀ PHOTOS BY LOUIS ASHWORTH & PAUL BANNISTER

What's On: Weeks 7 & 8

Varsity Basketball
Saturday 2nd March
University Sports Centre

Varsity Rugby
Saturday 2nd March
StoneX Stadium

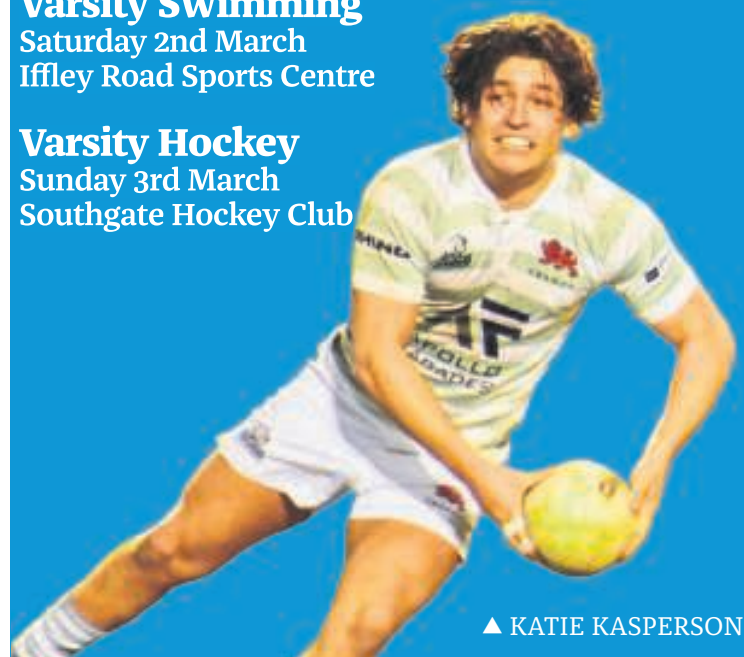
Varsity Table Tennis
Saturday 2nd March
Acer Sports Hall, Oxford

Varsity Swimming
Saturday 2nd March
Iffley Road Sports Centre

Varsity Hockey
Sunday 3rd March
Southgate Hockey Club

Varsity Ice Hockey
Saturday 9th March
Cambridge Ice Arena

Varsity Football
Friday 15th March
Abbey Stadium



▲ KATIE KASPERSON

Captain's Corner

Ice Hockey captain **Ivan Grega** chats to Ed Marsh about Cambridge's Ice Hockey club

Who is your sporting idol?

Zdeno Chára, who also comes from Slovakia. He was one of the best defence-men in the NHL and captain of the Boston Bruins for 14 years. He's an incredibly hardworking player, a great leader, but also a very humble person. Overall, a great role model. I met him at a training camp when I was 13, and I'd love to meet him again.

Best sporting moment?

Winning the Varsity match.

Worst sporting moment?

Losing the Varsity match.

Why your sport?

I got into ice hockey through my family. My dad is a coach and my two brothers also play. I started relatively late, when I was six or seven, so I had to work extra hard to catch up. The hardworking mentality stayed with me and continues to help me improve. Ice hockey is a complex sport which requires many aspects of athleticism, teamwork, decision making and judgment. It is very fulfilling to combine it all.

What is the best bit about being captain?

It's probably the proud feeling of seeing the team perform well in games. I have always lived by the creed that leadership is service, and I think it is important to put my teammates first. Try to set a good example and create the conditions for everyone to get better. Seeing that it pays off when the team does well is rewarding.

Worst bit about being captain?

Probably the most challenging bit is to keep a good picture of where the team is and adjust our approach accordingly. It is

my responsibility, and the responsibility of the other captains, to make sure the team is ready for the Varsity match. You have to keep asking yourself constantly - are we doing the right things? Is there more we can do? You don't want to be in a position where you're asking these questions after the Varsity match.

Is it easy for beginners to join?

While it is challenging to get into the sport, beginners often find it very stimulating and enjoyable. Someone once said: "Your ability to keep doing interesting things is your willingness to be embarrassed again and go back to step one ..." If you're someone who finds joy in learning new skills, you'll love the challenge.

Who could a beginner contact to get involved?

The club has a development squad called the Huskies which welcomes newcomers. It is best to join at the start of the season in October.

What might a typical training session look like?

Hockey requires a very wide range of abilities and training is adapt-

ed accordingly. It is a physical game with hitting which takes almost 3 hours from start to end - for that we train to improve our strength and conditioning in the gym. In our on-ice training, we focus on skills such as skating, puck-handling, shooting, tactics, strategy and other aspects of the game. In addition, we all do individual off-ice sessions which are tailored to the needs of every player.

When/where is training held?

We have on-ice training sessions at our Cambridge Ice Arena, typically on weekday nights. The off-ice strength and conditioning sessions are in the University Sports Centre.

