

**FREE**  
Take a  
copy

**A LETTER TO CAMBRIDGE'S FRESHERS:**  
on fitting in,  
making friends,  
and finding  
independence  
pg. 21

**Going the distance: Cantab  
couples on a summer apart**  
pg. 10



**Varsity's  
matriculation  
style guide**  
pg.26

No.925  
Friday 4th October 2024  
varsity.co.uk

The Independent  
Student Newspaper since 1947

# VARSIITY

## Cambridge continues to employ **sexual aggressors**



▲ HOLLY HARDMAN

**Felix Armstrong**  
Associate Editor

Cambridge University allowed multiple staff members to keep their jobs despite upholding allegations of sexual misconduct against them, *Varsity* can reveal.

Six student complaints of sexual misconduct, made against Cambridge staff, have been upheld by the University in the past six academic years, according to an FOI investigation. But, only one of these cases has resulted in a member of staff being fired.

In each of the five other cases, the accused staff member was allowed to keep their job at the University. Three upheld complaints resulted in the relevant employee being issued a "formal warning," while two cases were dealt with using an "informal warning".

Each of these complaints were made, and upheld by the University, between the 2018/19 and 2023/24 academic years.

"Sexual misconduct," according to a University code of conduct, can include attempted or actual sexual intercourse without consent, "sharing private ma-

terials of another person without consent," "inappropriately showing sexual organs to another person," "repeatedly following another person without good reason," and "making unwanted remarks of a sexual nature".

Elleni Eshete, Cambridge SU's welfare officer, told *Varsity* that sexual misconduct is a "serious offence" which can "negatively impact" individuals for the rest of their lives.

Eshete called on the University to take action: "The Cambridge SU urges the University of Cambridge to handle

the matter with the severity it deserves."

Between 2019/20, when Cambridge's Office of Student Complaints, Conduct, and Appeals (OSCAA) began recording the figure, and 2022/23, 41 students lodged complaints of general "staff misconduct". 26 of these were subsequently investigated by the University, with six eventually being upheld. OSCAA's report for 2022/23 described staff misconduct complaints as an "area of increase".

Continued on page 4 ►

**REVEALED:**  
Only 2/3 of  
Cambridge  
students take  
out a student  
loan

**Esther Knowles**  
Investigations Editor

Only two thirds of Cambridge students took out a tuition loan in the 2022/23 academic year, and the highest individual student debt of a Cambridge graduate is £141,210, *Varsity* can reveal.

**4,236**

Cambridge students who didn't take  
tuition loans in 2022/23

**£141,210**

The maximum debt Cambridge students  
are graduating with

**£5,837**

The average maintenance loan taken out  
by Cambridge students per year

8,704 undergraduate Cambridge students took out a tuition loan for that year, making up two thirds of its overall intake (approximately 12,940). The figure for those taking out a maintenance loan - 8,774 - is marginally higher.

The data was provided by the Student Loans Company (SLC) following a Freedom of Information (FOI) request submitted by *Varsity* and includes figures relating to student loans taken out by Cambridge students in the academic year 2022/2023.

Continued on page 9 ►

**Inside** ● University animal testing pg.5 ● In conversation with Imogen Grant pg. 15 ● The science of the female orgasm pg. 17 ●

## V Michaelmas, Week 0

# Editorial

Preparing to produce the first issue of *Varsity* after the long vacation is a pretty unique challenge. We enter a new Cambridge each year: one with a different political landscape; with different shops on King's Parade; and with a new set of issues and idiosyncrasies.

We are proud to always be uncovering something new. From finding out the extent of the University's animal testing regime (pg.5), to revealing that a third of Cambridge students don't take out a student loan (pg.9), *Varsity* is devoted to the principle that we deserve to know more about the institutions and the city that we call home.

In the face of everything new, and the ever-changing Cambridge landscape, it's with regret that we bear witness to those aspects of Cambridge that are yet to change. Reporting on the fact that the University still employs sexual aggressors (pg.4), and that the SU is continuing to utilise zero hour contracts (pg.3), is a disappointing duty. No institution should be immune from being held to ac-

count; our news serves this principle.

Beyond this, we hope that this edition of *Varsity* can provide you with an insight into the joys of life in Cambridge. To the surprisingly optimistic outlook of a Cambridge busker, to a long-time thesp's tips for newcomers, there is always room for advice, for friendly faces, and for kinder and more hopeful times.

In this issue, our Lifestyle section has become home to a discussion about what Cambridge means to us; whether there is room for optimism between supervisions and essay-cramming (pg.20), and whether we will look back fondly on our time here (pg.21). In Arts, we consider the unique spaces in which we can find community

in this city (pg.24), while we calm any fresher's fashion fears in our matriculation style guide (pg.26). We hope that the success of long-distance lovers in keeping their spark alive (pg.10), and the stories of students who have gone on to win gold (pg.14-15) inspire you to be proud of your own wins during your time here, however big or small.

Above all, we hope that in this edition

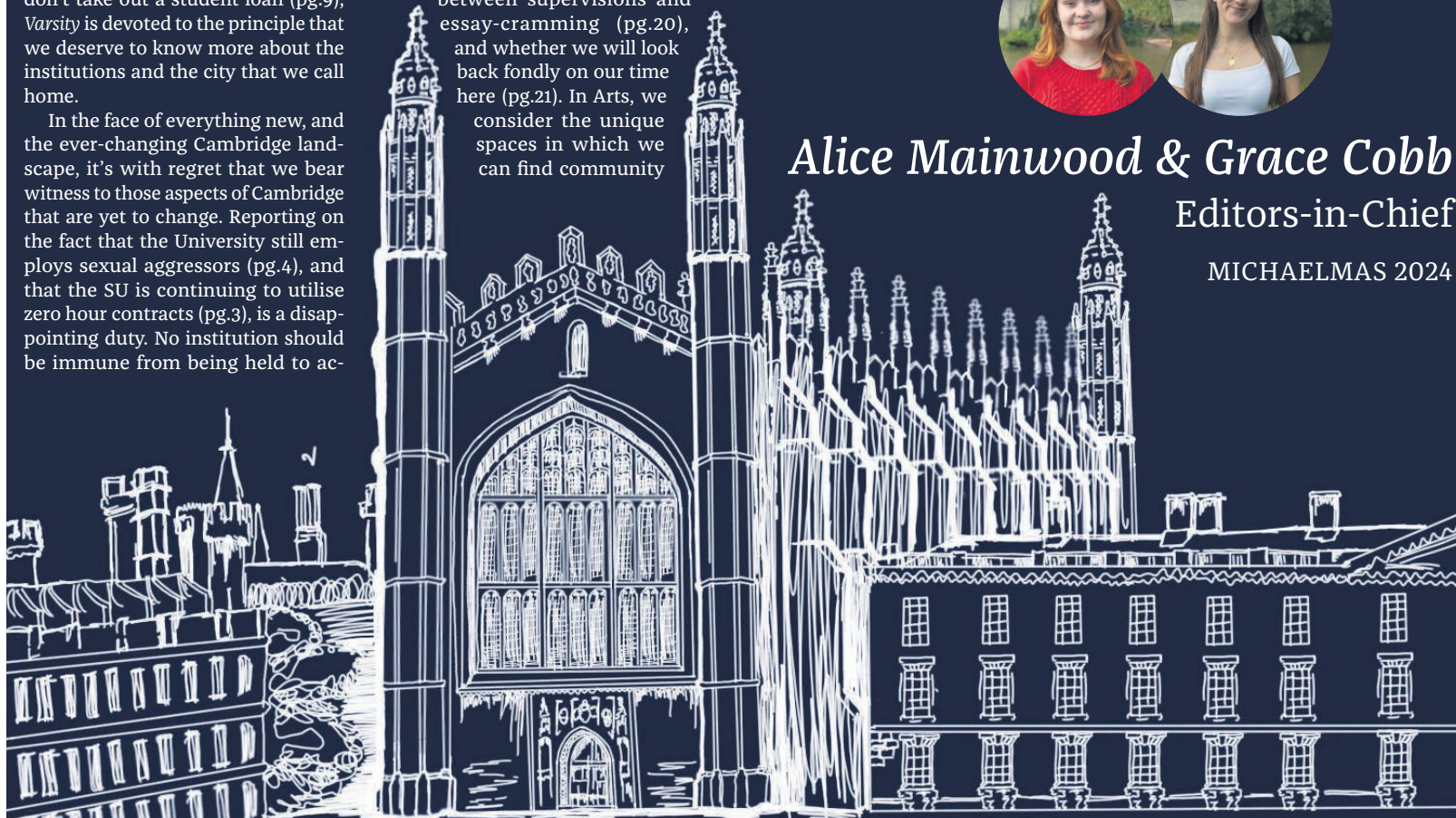
you will find an article that will reflect you and your time in Cambridge.

And finally, we'd like to thank our brilliant editorial team for their dedication to this issue. Making each edition of *Varsity* is no mean feat, but we find the utmost motivation and purpose in the knowledge that we can provide a paper entirely by, and entirely for, students.



## Alice Mainwood & Grace Cobb Editors-in-Chief

MICHAELMAS 2024



## Week in Pictures

▼ HOLLY HARDMAN



▲ Golden icon stolen from Magdalene College chapel



▲ Lola's reopened as Kiki's



▲ King's College Chapel, following refurbishment



▲ Jack's awaiting a new flock of freshers



▲ The Last Dinner Party set to perform in Cambridge after cancelled May Ball concert



▲ Tourists in central Cambridge

**EDITORS** Alice Mainwood & Grace Cobb  
*editor@varsity.co.uk*

**DEPUTY EDITORS** Matthew Taylor & Nick James  
*deputyeditor@varsity.co.uk*

**VULTURE EDITORS** Lauren Welsby-Riley & Loveday Cookson  
*magazine@varsity.co.uk*

**NEWS** Wilf Vall & Sophie Denny (Senior); Anuk Weerawanda, Evie Selby, Hannah Gillott & Iris Rogers (Deputy)  
*news@varsity.co.uk*

**INVESTIGATIONS** Esther Knowles & Omar Burhanuddin  
*investigations@varsity.co.uk*

**COMMENT** Hugh Jones, Maddy Browne & Max La Bouchardiere  
*opinion@varsity.co.uk*

**FEATURES** Isabella Steinmeyer & Claire Gao  
*features@varsity.co.uk*

**INTERVIEWS** Lauren Guye & Isabella Dowden  
*interviews@varsity.co.uk*

**SCIENCE** Teymour Taj & Ruby Jackson  
*science@varsity.co.uk*

**SPORT** Romilly Norfolk & Will Jonas  
*sport@varsity.co.uk*

**LIFESTYLE** Daisy Bates & Sophie Ennis  
*lifestyle@varsity.co.uk*

**ARTS** Felix Armstrong & Madelaine Clark  
*arts@varsity.co.uk*

**FASHION** Annia Krzoska & Elsie McDowell  
*fashion@varsity.co.uk*

**FILM & TV** Xin Shackleton & Gina Stock  
*filmandtv@varsity.co.uk*

**MUSIC** Ezra Izer & Sharleen Opia  
*music@varsity.co.uk*

**THEATRE** Zach Lonberg, Elsie Hayward & Milly Kotecha  
*theatre@varsity.co.uk*

**PHOTOGRAPHY EDITOR** Holly Hardman

**ILLUSTRATIONS EDITOR** Jessica Leer

**SUB-EDITORS** Varun Ravikumar, Ellie Buckley & Amy Barnes-Watson  
*subeditor@varsity.co.uk*

**ASSOCIATE EDITORS** Felix Armstrong, Hannah Gillott & Erik Olsson,  
*associate@varsity.co.uk*

**BUSINESS MANAGER** Mark Curtis  
*business@varsity.co.uk*

**VARSOC PRESIDENT** Felix Armstrong  
*president@varsity.co.uk*

**VARSITY BOARD** Dr Michael Franklin (Chairman), Dr Tim Harris, Michael Derringer, Mark Curtis (Company Secretary), Felix Armstrong, Erik Olsson-Ferrer, Hannah Gillott (Directors), Lotte Brundle (Guest) & Zoah Hedges-Stocks (Guest)

© 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

Interested in writing for *Varsity*?



Join our Facebook writers' group

# Union under fire over cash ties to controversial Tory donor

**Wilf Vall**  
Senior News Editor

The Cambridge Union is under fire for its connection to Frank Hester, CEO of TPP, after his alleged “racist” comments surfaced earlier this year.

Multiple sources within the Union expressed their disapproval of Hester’s association with the institution, claiming his comments made them “deeply uncomfortable” to be members.

Hester is CEO of TPP, a UK based software company that is listed as one of the Union’s sponsorship partners. He is also the Conservative Party’s biggest donor, having given them more than £20 million since the start of 2023.

In March, Hester caused major controversy after he allegedly said veteran MP Diane Abbott made him “want to hate all black women” and should “be shot,” in 2019. These comments were later labelled “racist” and “wrong” by Rishi Sunak.

In response to these comments TPP stated that Hester abhorred racism and “accepts that he was rude about Diane Abbott in a private meeting several years ago but his criticism had nothing to do with her gender nor colour of skin.”

TPP runs the electronic patient records of almost half the medical practices in the UK, and received £137 million through NHS contracts since 2020.

The company is one of the Union’s three listed partners, along with AstraZeneca and The University Arms Hotel. Sponsorships made up £59,325 of the Union’s income last year, according to their annual accounts.

Speaking to *Varsity*, one Cambridge Union member, who has previously served on full committee, stated that they were “reconsidering their future” at the Union over its ties to Hester.

“Obviously I support the Union’s commitment to free speech, but a line should be drawn when it comes to inciting violence against minority students. Stuff like that cannot be tolerated under the guise of free speech,” they claimed.

Another source close to the Union stated that taking money from TPP made them “deeply uncomfortable as a minority student” and that the Union should “clean up their image when it comes to sponsors”.

Hester featured on the Sunday Times’ Rich List in 2024, boasting an estimated net worth of £343 million.

**£343m**

Frank Hester’s net worth, who donated £20m to the Tory Party since 2023.

The Cambridge Union is the oldest debate society in the world, with its stated goal being “enabling free speech,” and to act as a “unique forum for the free exchange of ideas and the art of public debate”.

Concerns around Hester’s association with the Union were echoed the Cambridge Student Union’s BME officer, by Maroof Rafique who told *Varsity*: “For BME students, who already face chal-

lenges navigating spaces that were not historically designed for them, knowing that someone who holds such harmful views is financially linked to a prominent institution like the Cambridge Union, is both deeply troubling and demoralising.”

“This association sends the message that racist rhetoric can be excused, or worse, rewarded, by spaces that are supposed to represent the intellectual and social diversity of Cambridge,” he continued.

Hester’s comments are currently under investigation by West Yorkshire Police, who stated that they were “working to establish the facts and to ultimately ascertain whether a crime has been committed”.

Hester also faced calls to step down

from running NHS contracts following his comments, with the British Medical Association claiming that his “racist and misogynistic comments” breach its fit and proper person test.

Dianne Abbott was first elected in 1987 as the black female MP. She served in several shadow cabinet roles under former leader Mr Corbyn.

The Cambridge Labour Club Co-Chairs Ben Cartwright and Olivia Kelly told *Varsity* “We are disappointed but unfortunately not surprised to learn of the association between Frank Hester and the union. While we endorse the union’s respect for free speech, we believe those in positions of power have a responsibility to promote in-

clusive dialogue, not alienate potential new members.”

“We appreciate this is not the fault of any single set of individuals or students in current positions of leadership, yet this follows in a long line of internal crises in the union, representing a culture of profound exclusion and intolerance,” they continued.

These questions around Union finances also come after the Union was forced to raise membership fees last year, following what one insider labelled “years of bad financial decisions”.

A spokesperson for the Cambridge Union told *Varsity*: “TPP have been a sponsor of the Cambridge Union for several years and their position on diversity and inclusion is clearly articulated and published online. Frank Hester’s comments do not reflect the standard of our organisation, or the nature of our relationship with TPP.”

“The Union remains committed to promoting the freedom of speech whilst standing firmly against hate speech and the incitement of violence towards any individual. The contract, signed between our Trustees and TPP, was agreed well before any comments were made by Hester and since, the student committee have worked tirelessly to find sponsorships that reflect the values that we stand upon to continue offering access memberships, bursaries and scholarships,” they continued.

Frank Hester and TPP were contacted for comment.



▲ LOUIS ASHWORTH

# Cambridge SU persists with ‘precarious’ zero hour contracts

**Anuk Weerawardana**  
Deputy News Editor

The Cambridge Student Union (SU) has advertised for a new team of staff under zero-hours contracts



▲ RUYING YANG

despite previously supporting calls to abolish them.

The SU has claimed to “support the campaigning of the low-paid workers” on their website. The SU additionally continues to support the Justice for

College Supervisors Campaign (J4CS) which “advocates for supervisions to be paid fairly”.

The receptionists will be paid £12 an hour and have to be available from Monday to Friday.

This comes after the new Labour government’s plans to ban zero hour contracts, claiming that they force millions into insecure work. In their general election campaign, Labour promised to strengthen workers’ rights within their first 100 days in office, including ending fire and rehire practices and zero hour contracts.

Earlier this year, a report by the Office of Intercollegiate Services found supervisors are being paid an effective hourly pay rate £3 below the national living wage. The report was the largest of its kind, involving 35% of current and recent supervisors.

Paul Nowak, the general secretary of the Trades Union Congress (TUC), claimed that banning zero hour contracts should be a top priority despite economic concerns of business owners, stating: “I would challenge any business leader

or politician to try and survive on a zero-hours contract not knowing from week to week how much work they will have”.

“It’s time to drive up employment standards in this country and to make work pay for everyone. The government’s forthcoming employment rights bill will help create a level playing field - and stop good employers from being undercut by the bad,” he continued.

The SU’s recent recruitment drive comes after previous statements supporting UCU strikes and their 2021 campaign for “a framework to eliminate the use of precarious contracts”, including zero hour contracts. Statements supporting the removal of “precarious contracts” have since been removed from the SU website.

A report by the UCU earlier this year found revealed that two-thirds of Cambridge researchers were employed on “precarious” part-time contracts that foster “pay pressures” and “a culture of overwork”.

According to a survey by the opinion researcher Peter McLeod of 2,458 participants aged 16 and over in employment in Britain, 75% of participants on zero hour contracts struggled to meet living expenses due to not being offered enough working hours, reports *The Guardian*.

The survey also records around two-

thirds of workers on such contracts seek extra work. However, 58% of appeals for additional hours were denied by employers.

This comes after the Student’s Union faced a string of scandals last term, with two Sabbatical officers resigning, and former Postgraduate President Vareesh Pratap starting a hunger strike over the institutions alleged “corruption” and “bullying”.

Pratap also alleged that the SU’s Senior Management team had instigated “targeted harassment” against Sabbatical officers from minority backgrounds.

A spokesperson for the Cambridge SU told *Varsity*: “The reception roles at Cambridge SU are designed with students in mind, providing them with an opportunity to earn alongside their studies and feedback from our current student-receptionist staff has suggested that the flexibility of the current contract helps to accommodate learning commitments, particularly during this busy period of exams, deadlines and placements.”

“All other SU staff are offered permanent or fixed-term contracts, in line with the UCU’s demands. We will continue to support Cambridge UCU and J4CS in their campaigns to improve working conditions for University and College staff.”

## News

# Staff kept jobs after upheld sexual misconduct complaints

Continued from front page

In June, Cambridge partially banned sexual relationships between staff and their students in a bid to prevent sexual misconduct. The new policy states that academics who have “direct responsibilities” for students are now prohibited from entering relationships with students under their academic or pastoral care.

In 2022, *Varsity* uncovered multiple accounts of fellows matching with students as young as 18 on dating apps.

Last year, *Varsity* found that students had been “actively discouraged” from going to the police with sexual assault allegations, instead being urged to resolve their complaints internally through OSCAA.

One student, who was stalked by someone in a position of power at her college, told *Varsity* that this misconduct “would have stopped much sooner” if they had initially reported it to the police.

In July, the Office for Students (OfS), the independent regulator for higher education, said that it will introduce new requirements for universities to protect students from sexual misconduct, following a consultation which found that 20 percent of students have experienced

“unwanted sexual behaviour”.

Universities UK (UUK) told *Varsity*: “The results of this survey are sobering. Sexual misconduct is unacceptable on campus as in any walk of life, and no student or staff member should have to experience it.”

# 41

Cambridge student complaints of “staff misconduct” were lodged between the 2019/20 and 2022/23 academic years

# 20%

Of students at UK universities have experienced “unwanted sexual behaviour,” according to the Office for Students

“Sadly, it is clear this wider societal problem continues to impact higher education, despite much positive work in the sector to tackle it. Universities must go further still, doing everything possible to bring about a cultural change and stamp out sexual misconduct on campus,” the organisation said.

“UUK and our members will now work constructively and rapidly with

the OfS to help implement changes in support of our shared commitment to tackling harassment,” they added.

An OfS spokesperson told *Varsity* that universities will now be obligated to inform the regulator of the measures they are taking to prevent harassment and sexual misconduct.

The spokesperson also said: “While we’re unable to comment on individual universities and colleges, it’s clear that students want to see higher education providers do more to tackle harassment and sexual misconduct.”

“Universities and colleges are also being asked to take steps to prevent an abuse of power in personal relationships between staff and students. Many institutions have already banned relationships between students and staff, and we expect more will follow suit,” they added.

A spokesperson for the University of Cambridge said: “There is no place for any form of harassment or sexual misconduct at the University of Cambridge.”

“While disciplinary action may vary depending on the circumstances of a particular case, we always take allegations seriously, providing support for those affected, clear systems for reporting incidents and taking action where misconduct is found,” they said.

# Successor to axed St John’s choir launches

Wilf Vall  
Senior News Editor

A successor choir to St John’s Voices (SJV) is launching today (04/10), after the group was forced to disband.

The new choir, called Cambridge University Schola Cantorum (CUSC), will include the members of the old choir along with singers from other colleges, with the group claiming it will be “a truly

University-wide ensemble”. CUSC’s first performance will take place at Great St Mary’s later this month.

The choir was axed in March, after the College decided to redirect the “significant resources” spent on the choir to “new opportunities” in the College’s musical community.

The St John’s Voices choir (SJV) was formed in 2013 under musical director Graham Walker to give female singers the opportunity to participate in a College Choir.

In October 2021, St John’s Chapel Choir began admitting female members, with there currently being three, one of whom is a current student of the college. The Chapel choir also restricts women from joining as sopranos.

The decision to scrap SJV caused outrage among students and alumni, and a campaign to reverse the decision was backed by nearly 15,000 signatures, including famous choirmasters Gareth Malone and Rowan Williams.

Ahead of their launch today, the CU Schola Cantorum management team told *Varsity*: “Emerging from the ashes of St John’s Voices, we are extremely excited to be able to announce the launch of CU Schola Cantorum. After the difficulty of the last few months, it’s a huge relief to be able to continue singing, and we are really looking forward to our new role as a University choir.”



▲ KATIE KASPERSON

## THE ESPRESSO BAR

### Discover Cambridge's Finest Specialty Coffee Experience

Step into The Espresso Bar, located inside our coffee roastery, enjoy world-class coffees and a variety of brew methods in a relaxed, natural, urban environment.

Savour the very best in specialty coffee, hand-crafted sourdough toasties, warming soups, and locally sourced baked goods.

Explore our selection of freshly roasted coffee beans to enjoy at home, and check out our range of home brewing equipment for the perfect cup every time.

Join us for weekly coffee cupping sessions to discover new flavors and learn the art of coffee, or attend our monthly events that celebrate coffee and community.

Visit us for an unmatched coffee experience!

**Coffee  
World**



Open 7 days: 8-4  
www.coffeeworld.co.uk  
@coffeeworlduk  
135 Cambridge Road, Milton, Cambridge, CB24 6AT



# Vegan students slam University over ‘truly horrific’ animal testing figures

**Sophie Denny**  
Senior News Editor

Cambridge has been slated over its use of animals in scientific procedures, with critics calling on the University “to put an end to these cruel and unnecessary experiments”.

Statistics released in September revealed that the University carried out 223,787 procedures on animals last year. This is the highest out of 69 institutions who published their animal research statistics.

Students have expressed their anger at these statistics, with the Cambridge University Vegan Society labelling them “truly horrific” and stating that “medical progress is important, but animal testing is the wrong way”.

“The better alternative to animal experiments is the use of non-animal research methods such as human cell cultures, mini-organs generated from human cells (organoids), multi-organ chips, and clinical studies, which are superior to animal experiments in terms of ethics, informative value and transferability,” they continued.

The University uses a mixture of animals in testing, with 97% of research being conducted on mice and zebrafish. In 2023, 172,001 procedures were car-

ried out on mice, 46,172 on zebrafish, and 3,428 on rats. Other animals used by the University include sheep, guinea pigs, primates, and pigs.

Each procedure has a varying degree of severity. The majority of procedures in 2023, were classed as “mild”. This includes procedures in which “animals are likely to experience short term mild pain suffering or distress, as well as procedures with no significant impairment of the wellbeing or general condition of the animals.”

1,535 of last year’s procedures were classed as “non-recovery,” meaning the animals used “shall not recover consciousness”.

Among procedures carried out by the University, small monkeys had holes drilled in their skulls and a substance injected into their brains.

Sean Barrs, an academic at Anglia Ruskin University and Animal Justice Project Campaigner also called on the University to end animal testing: “Animal testing is an archaic practice that inflicts wanton cruelty on animals. We don’t need to do this; it’s 2024!”.

“Animal testing is ineffective and horrific for the animals trapped in laboratories. Cambridge University should engage with organisations like Animal Free Research UK and cease using animals in experimentation,” Barrs continued.

The ten institutions who conducted the most animal testing in 2023 were responsible for 54% of the total procedures in Great Britain. The University of Oxford were second on the list, carrying out 194,913 procedures last year.

All 69 organisations listed have signed the ‘Concordat on Openness in Animals Research in the UK’, committing to being transparent about the use of animals in scientific, medical, and veterinary research.

They are also committed to the ethical framework of the ‘3Rs’ – reduction, refinement, and replacement of animals in research – as

set out by the EU Law Directive 2010/63 and assumed into the UK’s 1986 Animal (Scientific Procedures) Act in 2013.

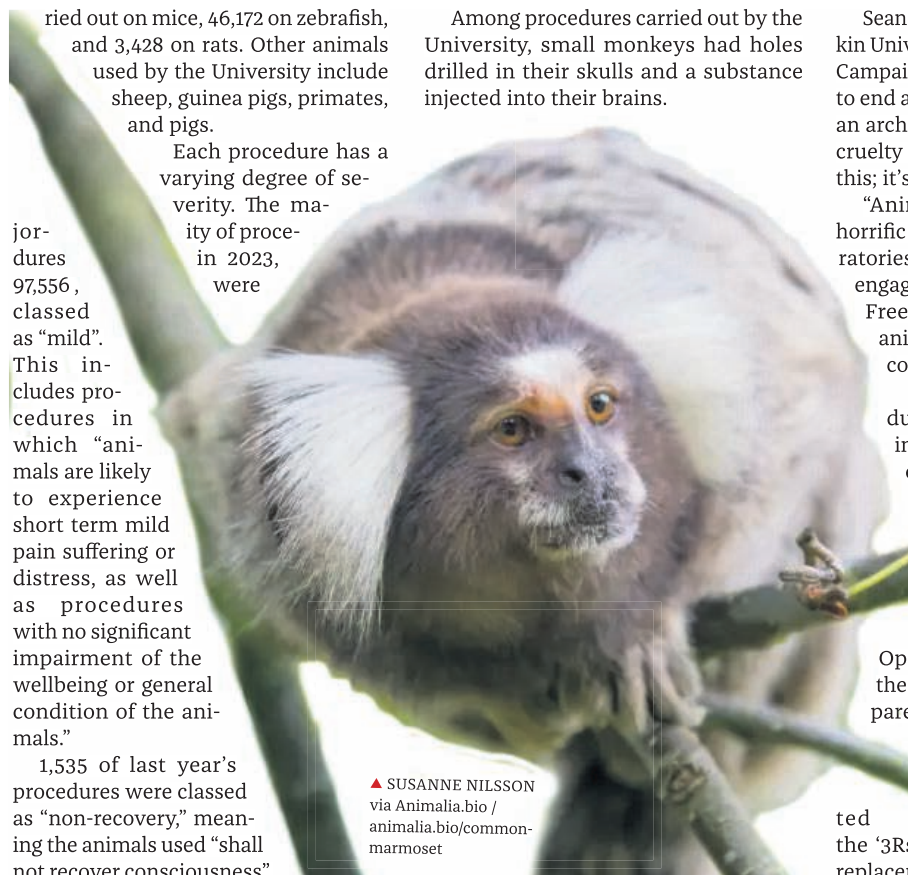
## Animals most tested on by the University

Mouse	172,001
Zebra fish	46,172
Rat	3,428
Xenopus	739
Medaka	527

Professor Anna Philpott, head of the School of Biological Sciences at the University of Cambridge, said: “Cambridge research is changing how we understand health and ageing, and how we treat disease.”