Funniest moment with the team?

There's no shortage of those as the past winners of the esteemed 'Hanson-Poe-Zhang Memorial Dust Award' would attest. A recent highlight is a player showing up for a training camp without his gear. But many other inside jokes obviously come up in our frequent social events.

Varsity predictions?

The 106th Varsity match will be held in Cambridge on 9 March. The game will be intense and entertaining, and Cambridge will win.

Who should we look out for this year?

Look out for your Cambridge Blues! We have a lot of breadth and depth in the team and every player will contribute to team success. Come to support and vote for your favourite player!



◀ NIGEL GOODENOUGH

Sport

An ode to
Parkrun
Page 31



Captain's
Corner
Page 31



Blues dominate Canadian side



BRITTON ROXBURGH/TWU UNIVERSITY ▲

Ed Marsh reports on the Blues rugby team's convincing victory over Trinity Western University

Cambridge 61

Trinity Western 19

Cambridge Men's 1XV rugby team took on Trinity Western University, a Canadian side currently touring England, in what proved to be a comfortable victory in preparation for this week's Varsity Match. Trinity Western, nicknamed "the Spartans" trained with the Blues' Varsity opponents, Oxford University, earlier last week in preparation for both this match and a later fixture against Bristol University.

The dye was already cast in the second minute when Blues winger Tim Andrew finished the first of many Cambridge tries to put them 5-0 up. In what would prove the only mistake in a superb kicking display, Jamie Benson failed to convert. That didn't matter though, as five minutes later the Blues scored again with a fantastic try by full-back Jamie Farndale. Benson slotted the conversion

away and Cambridge were 12-0 up by the ten minute mark and in full control.

Much of Cambridge's dominance was down to impressive scrummaging. The Blues pack were comfortably stronger and thus able to continuously punish the many offside that the Spartans conceded. In the 15th minute, the Blues chose to scrum right under the posts after another offside penalty given away by Trinity Western. Having proven their scrum superiority, however, this time Blues No 8 Makoto Tosa quickly took the ball out of the back of the scrum and made a successful dart for the line, in doing so leaving the Trinity Western defence helpless.

Cambridge would score two more tries before the half-hour mark, both of which were scored by outside centre Max Loveridge. On both occasions, the tries were born out of Trinity Western mistakes, especially the latter in which Loveridge intercepted a loose pass virtually on Trinity Western's own tryline and went straight to ground to score. After

five unanswered tries, Cambridge were 33-0 up with ten minutes remaining in the first half.

In the 33rd minute, however, Trinity Western got their first score of the game. After some fine offloading, Ty Dayton went over for the Spartans. Trinity Western's joy was soon cut short though, as the Blues went straight down the other end and replied with a try of their own after some industrious mauling was finished off by Ben Gompels. That would be the last major action of the first half as Cambridge went into the break with a 34-point lead.

The second half was better from a Trinity Western perspective. Despite conceding a try in the opening minute – as Cambridge finished where they left off – only a matter of minutes later Trinity Western got one of their own when Ethan Jurgeneit powered over the line.

The Spartans were much less flat in attack and began to cut out many unforced errors, which made the game a much tighter affair in the centre of the pitch.

Cambridge's clinical finishing, however, still remained too much for an increasingly tired Trinity Western defence to handle. Two more tries, both scored by Connor Collins and converted by the eventual player of the match, Jamie Benson, saw Cambridge extend the score to 61-12 with 15 minutes left.

Trinity Western, however, would have one last thing to cheer about. With five minutes remaining, Blues No 23 Jack Allinson was sin-binned for a high tackle. The Spartans capitalised on their man advantage and Ethan Jurgeneit got his second try of the match. Shortly after, the referee blew the full time whistle and the final score ended 61-19.

One Blues player afterwards told *Varsity*: "The game was an important run-out ahead of the 'big one' up next against O*ford." And that's certainly a fair assessment of what the game meant for Cambridge. It was obvious from the off that Cambridge were the better, more physical side and they got the job done in a professional manner.

Dabbled within their steady, assured performance, however, were some fantastic flashes of intricacy that they will be hoping to recreate at the StoneX stadium on Saturday 2 March.

While Jamie Benson was a deserved player of the match on the pitch, off the pitch there could only be two winners. Jeff and Debbie Paul had flown all the way from Canada to surprise their son and Trinity Western student, Ken Paul, at today's match. Jeff and his red vuvuzela were constantly making noise throughout the 80 minutes and, at the end of the match, Jeff told *Varsity* how proud he was of the Trinity Western team: "We weren't expecting much to be honest so to score three tries is amazing!" While ever rugby is a sport on the rise across the Atlantic, the chance to play English sides will always be special, and this fixture showed that. For Trinity Western it was once-in-a-lifetime; for the Blues it was the final stepping stone before their biggest game of the season – a fixture they now go into with fantastic momentum.