“Animal research continues to play a small but vital role in this work and in the development of ground-breaking new medical devices and drug treatments. We are committed to using animals only where there is no alternative as a means of making progress,” Philpott added.

*The University of Cambridge was contacted for comment.*



▲ SUSANNE NILSSON via Animalia.bio / animalia.bio/common-marmoset



The Business School for the World®

## PhD in Management

Join a diverse community of scholars and conduct cutting-edge research with five years of full funding\*.

We welcome prospects from diverse backgrounds, including those outside management, with or without research experience. Industry professionals seeking to transition to academia are encouraged to apply.

- Study in two campuses - Europe and Asia
- Secure top academic placements worldwide
- Strategic alliances with Wharton and Sorbonne
- Be part of a supportive and highly diverse academic community



### Discover the INSEAD PhD

Apply now for the Fall 2025 intake

Learn more at [insead.ad/phd](https://insead.ad/phd)

Cambridge students and alumni are eligible for application fee waiver for the 2025 intake. Contact [insead.ad/contact-phd-team-cambridge](https://insead.ad/contact-phd-team-cambridge) for more details. \*Visit [insead.ad/phd-financing](https://insead.ad/phd-financing) for the latest updates.



## News

# Cambridge's Year Abroad students face limited access to funding

Elizabeth Bratton  
News Correspondent

Some Cambridge students have been unable to access Turing Scheme funding during their Year Abroad, unlike their counterparts at other universities.

The Turing Scheme is intended to provide financial support for students doing paid work, volunteering, or studying abroad. However, at Cambridge, students doing paid work placements have not been eligible for funding.

The scheme was introduced by the

Department for Education in 2021 as a post-Brexit replacement for the Erasmus+ Scheme.

Educational organisations have to apply for funding on behalf of students, and are not limited in the grant amount they can apply for, nor in the number of Tu-

ring Scheme participants they can have.

Cambridge students applying for Turing funding for the 2023-24 academic year had to complete a 'Mobility Funding Application Form', which asked for information about the student's background, the placement they would be undertak-

ing, and how they would use the grant.

One MML student doing two paid internships claimed that they were "not entitled to Turing funding". Both salaries were insufficient to cover the student's rent and living expenses.

The student added: "I was surprised to learn that, at my first placement, a student from the University of Oxford doing a similar internship to me, and on the same salary, was also receiving Turing funding."

They also signalled the "gap between eligibility for this hardship fund and having to rely on parents," which can cause financial strain on students' families.

Students have also claimed that a lack of access to funding has limited the opportunities students are able to pursue on a Year Abroad.

One MML student stated that they were "essentially required to do British Council because the internships I was looking into just did not pay enough to feasibly cover the cost of rent and living expenses."

The student claims that they were "compelled to do a placement, essentially in English", which significantly hindered their language development.

A Freedom of Information request revealed that, of the 210 students who applied for Turing Scheme funding in the academic year 2023/24, 183 received funding. The University's Turing Scheme budget for that year was £458,455, which was supplemented by a contribution from the University.

Cambridge students undertaking their Year Abroad in the 2024/25 academic year have been warned that their funding opportunities may be even more limited.

An email sent to students by the MML Year Abroad Office on 26 July explained that the University would receive "some funding under the Turing Scheme for 2024/25 but with a significantly reduced budget due to priority at a national level focusing on students from disadvantaged backgrounds."

Students doing paid placements will remain ineligible for Turing funding, but will continue to be eligible for the University Hardship Fund.

The 2024-25 'Mobility Funding Application Form' asks similar questions to those of the 2023-24 version, but requires more details about students' financial situations.

One student, who said they "barely know anything" about the Turing Scheme, has described communication about the funding as "fairly dreadful".

Students who applied for Turing funding for the first half of their Year Abroad have recently received the outcome of their applications.

One student, who will be undertaking an unpaid work placement in Spain from October to December, will receive Turing funding.

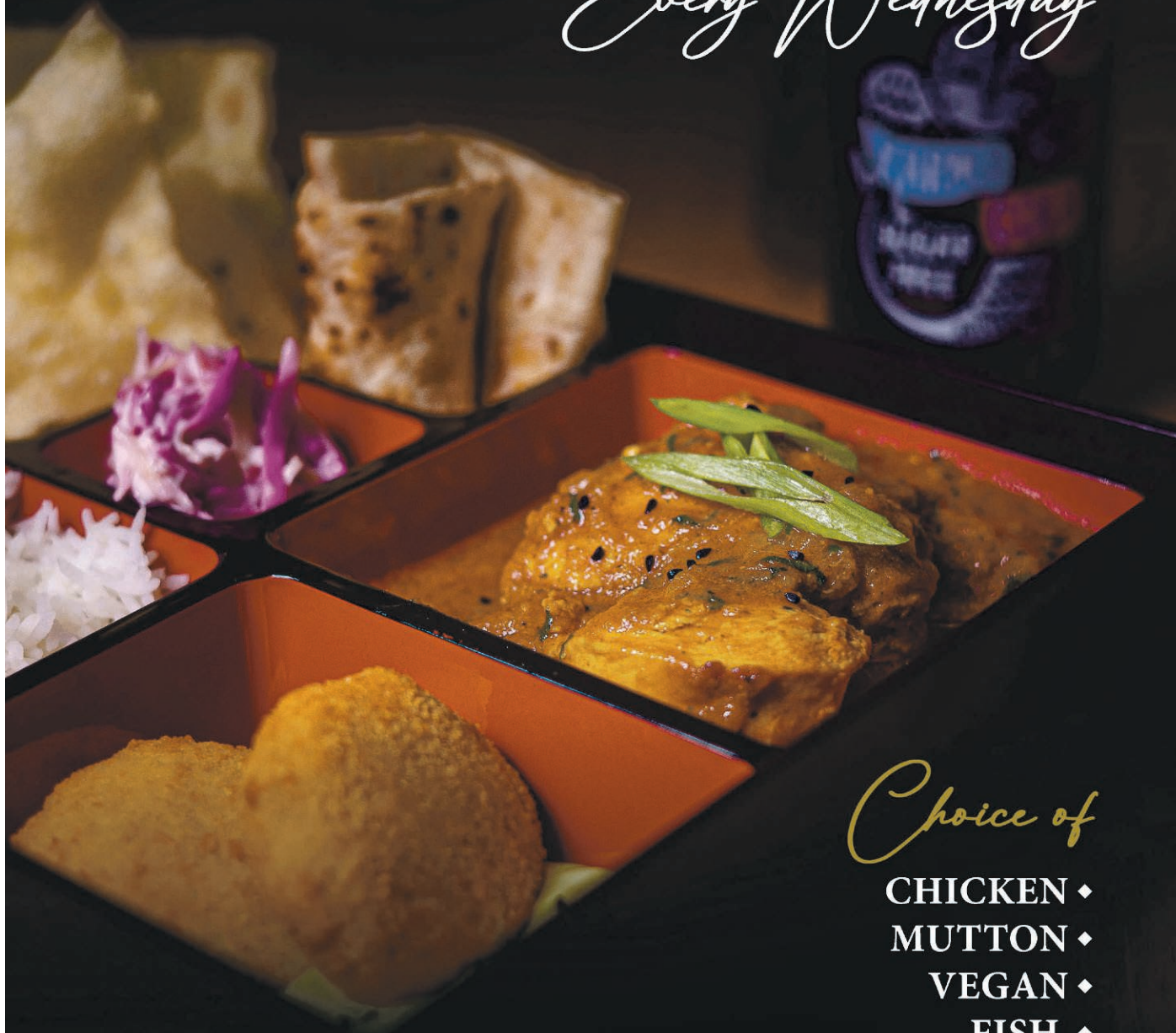
They described Turing funding as "so useful", alleviating the need for financial support from their parents. While they "could have made it work" without Turing, they believe their Year Abroad would have been significantly more stressful without it.

The University of Cambridge, the Office for Students, and the Turing Scheme were contacted for comment.

Golpo Bengal Cafe & Restaurant - 36-38 Hills Rd, Cambridge CB2 1LA

## Bento Thali Nights

Every Wednesday



Choice of

CHICKEN ♦

MUTTON ♦

VEGAN ♦

FISH ♦

All thalis are served with popadums, pickle, pakora, shingara, tarka dal, steamed rice & paratha.

FROM 5.30PM | £15

# Trinity splashes the cash on boffin students, while Lucy Cav falls short

**Sophie Denny**  
Senior News Editor

Vast disparities exist between awards different colleges give to students who achieve highly in exams, with some colleges offering over £600 for individuals who attain a first, whereas others hand out just £50.

In the 2023/24 academic year, Trinity spent a total of £215,706 on scholarships and academic prizes for high attainment. Unsurprisingly, the University's second wealthiest college, St John's, spent the second most last year at £102,888, with the majority of this – £78,750 – financing scholarships for students who achieved a first.

Trinity's total is 38 times the amount spent by Lucy Cavendish, who

spent £5,550 – the least of the 26 colleges that responded to freedom of information requests.

Lucy Cavendish student Fatima Zahra Yusuf, said: "I'm honestly quite frustrated and disappointed to learn about this disparity in exam awards between colleges. It feels unfair that my academic achievements are valued less financially simply because I'm at a less wealthy college."

"We need a motion calling for a redistribution of college wealth, especially when it comes to student awards and support," she continued.

The systems for awarding prizes differ greatly across

colleges, with Emmanuel's figures revealing that they awarded more in total to students who achieved a II.i in their examinations than to those who achieved a first in 2023-24.

Other colleges also have broader criteria for awards. An Exhibition Prize of £50 is given to Christ's students who narrowly miss out on a first, while Sidney Sussex focuses on individual improvement. The College awards £130 to those

who achieve a substantial percentile improvement of 25% or more in the merit ranking or who rank in the 26th-35th percentiles.

Sidney Sussex student Alex Brian explained: "Cambridge can sometimes be an overly competitive and pressurising environment so it's great to see Sidney encouraging students, not to compete with each other, but to challenge themselves to do better."

This makes the awards "much more inclusive" and "recognises that study is a personal struggle, for which one's effort

should be rewarded, rather than simply one's ability to come out on top among some of the best minds in the country."

Varying criteria for awards lead to huge differences in the total amount of money individual students receive, with some colleges offering significant subject prizes on top of scholarships. This enabled one Trinity student to be given a total of £1,080 in awards last year.

While awards mostly do not vary across subjects, there are some exceptions, notably when prizes are funded by donations. At Trinity Hall, all subject prizes are £200 except for four law prizes which range from £250 to £450.

At Girton, special regulation prizes exist for Engineering, Music, Law, English, MML, and Geography, with the amounts students receive varying from £100 to £800.

Extra perks offered to scholars also vary between colleges. Most colleges offer a free 'scholars' dinner,' with scholars at St John's and Emmanuel being invited to read grace at subsequent formals. At Emmanuel, those who read grace at formal dine at the College's expense on that occasion.

While scholars' ballots are largely a thing of the past, scholars at Churchill and Peterhouse are still offered a certain amount of free accommodation outside

of the standard residential period.

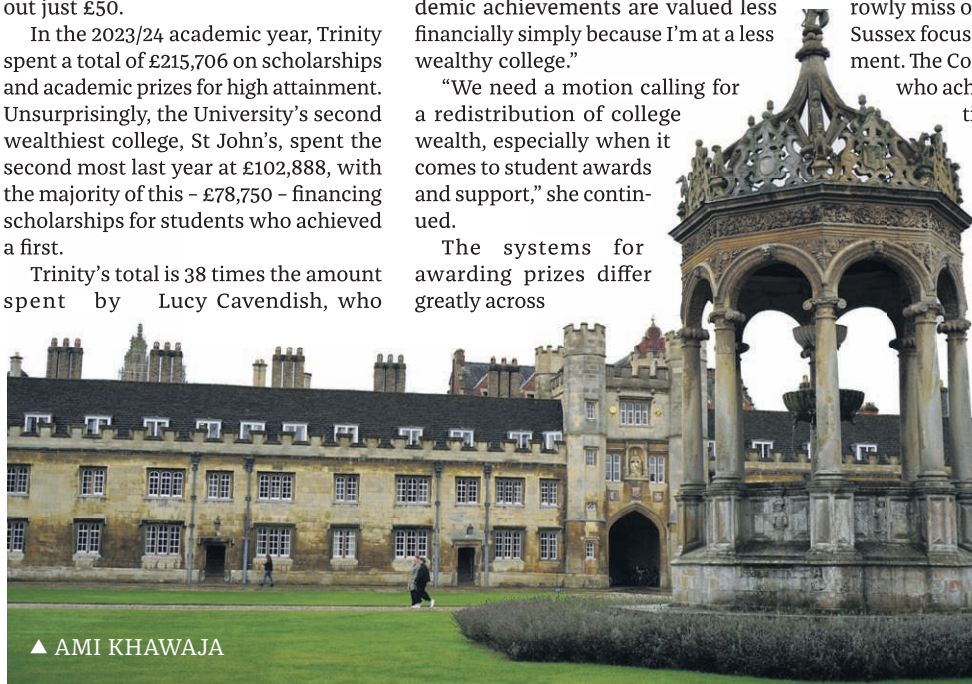
Speaking on the disparities between colleges, Sarah Anderson, SU Undergraduate President, and Katie Clarke, SU Access, Education and Participation Officer told *Varsity*: "As part of the ongoing teaching review, we are encouraging the University to re-approach how it values academic achievement, including all the potential different outcomes of a student's learning journey."

"We should celebrate all students' academic achievements, especially when they frequently are achieved against a backdrop of social and financial disadvantage," they continued.

A spokesperson from Trinity College said: "Trinity College continues to do everything it can to support its members, and students and researchers across the University of Cambridge and its Colleges. In 2023-2024, Trinity spent more than £10 million in support of the Collegiate University, particularly through research and studentships, and via contributions to other Colleges."

Senior Tutor at Christ's College, Professor Tom Monie, said: "Christ's values and recognises all forms of academic and extra-curricular achievement by its students."

*All relevant parties were contacted for comment.*



▲ AMI KHAWAJA

## A trading house for game-changers

Da Vinci is a proprietary trading house made up of some of the sharpest minds and most passionate players in the industry.

Our traders and researchers are competitive and innovative. They work closely together with engineers to maintain our edge and bring new strategies to life.

[VISIT OUR CAREERS PAGE](#)

COLLABORATE   INNOVATE   CHALLENGE   ACHIEVE

## 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](mailto:campus@seo-london.org)  
[www.seo-london.org](http://www.seo-london.org)

# News

## The Don is gone

The longstanding dispute over the four metre tall Cambridge Don statue is over. The statue was removed from outside an office following a failed appeal over planning permission for the statue. Unex, the office block's owners, had previously claimed that the £150,000, three tonne bronze figure had simply been "placed" in front of the building, and did not require planning permission. The piece previously caused controversy over its authorship, with the alleged artist of the work claiming that crediting him for the statue was "an abuse".

## Leaky lawn

Jesus green is in need of "essential" riverbank repairs following damage caused by a faulty lock. Cambridge council found that significant damage to a 105 metre section of the riverbank required £800,000 in funding to repair. The green is often frequented by Cambridge Students on C-Sunday, with some critics speculating as to whether spilled cans of £2 Sainsbury's cider had caused some erosion to the ancient riverbank.

## Boat race vindication 152 years on

For many of us, the only boat race souvenir we take home each year is soggy shoes and a hangover, but back in 1872 spectators could head back with a medal memento. This week, a pair of mudlarks found such a souvenir at the bottom of the Thames while searching the riverbed for historical treasures. The medal, which shows interlocking Oxford and Cambridge crests, had been trapped in the river for over a century, since the "cheerless" race of that year.

## Deborah Prentice celebrates economic performance

Vice-chancellor Deborah Prentice highlighted Cambridge University's important place in the national economy at her annual address this year. Marking the official start to the academic year, Prentice's speech highlighted Cambridge's "extraordinary significance". The VC also called the University's student support programmes a "thrilling achievement". As we enter a new year, it remains to be seen just how thrilling our student support will be.

## Around town



### Anuk Weerawardana gets across local Cambridge news

### National Pizza Awards visit Cambridge

Two of the UK's best pizzas are available to buy in Cambridge, according to the National Pizza Awards. Chefs from Maurizio Dining & Co and Scott's All Day will be two of sixteen chefs taking part in a live cooking showdown at London's Big Penny Social on November 12. Maurizio Dining & Co will be showcasing their Lord Orli, containing gorgonzola, 'nduja, anchovies, capers, olives, and fried garlic. For Scott's All Day, the Pepperoni and Hot Honey Detroit is the one to beat. In addition to the signature round, which decides the National Pizza of the Year, chefs will also compete to make the ultimate pizza from an assortment of sponsor ingredients to claim the title: Pizza Chef of the Year.

### Town and Gown 10K takes over city

Cambridge city centre roads will be closed to traffic on October 6 for Bidwells Town and Gown 10K. The running event organised by Muscular Dystrophy UK aims to raise £120,000. A Junior 3K Run will start at 9:15am, with the main 10K race starting at 10am. Runners will be going through the centre of Cambridge, with the route including University buildings and historic landmarks. Road closures are expected to start from 8am, according to race organisers, although Victoria Avenue will close at 5.30am.

### Former homeless hostel to be turned into new flats

Cambridge City Council have approved plans to convert a homeless hostel in Willow Walk into nine new flats. The hostel closed permanently in 2022 after offering accommodation for homeless people in Cambridge. The hostel operated from the late 1800s until the 1980s, when it had to be shut down for refurbishment. The proposal to turn the hostel into flats was proposed by Ridley Godfrey (Holdings) Limited, who stated that the change is "making a positive contribution to the city's housing supply".



**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



# Revealed: Only two-thirds of Cambridge students take out a student loan

## University watch



Continued from front page

Of these students who did take out a maintenance loan to cover their living costs, the average amount is £5,837 (calculated by summing the overall maintenance loan award and dividing by the students awarded a loan). The recommended sum Cambridge students need to support themselves through the next academic year (2024-25) is now £10,950.

According to the SLC, the highest outstanding loan balance for a student who only attended Cambridge (£141,210) and the highest outstanding loan balance for a student who attended Cambridge and other higher education providers (£141,118), belong to those with extenuating circumstances. This includes students who received funding for multiple courses, additional funding due to personal reasons, or are on courses of up to six years of length.

Elsie McDowell, President of Cambridge's SU Class Act Campaign, spoke to *Varsity* about the discrepancies between students taking out different loan amounts, stating: "I am incredibly grateful for my full maintenance loan as I would not have been able to afford university without it."

"However, I will be graduating with almost £60k debt for my three year degree, meaning that in the long run I will pay more for my time at university than my more affluent peers. This feels both terrifying and unfair," she continued.

Student loans begin gaining interest from the date the first payment is made to a student or their university, meaning students on longer degrees will see their debt accumulating more interest over the duration of their studies than those on a typical three year course.

Luke Quinn, a Medicine student at Cambridge, admitted: "The three extra years before I will be earning a salary when the debt will be increasing in size further exacerbates my concern over adequate pay for NHS staff."

"It is frustrating to look at my career prospects with the view of how long it will take to pay back this increased debt on the current pay levels, and even makes me understand why so many medical graduates consider moving abroad for a better salary," he added.

For students who matriculated from 2024, the introduction of Plan 5 loan repayments mean student debt will become an even heavier bur-

den. Under this new plan, the income threshold for repayments has changed from £27,295 to

£25,000 and the period before debt is written off has extended from 30 to 40 years.

Changes to tuition fees are not set to end with the introduction of Plan 5, as the government recently announced that the price of a university education will increase from £9,250 per year to £10,500 over the next five years. Cambridge University was one of 141 universities calling for the increase, triggered by a decrease in international student admission and increased inflation.

In order to support students struggling to fund their studies, the University runs a Bursary Scheme where eligible students are given up to £3,500 a year which, unlike tuition and maintenance loans, does not need to be repaid. Eligibility is calculated by household income and you can find out how much you are entitled to on the Cambridge website.

A University spokesperson said: "The University recognises that variations exist across the nations of the UK for both tuition fee payments and student maintenance. Through use of our own resources, supplemented by philanthropic giving, we ensure that substantial levels of financial assistance

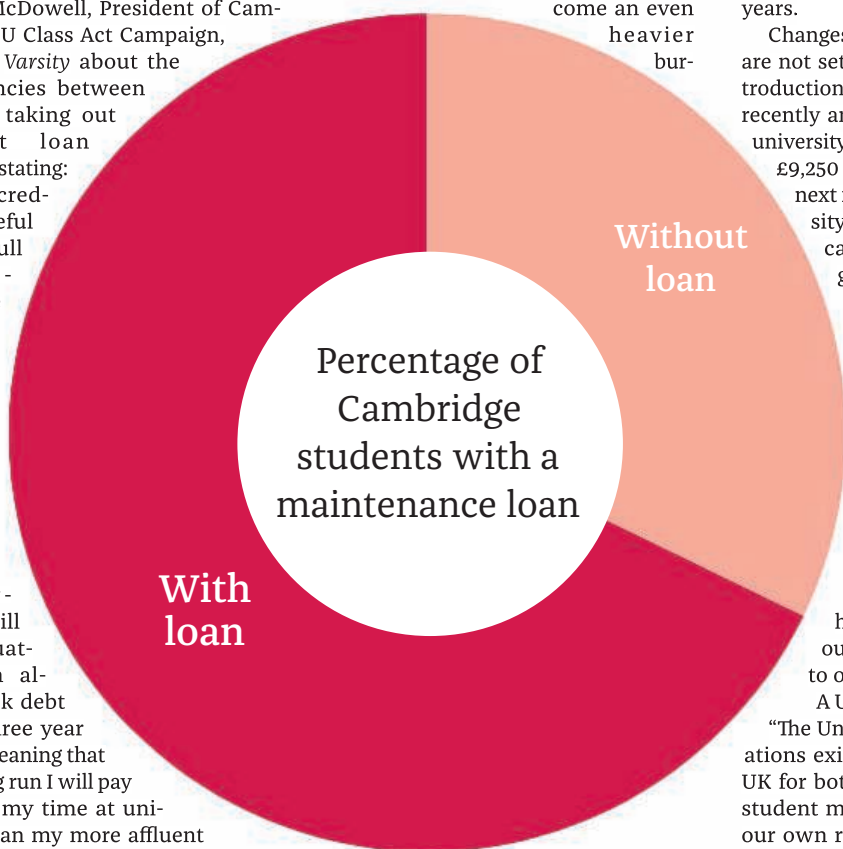
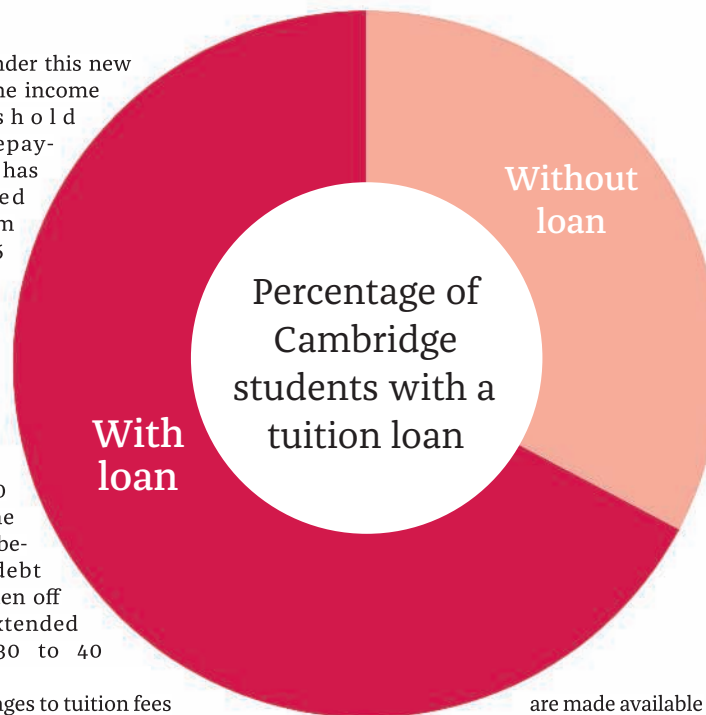
are made available through our bursary and scholarship support, and that priority is directed to those students who are in the greatest financial need."

"As we are working within systems of funding established by the government we need to be responsive to any changes, which is why we regularly review the levels of financial assistance we provide. We also need to ensure that our resources support not only the current student body, but are also available to assist future generations of Cambridge students."

A Department for Education spokesperson said: "We believe that every young person, regardless of their background, should have the opportunity to attend university. That's why we are dedicated to creating a sustainable higher education funding system that supports students, expands opportunities, and upholds the excellence of our world-leading universities."

"The Government is committed to reviewing the higher education funding system to deliver for our economy, for universities, and for students and we will be announcing further details in due course."

*The Student Loans Company was contacted for comment.*



### Anuk Weerawardana rounds up student news from around the country

#### Dutch princess joins UCL freshers

Princess Alexia of The Netherlands has been enrolled in her chosen subject, Science and Engineering for Social Change at University College London. The 19-year-old fresher/princess has started her degree following a gap year. The princess had initially had her eyes set on studying in The Netherlands but had been "a bit stressed about choosing," according to the *NL Times*.

#### Notts runs out of cash for library books amid job cuts

Nottingham University has sanctioned a series of cutbacks following recent revelations to its leaders that the University was edging towards a financial year-end budget gap. The University could be looking at around 500 job cuts according to a spokesperson from its union, as library book orders have been put on hold and coffee has been taken out of classrooms. In June earlier this year, the University had started a Mutually Agreed Resignation Scheme, which allows employees to leave with severance pay instead of facing redundancy. However, this comes after the decision to forgo renewing almost 500 staff contracts that expire in July and a prior hiring freeze.

#### Liverpool students outraged by new pro-life society

Following its first social media post, a petition was created to dissolve new pro-life societies at the University of Liverpool and Liverpool John Moores University. Within 24 hours the petition had over 8,000 signatures and currently has over 13,000 signatures. The University of Liverpool and Liverpool Guild of Students have released a joint statement acknowledging student concerns but explaining that they are unable to reject the society unless it breaks the law. They state that it is their responsibility to ensure all societies can operate freely on campus, regardless of beliefs.

## Comment: 'A graduate tax would be fairer than this'

Matthew Taylor

Not so long ago, when political leaders called for the scrapping of tuition fees, the electorate voted as if it were more than a pipe dream. It was the Cameron-Clegg coalition that provided a reality check. In government, the Liberal Democrats' abandoned their manifesto pledge to oppose the raising of tuition fees and instead facilitated the raising of the cap from £3,000 to £9,000, a U-turn that cost them dearly when they lost 49 of their 57 seats in 2015. In Corbyn's 2019 manifesto, Labour tried to tap

into this anger, promising to scrap tuition fees and bring back maintenance grants. In 2023, following a change of leadership and the unholy fiscal trinity of Brexit, COVID-19, and Trussonomics, then leader of the opposition Keir Starmer announced that the Labour Party would abandon this pledge due to the "difficult financial situation". The idea of a debt-free graduate faded into obscurity once more.

That is, unless you belong to the third of Cambridge students who do not take out a loan. The rest of us find ourselves

in the strange position of being appreciative that we will not be hit as hard as those coming through the system after us, with fees set to rise to £10,500 over the next five years. It is an odd kind of Stockholm syndrome at play when £9,250 has become a figure to be grateful for. But if growing up in the 2010s taught us anything it was to hope for little and expect even less. Unless we go corporate, paying off our student loans before they expire looks unlikely. In fact, we are regularly told to understand tuition fees as a graduate tax rather than a debt... a

way of sugar-coating further financial disappointment as we enter a market where home ownership looks unlikely and pay rises are frequently below the level of inflation. But a graduate tax would actually be fairer than this state of affairs where the richest coast from education to employment without a second glance at their bank account. The rest of us can only dream of an alternate reality where Nick Clegg's stint as deputy prime minister had had a different outcome.

## Features

# Going the distance: how Cantab couples cope with a summer apart

## Isabella Steinmeyer speaks to students forced to go long-distance



talking openly was key. Once they had aired their concerns, he and his partner accepted there would be periods – especially during exam season – when they would be apart. Communication, he says, “makes everything easy”.

“Does maintaining a Snapchat streak count as the sixth love language?”

It’s easy to talk when you’re in the same time zone, but what if you’re not? Does maintaining a Snapchat streak count as the sixth love language? Charlotte, whose boyfriend is an international student, says that during the holidays they speak over text or “send Instagram memes,” and finds the shift from life in Cambridge, “living together and having all our meals together” to romancing online, difficult. “Texting can lead to miscommunication,” she says, since “tone doesn’t come across the right way, and you might not be able to talk about it immediately, because they’re asleep.” Charlotte also mentions the “unspoken etiquette” of communicating virtually and advises that, along with compulsory goodnight messages and weekly calls, it’s important to keep on top of every meme shared.

Natalia and her boyfriend rely less on virtual communication, and though they speak daily, are not ones for “FaceTime dates”. Instead, they ensure they “have lots of date meals” during term time, to compensate for time apart. A smart choice: eating together over FaceTime will never replicate the intimacy of a real date until there’s an app for playing virtual footsie (Facebook pokes don’t count). Emily discovered she also prefers relaxed and spontaneous communication. When long-distancing with her partner, she found herself questioning the routine of scheduled calls. “Why is this the one part of my day that feels boring and compulsory?” she wondered. Eventually, this lack of spontaneity and sense of obligation started to weigh things down. She realised her “high energy” personality wasn’t the best fit for her ex’s calm, introverted one.

Most Cantabs I spoke to said time spent together is enriched by the knowledge it will be short. Natalia isn’t “complacent”

about the time spent with her boyfriend, aware that “they’re apart more than they are together”. Lucy agrees and makes sure she has “quality time” with her boyfriend away from uni. In Cambridge, she notes, “everyone is stressed constantly” and both she and her partner have “somewhere to be or something to do”. To break up the long-distance summer, she visits her partner in his hometown, which is a refreshing change, “because you get to see the places they always go to and do the things they have done their whole lives”. It’s a good point: making a pilgrimage to the landmarks of your partner’s childhood is far more romantic than a rushed pre-library pizza from Aromi.

Some of the students I spoke to make the most of the summer apart. Though part of a couple, it is possible to be independent when long-distance. Lucy, who travelled in Central America for two months this summer, says, “it never crossed her mind that just because she was in a relationship” she wouldn’t do the same things she would have done when single. “Having space is really important”, she says, and savours having a “whole other life” back home. If you have the space to solidify old friendships,

you never feel “tied down”. In contrast, Max feels there are “zero positives” to this, and while other couples might relish their “breathing space” and distraction-free study time, it doesn’t apply to him. Since he and his partner “aren’t together 24/7 in Cambridge”, he would love to see more of his significant other. Perhaps there’s a limit to time spent apart.

Having survived the four months of separation, what advice would these Cantabs offer to long-distance sceptics? How can a relationship survive time zones, conflicting schedules and unfortunate autocorrects? Everyone I spoke to emphasised the importance of communication. Emily, whose long-distance relationship didn’t last, told me that “getting to know your partner’s love language” and “finding new ways of showing that you love each other” is key, and admits she “could do so much better now”. So, as long as you keep talking, you will find your way, and you can go the distance...

\*All names have been changed.

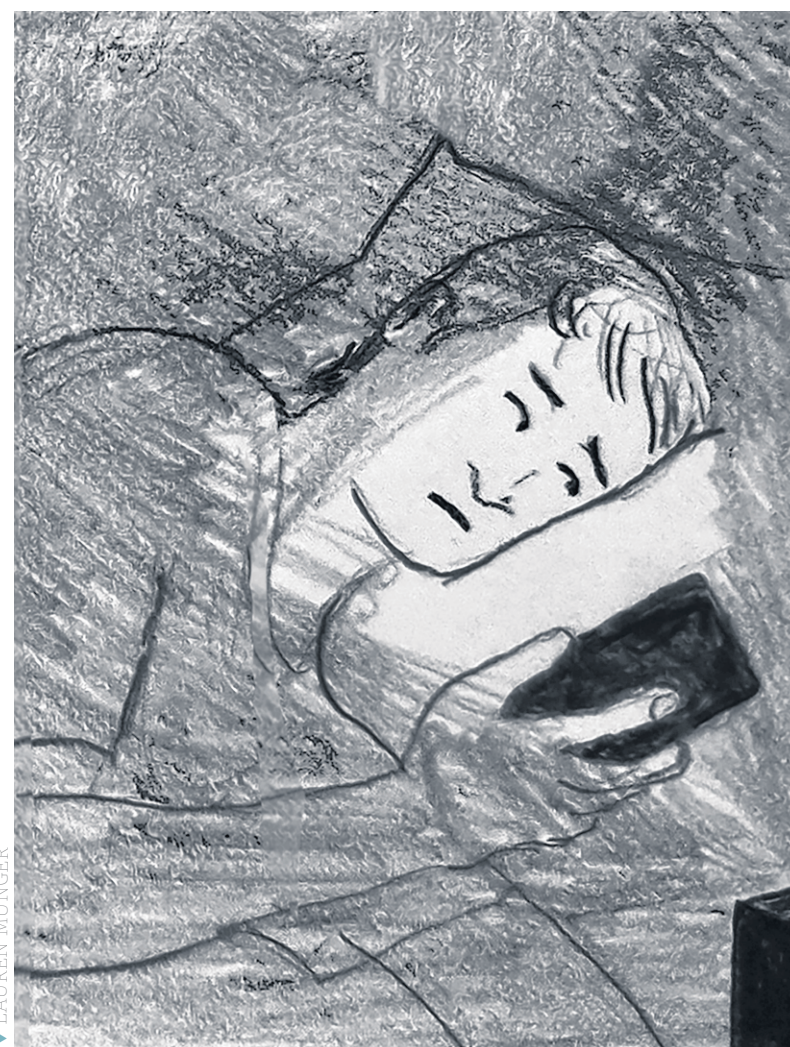
You’d be forgiven for approaching the new term with lukewarm enthusiasm. Michaelmas heralds a return to dark evenings, deadlines, and showering in flip-flops. But for some Cantabs, the start of term marks a greater readjustment: they’ll be reuniting with their other halves after a summer spent apart. For them, the hellish half-hour spent inching around Parker’s Piece as we all descend on Cambridge on the same Saturday is a heart-fluttering build-up to a *Love Actually* reunion. But how do they feel about spending the next eight weeks tangled up in a single bed? Has distance made their hearts grow fonder? To find out, I spoke to Cambridge couples about how they fared long-distance over summer.

Some embarked on their relationships without giving ‘the distance’ much thought. Emily – who is no longer with her long-distance partner – admits that she “wasn’t really worried” because “when you’re with someone you really love you think, ‘Of course it’s gonna work, it’s me and him, we’ll be completely fine.’” Emily says

she wasn’t prepared for the challenges of long-distance, particularly the lack of physical touch which made it “very very difficult for her” to feel connected to him.

“But how do they feel about spending the next eight weeks tangled up in a single bed? Has distance made their hearts grow fonder?”

Others, like Max, anticipated difficulties before he and his partner made things official. Not only was his partner graduating a year earlier, but planned to move to London for his postgraduate degree. Max says that, although London isn’t “hundreds of miles away,” “between the Cambridge workload, train ticket prices and clashing timetables” he doubted they would see each other enough, which, “as a planner”, worried him. Max found

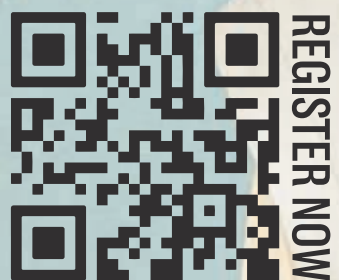


▶ LAUREN MUNGER

GRAND ARCADE  
SHOPPING CENTRE

# STUDENT NIGHT

9.OCT  
3-8PM



DISCOUNTS FOR ONE NIGHT ONLY!  
FREEBIES, GAMES, FREE POPCORN,  
PHOTOBOOTH, LIVE DJ & MORE!

ALLSAINTS



20% OFF

SAVE ON MAC OR IPAD.  
PLUS GET A GIFT CARD UP TO £120

BEYOND RETRO

Bubbleology®

20% OFF

25% OFF

CANDLES & OUD

CHARLES  
TYRWHITT

Dr. AirWair  
Martens

Ed's  
Easy Diner

FRASER HART

20% OFF

15% OFF

20% OFF

30% OFF MAINS

15% OFF

GANT

HOLLISTER



JOHN LEWIS  
& PARTNERS

Krispy Kreme  
DOUGHNUTS®

20% OFF

20% OFF

20% OFF

10% OFF BEAUTY

20% OFF

Levi's®

MANGO

MOANA POKÉ

OLIVER BONAS

PANDORA

30% OFF

20% OFF

30% OFF

10% OFF

10% OFF

Raspberry Pi

RITUALS...

SCAMP & DUDE ⚡

schuh

sunglass hut

10% OFF

20% OFF

10% OFF

20% OFF

25% OFF

SWAROVSKI

VANS  
"OFF THE WALL"

20% OFF

UP TO 25% OFF

\*T&CS APPLY TO ALL DISCOUNTS AND OFFERS. PLEASE CHECK IN-STORE FOR DETAILS. REGISTER FOR THE EVENT AND BRING A VALID STUDENT ID ON THE DAY.

# Comment

Got an opinion  
you want to  
share?

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



## Cambridge's new free speech code is a return to the culture wars

Last month, Bridget Phillipson, the education secretary, shelved the previous government's controversial Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Act amidst concerns that it would encourage hate speech on campus. The Higher Education Act had been a response to the de-platforming of divisive figures by students' unions across the country, but it was widely criticised for treating free speech as more important than student welfare. Now, the act is likely dead, but its influence lives on in Cambridge.

In August, the University introduced a new, absolutist free speech code based on the now-dormant act. The code vows to protect the academics' ability to voice "controversial" and "unpopular" opin-

“*Cambridge risks being seen as cosying up to a now defunct national policy*”

ions on campus without the threat of disciplinary action like dismissal or being made ineligible for promotion. Free speech is of course fundamental, but the truth is that universities themselves already have a legal obligation to protect free speech via the Human Rights Act. Cambridge's code, and the act that animated it, go further than this by ensuring free speech prevails over the competing right of students to live free from discrimination and harassment.

There is a reason why Phillipson removed the legal obligation for universities to introduce these new free speech absolutist codes. The proposed resolution mechanisms for free speech incidents had been described as “burdensome” and “disruptive”. They included a free-to-use free speech complaints scheme and a statutory tort that would have allowed academics to take universities to court if they felt free speech was infringed. As Daniel Zeichner, MP for Cambridge, put it, the act would have given “those with really outlandish views, a legal stick with which to beat institutions.” The University of Cambridge risks being seen as cosying up to a now defunct national policy that could undermine its ability to protect campus inclusivity.

Cambridge's free speech code will galvanise the 600 academics who have signed an open letter that urges Bridget Phillipson to reinstate the act. They argue that because only lawful free speech is covered by the act, and “English law

already provides strong protections against harassment and incitement to hatred”, no further limits to free speech are necessary – and so the act's protections for speech are a positive development.

This oversimplifies a complicated legal picture. Drawing the line at the law seems logical, but if you force universities to permit all legal speech, you risk encouraging them to permit illegal speech too. Punishing speakers for incitement offences, and other speech-related crimes, involves regulatory risks and legal costs just to determine which side of the line a given speaker is on. The result is that universities are deterred from taking swift disciplinary action which keeps students safe, because they no longer know where they stand legally.

We are dealing with more than hypotheticals here – in the last year alone, Cambridge has been no stranger to ‘free-speech’ incidents. In February the ‘race-realist’ beliefs of the then Cambridge philosophy researcher Nathan Cofnas emerged. Cofnas' blog interspersed sporadic philosophical references with claims that without positive discrimination, black people would “disappear” from “almost all high-profile positions outside of sports and entertainment”. Cofnas is now suing Emmanuel College over his dismissal, but were he to have posted his blog now rather than back in February then it is possible he would still be teaching at Cambridge.

The truth is that Cambridge's code and the dying Tory government's act is a solution in search of a problem. Helen Joyce, a ‘gender-critical’ author, is one of the academics who has deplored the “censoriousness” of Cambridge, as fellow free speech advocate Arif Ahmed put it. Back in 2022, she gave a speech at Gonville & Caius College on her book *Trans: When Ideology Meets Reality* and was met with peaceful protest by students across Cambridge. Joyce now claims the left has “fallen out of love with free speech”. But surely her experience reflects the healthy interaction of different free speech rights in a diverse, liberal university community? Free speech cannot be understood as an entitlement to spew divisive content down the nearest microphone unopposed. It does not confer a duty upon universities to amplify the free speech rights of academics above the right of students to signal their disagreement.

Whether we like it or not, Cambridge and its students are one of the media's favourite political footballs. The University should urgently reconsider whether ploughing ahead with a free speech absolutist code when the national policy is under review sends the right message to its students and the country. At the very least, the University should pause its code pending the review's outcome, or it will be students who pay the price.



LAURA FORWOOD

Sam Moore



## Long-distance love makes Cambridge easier

In Cambridge, maintaining a long-distance relationship is something of an anomaly – a deviation from the stress-ridden atmosphere encompassing this institution. But contrary to the tired assumption that long-distance relationships won't last at university, take my experience as assurance (for all you freshers, especially) that they are possible, even at a place like Cambridge. More than that, they make this short interval in our lives so much easier.

It's not difficult to lose ourselves in a culture of overwork, exams and deadlines. These pressures are put on us externally by supervisors and by ourselves, rooted in a perfectionist trait so customary that speaking of it together with Cambridge feels tautological.

Therefore, it's hardly a surprise that this was my case entering Michaelmas last year. A momentarily starry-eyed fresher, I had been picked up from a nowhere-town in rural Wiltshire and thrown into what seemed a bustling, intense city. It was Day Three of Freshers' Week, and I, like most other freshers, found myself in Revs. Rather than being captivated by Cambridge's charmingly lacklustre club scene, I noticed my phone vibrate. I had been confronted with no-

tice of a second essay – due imminently.

Anxious and feeling out of my depth, I left. But on my admittedly short, drunken journey back to King's College, I was on the phone to my girlfriend explaining what had happened. She was now far away at another university entirely – a partition from our days in sixth form, demarcated by geographical distance and academic commitments.

She told me I was allowed to enjoy freshers'.

Was I? I didn't have the time for enjoyment. I didn't need it. Gifted with an offer that nobody else from back home had received, I felt I couldn't waste it. However, her words resonated, even from afar. Across the many miles that should have set us apart, she had already punctured both Cambridge's and my own pressurised bubble that I was otherwise bound to envelop myself in.

I don't fully remember the subsequent evening, so her words must have left a fairly immediate impact. It was that appearance of loving guidance when I needed it most – with a perspective so crucially devoid of any Cambridge quality – which reassured me that our long-distance relationship would work.

That same week I recall telling some-

one, also entering Cambridge in a long-distance relationship, that my partner and I planned to see each other fortnightly, alternating each train journey and visit. They seemed taken aback, with an insinuation of doubt that this would last. Yet, it did.

Sure, I probably spent half my bursary funding on train tickets (despite a railcard!) over this last year. There were, of course, many instances of last-minute supervision scheduling (to which I would then have to traverse several trains and a tube ride back to Cambridge in the morning, often noticeably hungover). But it was in this balancing act that I learned to love my university.

In a long-distance relationship, I could identify Cambridge's absurdity: a micro-society of overloaded young adults operating in an institution where we can college marry, May Balls are in June, and everything is abbreviated. Routinely taking time away from this no longer seemingly bustling city allowed me to enjoy these idiosyncrasies rather than feel exhausted or trapped by them.

Instead of becoming accustomed to this culture of overwork, I had a loving reminder that I didn't need to be a perfectionist. We could be reciprocally proud

“*I probably spent half my bursary funding on train tickets over this past year*”

of each other without our only forms of validation being exclusively tied to our respective universities. Rather than feel inattentive to many of Cambridge's beautiful qualities, I had a reason to explore, tour and look for them.

We met each other's friends and we both learned more about how different universities functioned: the courses they had to offer, the societies, the people, and the exams. After each visit, I would return to a denaturalised Cambridge, bifurcated by a more realised need to reclaim certain aspects of this university. There was the Cambridge I could love and have renewed excitement for, and the Cambridge I increasingly had an apparatus to criticise.

My perfectionism has dwindled, and my long-distance relationship has undoubtedly made my time here easier. It is now much easier to spot what can be improved, when to take a break, and what can be borrowed from elsewhere. Whether that's the exams, culture or the overwork, being able to not fall apathetic or burned out has only been made possible thanks to Isobel, and nurturing our long-distance relationship this past year.

Max La Bouchardiere



Daisy Stewart Henderson

# Trinity's terrible gender imbalance makes female students feel inadequate

Upon arriving at Trinity College for my interview, I wondered where all the girls were. I was again curious when they failed to manifest at the Offer Holders' Day or for our matriculation photograph. Months later, I learned the quantification of the gender imbalance I had observed. Only 37.6% of Trinity's applicants in 2023 were female, shrinking to an even more meagre 29.4% of acceptances. This dismal statistic is often attributed to Trinity's affinity for the sciences and the longstanding underrepresentation of women in STEM. Yet, despite studying history, I feel the unevenness acutely. An unequal distribution of confidence, inflamed by a college whose reputation and culture are embodied by its imposing architecture and promotion of cold, hard meritocracy, disproportionately attracts self-assured men, leaving women and Trinity rejecting one another.

I frequently ponder why my perpetually insecure seventeen-year-old self applied to what I hear tour guides crown 'Cambridge's most prestigious college' as I walk through the Great Gate to have dinner under the gaze of our founder (and renowned feminist), Henry VIII. The answer to this great paradox of my life is unimpressively simple; coming from a school where Cambridge's col-

“A year into my degree at Trinity, my lack of confidence had become debilitating

legiate system was a mystery-shrouded unknown, I was painfully naive. Had I better comprehended Trinity's reputation, I would have run for the hills, as many girls likely do.

My naïveté was such that as I packed for Cambridge, I felt qualified. After all, I could confidently list an obnoxious number of US Civil War generals and rattle off the chronology of the Russian Revolution! A few weeks later, feebly attempting to explain my absence of a bold conclusion on Martin Luther's significance to the Protestant Reformation, I felt severely inadequate. My supervisor was an expert, and I had studied the topic for less than a week; how was I qualified to have an opinion? At the end of the supervision, she told me gently that I needed to be more confident, confiding that being reticent was common among women at Trinity, my first glimpse of Cambridge's gender attainment gap incarnate.

If my male peers shared this anxiety, they masked it exceptionally. In an environment where debating constitutional law and postmodernist philosophy is a relaxed Saturday night, and Thomas More's *Utopia* is dubbed 'light reading', I often felt like a stupid girl among the Old Boys. As I nodded along, rumours of peers believing that women shouldn't be

at Trinity came to mind. Could they have a point? By the beginning of Lent Term, I felt unworthy of any society involving speaking or writing; skills I had rated among my finest a year prior. My essays improved, but my confidence worsened. My long-suffering friends can attest to the escalation of my pangs of self-doubt from "that essay was not good enough" to "I am not good enough for Trinity". Returning home for the summer, a bitter realisation sank in: a year into my degree at Trinity, my lack of confidence had become debilitating.

Trinity's admissions meritocracy is based solely on one's ability to 'thrive intellectually' within the college. With a seeming lack of concern for the circumstances of one's background, demonstrated by its apparent disregard for the now defunct state school quota, confidence is a precious commodity. Unsurprisingly, for many high-achieving girls conditioned from infancy to please and instilled with a mortal fear of offending, exhibiting the boldness required to thrive academically, socially and in extracurriculars at Trinity is counterintuitive at best, and downright frightening at worst. Reshaping an institution that has been the training ground of Britain's male elite for centuries is necessarily difficult. Yet, small changes can

go a long way in encouraging bright girls to apply and thrive upon arrival. Trinity's ethos is certainly not wholly negative, nor is it malicious. However, it should be tempered with sympathy for the systemic realities that make confidence harder to attain for some, to create a meritocracy of a truer form. Acknowledging that there is a problem and resolving to address it would be an excellent start.

If I had to pinpoint the moment when I made my resolution, to be bolder next term, it would be at the Eras Tour. Far removed from the intellectual posturing over port, singing along to Taylor Swift's mash-up of 'The Archer' and 'You're on Your Own, Kid' made me feel profoundly close to my seventeen-year-old self. Those were the lyrical echoes of her girlish anxieties that soundtracked her daydreaming about Trinity on her way to school. In hindsight, confidence was always going to be my Cantabrigian hamartia. But I owe it to my seventeen-year-old self, and to future girls like her, to have the confidence to thrive within Trinity's meritocracy. Still, I probably won't explain this to the boys at Trinity. They might laugh. They definitely won't get it.

# Freshers' Fair or freshers' foul?



Maddy Browne

Freshers' Fair: one of the remaining events in the Cambridge Freshers' (half) Week that doesn't require black tie (yet). As an incoming third year, this would be my third and final Freshers' Fair, if I hadn't got Covid at the very start of last year. I was sad to miss the hustle and bustle of the big tents on Parker's Piece. It forms a welcome reminder that this ancient institution is also a 21st-century university, and we are allowed to have fun.

The possibilities — and the free food — are endless. Every year, the fair rep-

resents the faint hope that this might finally be the year that I actually try pole dancing, or ultimate frisbee, or Doctor Who society. This is before I inevitably take myself off the mailing list after a respectable period of time somewhere in between giving up too soon and soul-crushing guilt that I haven't managed to have it all.

At the risk of sounding overly dramatic, the fair now becomes a chance to relive my silly fresher days when I felt I could try anything. I grab freebies at every opportunity and feign enthusiasm with future investment bankers

for a free packet of Haribo. Admittedly, I will probably never join the trampolining team. The point is that, at Freshers' Fair, I could if I wanted to (and if I had any athletic ability whatsoever). It still needs a quiet hour, and often at times feels too commercialised, but the fair at its core represents all of the opportunities open to us during this infamous 'uni experience', and all the people we could still be. At least, that is what I am telling myself before the third year panic sets in.

If anything, it's a nice reminder that the Cambridge SU does have a purpose: getting us free Domino's.



Hugh Jones

Freshers' Week, alcohol-induced amnesia notwithstanding, is a time one tends to remember. I have warm memories of mine, like seeing my room for the first time, the chaos of my first bop, and the kindness of the third years who stopped to chat with me when I arrived alone at the buttery.

What I do not remember is going to the Freshers' Fair. My recollections of plastic tables and handwritten posters are so vague that I cannot be sure that I am not hallucinating a false memory, cobbled together from other people's Instagram stories and episodes of *Fresh Meat*.

This is not to blame the enthusiastic students and beleaguered SU sabbatical officers who put the fair together that year. I don't think the fair is ever really memorable. In fact, I don't think the fair is ever really worth going to.

That is because it takes place in Freshers' Week. Needless to say, it can't be at any other time. Societies have to grab new members before they get distracted by this strange and terrible thing called tripsos. But when I think back to my first fortnight at Cambridge, I can hardly believe that I spent hours of it traipsing around a field, signing up to ignore some mildly amusing emails.

If I did, it was a mistake. Somewhere in Cambridge there was something more interesting to do — something which I would remember now as a wizened fourth year. Freshers, your first week at Cambridge is a wonderful, precious time; you can find something better to do with it than be hassled by Union hacks on Parker's Piece. Or, if you can't, maybe that means the dread hour has finally come, and it is time start writing that first essay.



▲ RUYING YANG

## Interviews

# From the River Cam to Olympic glory: meet Cambridge's Paris 2024 rowers

Lauren Guye and Isabella Dowden speak to the Cambridge alumni who won medals in the rowing at the Paris Olympics and Paralympics this summer

## Jan Helmich

Early mornings are peaceful on the River Cam. Mist rises from the water's surface, sunrise approaches, and rowers glide along the river silently, their oars slicing through the water's surface. For some of these rowers, their time at the University will be a springboard to the world of elite sport, as it was for Imogen Grant, Tom George, and Jan Helmich, three of the seven Cambridge alumni who won medals in the Olympics and Paralympics at Paris this summer. We invited these athletes to reflect on their incredible journeys; how have they managed to balance academic excellence with the pursuit of Olympic glory?

"I just really enjoyed it. I liked the exercise element, and being outside," Jan Helmich tells me, reminiscing about his initial impression of rowing. He had never rowed before starting at Cambridge, but



quickly started to rise through the ranks, training throughout his undergraduate and Master's, as well as the doctoral degree he is currently pursuing.

For Helmich, finding something you're passionate about is one of the best things about Cambridge: "You can play all of the instruments, go to choir, go shooting, play polo or any sport you can think of, learn about pretty much anything."

Having reached out to the German Paralympic team in 2018, Helmich very quickly gained international recognition, competing at the 2018 world championships that summer. Balancing sport and academics has "always been a bit of a sacrifice" he says, with early morning training sessions followed by academic studies before another training session.

Helmich made history in the Cambridge

**“**Helmich made history as the first athlete to receive a Blue in para-rowing

University Boat Club, becoming the first athlete to receive a Blue in para-rowing. "With the blessing, with the support of the Lightweight Boat Club at the time, I put in a request for an extraordinary Blue." Without a precedent to work with, the University invited Helmich to discuss what the requirements should be. "Now there's actually criteria written down for future athletes."

"That's the first hurdle, right? You need to find someone that's willing to give you the shot, despite maybe being concerned about what the implications of it might be like." Helmich, who has clubfoot, "execute[s] the movements a little bit different[ly]" but doesn't need "a special boat [or] a special training environment as such." He tells me that this made it "very easy for the team to just try it and see how I can get along [...]" Everyone's been really kind of supportive, and also, in a good way, interested in how it affects me, how I do things differently."

Helmich tells me how he's been able to adapt to his rowing partner, Hermine

Krumbein, in a similar way. "I can't move my ankles [...] but she's visually impaired, so she doesn't know how far along in the race we are." During their races, Helmich therefore takes on a "double role", steering the boat while rowing.

Recalling the last 500 metres of the final race, he says "I think it was the biggest amount of spectators I've ever seen at any rowing [event]. It must have been around 15,000 people." Both Helmich and Krumbein are luckily "fairly good" in stressful situations. "I think that's also equally something that Cambridge teaches you quite well, like just being exposed to so much stress that you just have to learn how to deal with it."

After everything was over, it took "a minute or two" for the joy to sink in. "We managed to show the world that we're the third best crew at the most important event that we can be a part of [...]" I'd never quite had this feeling before."

**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

**KINGSWAY**  
**CYCLES** Est 1978

New and Used bikes for sale, ladies and gents available.

Also lights, locks, helmets and other accessories available too.

Please come to our store.

8 City Road, Cambridge CB11DP

Tel: 01223 355852 Email: kingswaycycles@hotmail.com

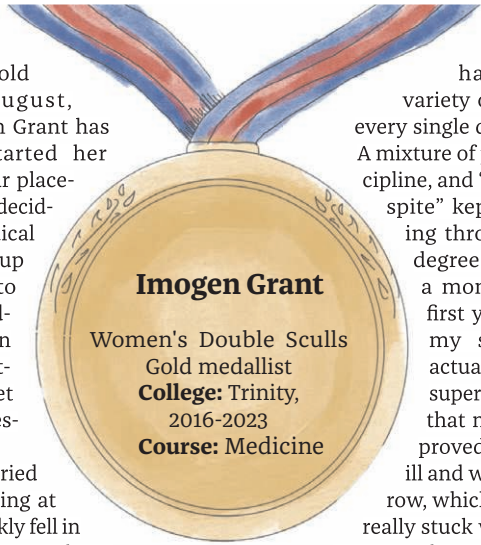
www.kingswaycycles.com

# Interviews

# Imogen Grant

Since winning gold in August, Imogen Grant has just started her first foundation year placement, 20 years after deciding to pursue a medical career. When I pick up the phone to talk to her, she is in the middle of a busy shift on the ward. Not wasting any time, we get straight into the questions.

Grant had never tried rowing before arriving at Cambridge, but quickly fell in love with the sport. For a large chunk of her rowing career, balancing both sporting and academic commitments was a difficult task. But, according to Grant, it was also essential. "If you want it enough, you'll find a way. And that's kind of brutally simple," she tells me. "I've always been adamant that this is what makes me like a whole person, like having



this balance and having that variety of what I do every single day." A mixture of passion, discipline, and "a little bit of spite" kept Grant going throughout her degree. She recalls a moment in her first year: "One of my supervisors actually put in my supervision report that my work improved when I was ill and wasn't able to row, which has always really stuck with me as a reason to keep doing it and

"A mixture of passion and 'a little bit of spite' kept Grant going

prove that I could do both, and that I could excel at both."

It seems that being a rower has actually made Grant a better medic. She tells me "how important recovery is" in both contexts. "You know, if I'm standing on a medical ward and I'm feeling like I'm nodding off or zoning out or struggling, [it's] actually recognising that in myself and [listening to] the athlete brain going 'I'm not actually getting anything out of this right now, I need to either figure out a way to make it useful, or I should actually be focusing on recovering.'"

Having come fourth in the Tokyo Olympics (by a margin of 0.01 seconds), Grant and her partner Emily Craig took nothing for granted in the buildup to the final. "We'd gone into the games as the favourite, being unbeaten, but we knew better than anyone that coming in with good performances doesn't guarantee you a medal."

She tells me that in the final race "we were so internal and so process driven [...] keeping ourselves focused on exactly what we wanted to do, rather than focusing on the enormity of what we were

trying to achieve." I ask her how it felt to cross the finish line. "The first emotion I felt was disbelief [...] that disbelief of 'oh my goodness, we've actually done this thing, and it's actually a massive deal.'"

It's a lesson that can be applied to sport, academia and beyond. Rowing is a sport that depends on the natural environment, and over the last few years, Grant has become an advocate for sustainability. She tells me that "being an elite athlete, and seeing what someone can achieve if they put their mind to achieving one goal, it just puts into perspective what we can achieve if collectively, we focused on something like that, in the same way."



STEVE MCARTHUR ▶

## Cambridge's Rowing Competitors

**Ollie Wynne-Griffith & Tom George**  
Peterhouse 2021  
GB Silver Men's Rowing Pair

**Imogen Grant**  
Trinity 2014  
GB Gold Women's Lightweight Double Sculls

**Henry Fieldman**  
Homerton 2012  
GB Bronze Cox of Women's 8

**Freddie Davidson**  
Emmanuel 2017  
GB Bronze, Men's 4 Rowing

**Dara Hossein Alizadeh**  
Hughes Hall 2017  
Bermuda, Men's Single Sculls

**Olivia Coffey**  
Homerton 2017  
USA, Women's 8

**Paige Badenhorst**  
Magdalene 2021  
USA, Women's Single Scull

**Jan Helmich**  
Trinity Hall 2016  
Germany Bronze  
Paralympics, PR3 Mix2x

Tom George won silver with partner Ollie Wynne-Griffith - also a Cambridge rower - in the Men's Pairs at Paris 2024. Tom began rowing at school and continued as an undergraduate at Princeton, where he studied Politics. Tom and Ollie were part of the GB Men's eight crew that won bronze at the Tokyo Olympics three years ago, but switched to the Men's Pair when they both came to Cambridge to pursue a master's.

Tom describes how the decision to go to Cambridge was initially a "risk" for his rowing career: "We were outside the team, and I think they [Team GB] thought we were just drossing around and not taking the training seriously." However, it soon became evident that it was the right decision, "[Cambridge] was an opportunity to keep rowing like but also sort of take stock of life and what we want to do. We soon solidified ourselves in the pairs and began winning races."

Coming into the Games, the pair were unbeaten in 2024, and Tom explains that the key to their success and remaining disciplined was their strong working re-

lationship. "Ollie and I've known each other a long time, which is good because you can hold each other to account and you can have difficult conversations knowing that you know each other well enough. We can be frank with each other, and for both of us it was always all about striving to be the fastest we can be, which is always pretty special."

So what did a day in the life look like, balancing training for the Olympics with a Cambridge workload?

"It was early starts, and it was pretty brutal. We were on the 5:20am train from Cambridge to Ely and the aim was to try and do two rows in the morning and then come back. And I remember I always had 11 o'clock classes. So I'd always row twice, have some food, row again, and then rush back to the train, get back to Cambridge, grab my bike, cycle up to Peterhouse, get some more food. Oh yeah, and I would squeeze in a ten minute nap before my two hour class!"

Tom reveals that a certain sandwich shop on Bene't Street fuelled his afternoons of yet more rowing and studying: "inevitably I'd end up in Bread and Meat having lunch after class - I went there so much, it was just an absolute staple of

"I'm excited about what the future holds

my Cambridge experience!"

Such intense training did not come without its sacrifices. More recently, Tom describes having to miss friends' weddings, but as a student, it was evening pub trips. "Obviously there's quite the pub culture in Cambridge, but I could rarely take up the offer of a pub trip because normally, if I had rowing, especially the next morning, I would be in bed at nine o'clock, or I just couldn't keep it up!"

However, he notes not everyone followed the same routine: "I was always really impressed with the undergrad guys who would go out with their friends and then just roll onto the train in the morning having had two hours



sleep!"

Post-Olympics, Tom is taking time to decompress before deciding whether to continue rowing, with the possibility of making another Olympics, or forge a new path.

"I'm excited about what the future holds, because my life has always been pretty boxed into a very rigid structure, and if I do decide to carry on rowing, then I guess I'll go back into that box. But if I don't, then there is a lot to look forward to. Even

simple things, like I have never had a weekend, because we always train on Saturdays and some Sundays. I am also excited to go on a skiing holiday! It's written into our contracts that we can't ski due to the high risk of injury."

# Tom George

## Science

# Anti-climax? The science of the female orgasm

Lucie Debaig investigates the evolutionary rationale behind the ever-elusive female orgasm

Pop culture paints the female orgasm in contradictory light, which flickers through waves of sexual liberation. Heterosexual male characters like *How I Met Your Mother*'s Barney Stinson completely disregard women's sexual needs, treating them as vessels for their own egotistical pleasure. On the other hand, women like Samantha from *Sex and the City* are sexually liberated, empowered by their ability to sustain multiple orgasms in quick succession. In any case, the female orgasm has more potential, more elusiveness, and more complexity than its male counterpart.

Why do women have them? Men orgasm and ejaculate to shoot sperm into a vagina (in fact, male orgasm and ejaculation are two separate phenomena, worthy of their own discussion), after which sperm can swim to an egg which can be fertilised to give rise to more humans. But human women produce the egg regardless of sexual satisfaction. How does a woman's enjoyment of sex to the point of sustaining a changed conscious state and experiencing involuntary muscular contractions benefit our species?

The most intuitive evolutionary explanation for the female orgasm is that enjoying sex will make women have it more, increasing chances of pregnancy and thus leading to more sex-enjoying offspring with every generation. However, orgasm is not always about making babies, nor is it entirely psychological. Procreation is not the whole story. And that fact is not limited to humans.

Bonobos, one of our closest ape relatives, are notorious for enjoying sex. This is asserted by primatologists not only because they appear to have sex regularly, emoting extensively while doing so, but also because bonobos have gay sex. Females will engage in mutual clitoral stimulation, known as 'genito-genital' (G-G) rubbing, in greeting or before sharing food. It is no surprise bonobos are dubbed 'hippie apes'. It is unclear whether G-G rubbing tends to lead to orgasm, or if this is the intention: primatologists do occasionally respect personal boundaries of their subjects, it seems. However, sexual pleasure does convincingly play a role in social bonding beyond human society.

While most human beings may not be as sexu-

ally liberated as these great apes, it is obvious from the existence of contraception that sex between humans is not always about babies. Nor does it always result in orgasm, and orgasm is not always the point. Especially among humans, the role of sexual pleasure and orgasm in social bonding is incredibly variable, influenced by culture and personal values, and it is not my role as an author to tell you what it means to you. Allow me instead to guide you to consider the biology of orgasm: what might the physiological roles be?

One of the most clinical ideas put forward to explain the female orgasm is known as 'upsuck'. It was suggested that the muscular contractions brought about as part of the female orgasm would propel sperm towards the egg, a little like extruding a Calippo. This does seem to happen in pigs and macaques. While applying the same logic to humans doesn't sound entirely absurd, the experiment which disproved it does: Masters and Johnson, the scandalous scientific duo behind early human studies of sexual responses, recruited women and presented them with artificial sperm laced with chemicals which would show up dark on an x-ray. The participants were instructed to masturbate while x-ray images were taken. No evidence was found for the fluid being vacuumed up from where it was placed in the cervix into the uterus. In short, the female orgasm does not seem to increase the chances of pregnancy occurring from sex.

In non-human species, sex does induce changes in the female which are required for pregnancy. Rabbits, for instance, only ovulate, releasing the egg from the ovary into the uterus, in response to sex. We cannot call this orgasm: who are we to assert what the rabbit feels? 'Fall off', where the male rabbit momentarily loses consciousness as he literally falls off his partner's back, is the end of rabbit sex and, rather amazingly, does seem sufficient to induce female ovulation (do both rabbits climax simultaneously?).

A 2019 article considering whether this process is related to human female orgasm gave rabbits human antidepressants known to re-

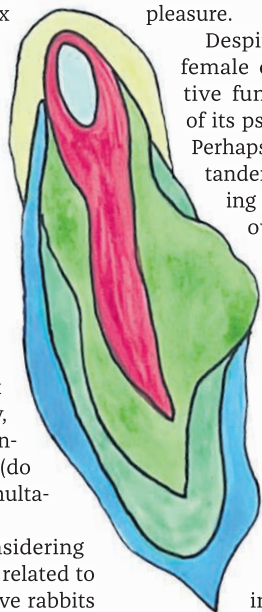
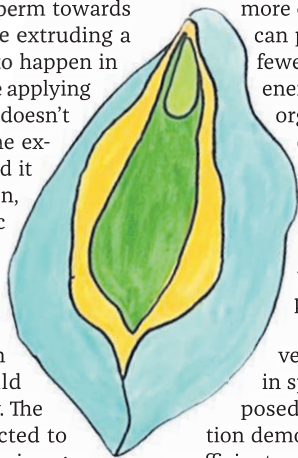
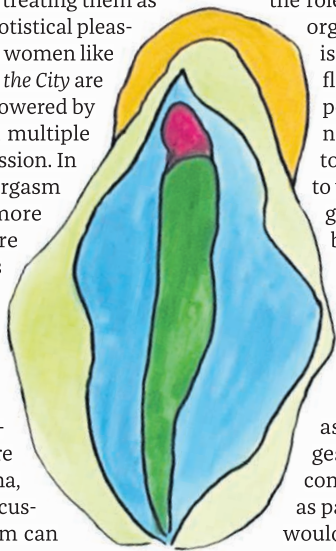
duce human female sexual function. This reduced rabbit ovulation following copulation by 30%, suggesting a common mechanism to human orgasm and rabbit ovulation. Perhaps we evolved from induced ovulators, and later

“*The female orgasm does not seem to increase the chances of pregnancy occurring from sex*

evolved the more regular menstrual cycle, but retained some psychological reaction to sex. This would have happened in parallel with stricter mate selection: induced ovulation increases chances of pregnancy given sex, but in more complex social groups it can pay for a female to have fewer babies, devoting more energy to each one. So while orgasm does not improve chances of pregnancy directly, it may have done so in our ancient ancestors. Do human women merely enjoy the remnants of ancient physiology?

The spectacular diversity of clitoral anatomy in species with fixed (as opposed to sex-induced) ovulation demonstrates that this is not a sufficient explanation. From the female hyena's penis-like clitoris to the dolphin's large clitoris placed much closer to the vagina than its human counterpart, diversity of form indicates that natural selection has acted specifically on the hotspot of female sexual pleasure.

Despite efforts to reduce the female orgasm to a reproductive function, the importance of its psychology is undeniable. Perhaps orgasm first evolved in tandem with the brain-involving mechanisms of induced ovulation, maximising chances of pregnancy after sex. However, once this physiological role was overwritten by the menstrual cycle, orgasm prevailed. From that point onwards, sexual pleasure may have dictated the diverse evolution of the clitoris to be tailored to the sexual habits of different species, humans included. Female sexual pleasure has hence become a driving force in sexual evolution.



◀ANNABELLE WELLS



▲JESSICA LEER

Maya Kunchur gets you up to date on some of the latest scientific discoveries

### Life on Mars? Or life on Europa?

NASA has confirmed its Europa Clipper flight should go ahead on schedule. The Clipper is planned to launch around October 10th and land on Jupiter's moon Europa in April 2030.

Europa is of particular scientific interest because it has an ice crust, below which scientists are almost certain lies a vast salt-based ocean, larger than all of Earth's oceans combined. This is partially theorised based on the behaviour of Europa's magnetic field. As far as we know, life requires water, so its presence is the first hint that the moon holds the potential to support life. Another requirement for life is sufficient energy: despite Europa's distance from the Sun, energy is transferred as a result of tides induced by Jupiter's strong gravitational field.

The Europa Clipper will measure the ocean's depth and salinity, as well as how deep the ice crust is. It will also search for traces of some of the other building blocks of life as we know it, such as carbon, hydrogen, oxygen and sulphur. The Clipper is specially designed to endure Jupiter's immense gravitational pull (close to 20,000 times stronger than Earth's) and is decorated with poetry, artwork and over two million names.

### Can scientists see right through you?

Scientists have discovered that a yellow food dye used in Doritos can turn living tissues transparent. It works by influencing how much light is scattered.

Different molecules and materials make up a living tissue; lipid, protein, fluids and more. As light reaches the boundaries between each of these materials it is both scattered and refracted, bending in a different direction.

Fluids and lipids have very different refractive indices, which means a lot of light is scattered between them, causing a tissue to appear opaque. When this dye is dissolved in water it decreases the difference between the refractive indices so more light can pass across the boundary, giving a transparent appearance.

The dye, tartrazine (otherwise known as 'FD&C Yellow 5'), was first tested on raw chicken breast and has

since been tested on mice. Scientists were able to see a mouse's intestines and organs when the dye was applied to its belly and viewed under red light, as well as blood vessels in the brain when applied to the scalp.

The discovery is particularly useful because tartrazine is a common food dye, so it is non-toxic and the effects can be completely reversed by rinsing it off. Currently, it can only be used to see depths of around 3mm, but potential uses include helping a phlebologist more easily find a blood vessel. Additionally, scientists often study naturally transparent organisms (e.g. Zebrafish) to easily see structures develop but with this dye, other organisms could be studied in a similar way.

### Is electric flight about to take off?

Electric or hybrid cars are no longer a rare sight on the roads, but it could take longer to get used to the idea of a battery-powered aeroplane. The Velis Electro is one of the first. It is powered by two lightweight lithium batteries in a powertrain which is liquid-cooled to stabilise its temperature. This design overcomes the two most common problems in electric flight: weight and heat.

Currently, aviation accounts for just over 2% of CO2 emissions and 4% of global warming. As the market is projected to keep growing rapidly, alternatives will need to be developed fast to prevent this number continuing to rise. Of course, batteries still require non-renewable components and lithium mining has no small carbon footprint. However the Visio Electro produces no carbon emissions during operation, so this appears to be a step in the right direction.

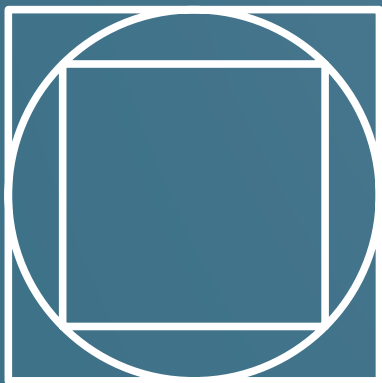
Current models of electric planes are only suitable for short-haul flights, which account for just 20% of the aviation industry's impact on global warming; there is a long way to go. However, these planes provide hope for change, and there are many of them in development to keep an eye on. Pipstrel, the company behind Visio Electro, is working on other projects such as the Unifer 19. This plane is being designed under an EU initiative for a reduced carbon-emitting and less noisy 'mini liner' for short-haul flights in Europe.



# PREDICT



# TO WIN



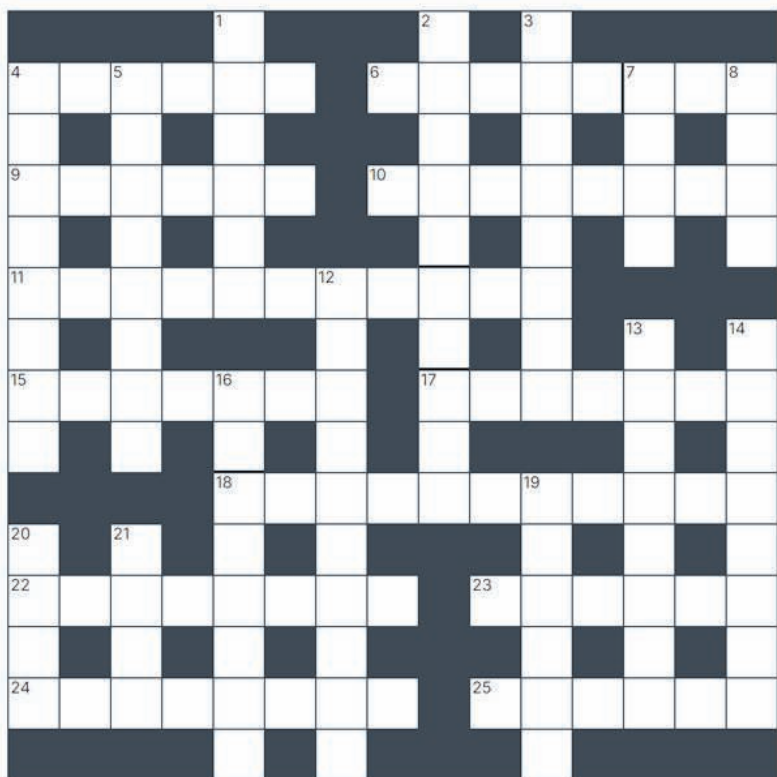
If the area of the outside square is  $100\text{cm}^2$ , what is the area of the inside square?

What percentage of respondents successfully solved this?



# The Smoking Area

## Crossword



### Quick:

#### ACROSS

- 4 The unmentionable city (6)
- 6 Memory device (8)
- 9 They go out, in Latin or in a play (6)
- 10 Parts of a newspaper (8)
- 11 You'll know his Nutcracker (11)
- 15 Closest planet to the Sun (7)
- 17 As a spanner may be, or an uncouth person in American slang (7)
- 18 German state surrounding Berlin (11)
- 22 Dissembles (8)
- 23 Light display (6)
- 24 Deep blue (8)
- 25 But first, \_\_\_\_\_ (6)

### Cryptic:

#### ACROSS

- 4 Croup's ravaged this college (6)
- 6 Prehistoric man set in stage (5,3)
- 9 Floppily, left intimate (6)
- 10 Charm your way in! (8)
- 11 Seaside town rebuilt as burnout home (11)
- 15 Gluten-free company messed around Celia (7)
- 17 Capacity of MMLL, say (7)
- 18 Visionary college announced changes to navy (11)
- 22 A real bed made nicely is comprehensible (8)
- 23 Romance a feminine blonde! (6)
- 24 Marge let back message (8)
- 25 She fled Russia in extremis, despising Alexander the first (6)

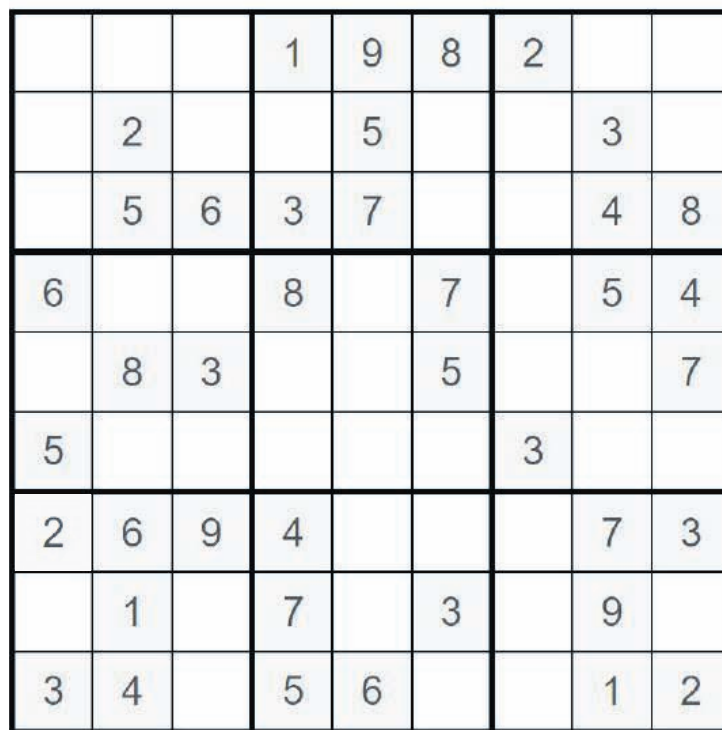
#### DOWN

- 1 Nation on Borneo (6)
- 2 Explicit (10)
- 3 Purple quartz (8)
- 4 Beyond set working hours (8)
- 5 First-years (8)
- 7 Midday (4)
- 8 Crackable for detectives (4)
- 12 Shelley met a traveller from an antique land... or so he wrote (10)
- 13 Dismiss (5,3)
- 14 Fester (8)
- 16 Parasol for the rain (8)
- 19 Nerve cell (6)
- 20 Type of poem the Iliad is (4)
- 21 Founder of the Labour party, \_\_\_\_\_ Hardie (4)

#### DOWN

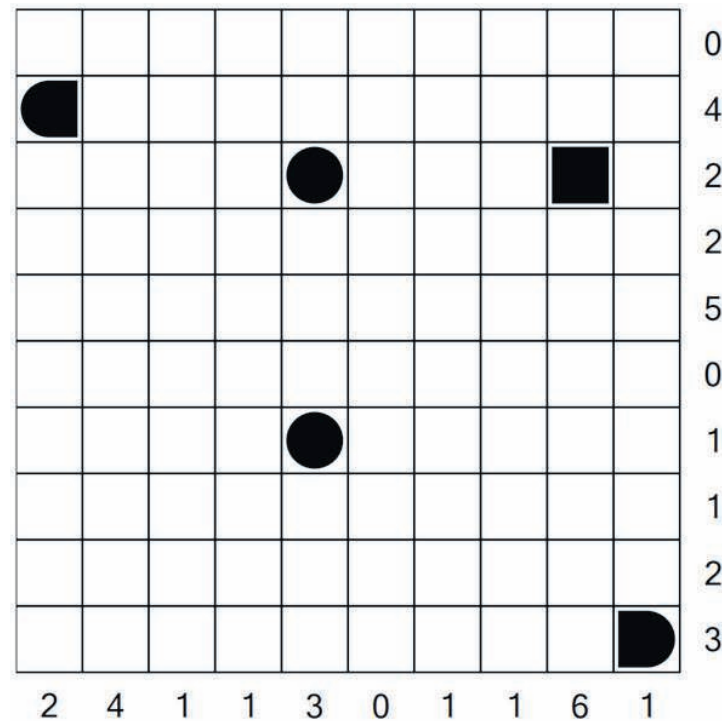
- 1 Moody consul lends only a part (6)
- 2 Support comedian convention without hesitation (5,2,3)
- 3 An artist returns, fashionably lawless (8)
- 4 Screwed a bicycle to avoid sex! (8)
- 5 Reputed spirit poured without head (8)
- 7 Italian river found near Novara (4)
- 8 I had shortly heard and seen (4)
- 12 His welcoming mother is at full term (10)
- 13 Lace gave out, revealing woman's chest (8)
- 14 Crazyness this year? (8)
- 16 The boss is trendy and current (2,6)
- 19 Hug and kiss crossing the other place (6)
- 20 Little devil put republican in club (4)
- 21 Author trims end of flower (4)

## Sudoku



## Battleships

Find all the battleships in the grid. There is one battleship (4×1 squares), two cruisers (3×1), three destroyers (2×1), and four submarines (1 square each). The ships do not touch, not even diagonally, and the numbers indicate how many squares in each row and column are occupied by ship parts.



ANSWERS TO PUZZLES ON INSTAGRAM @VARSITYCAMBRIDGE PUZZLES BY SOPHOCLES

## VINTAGE VARSITY

Resident Archivist Eleanor Dougan investigates the 21st-century freshers who made Varsity headlines

As the hallowed halls of our university (and by extension the Revs dancefloor) are once again flooded by flocks of hopeful fresh meat, anxious to make an impression, I decided to poke around in the Varsity archives and investigate the newsworthy behaviour of reckless 21st-century first-years. Based on my research, it is apparent that the freshers of Cambridge seem to be getting no less disorderly and hedonistic during the anarchy of first year. Using my ancient wisdom as a survivor of first year, I urge any freshers reading to make the most of your first year at university — while being careful not to get yourself into similar scrapes to some of these bygone beginners.

Clubs and college bars are key habitats for freshers, and their actions in these locations have often culminated in Varsity mentions. For instance, a 2022 fresher working as a bouncer “keeping the peace outside Revs” confirmed the terrible dancing skills of Cambridge students in a Varsity interview, recounting a dance routine made up of “purely elbows” which led to one girl getting hit in the face. Given my experience last year, I have to assume there will not even be enough space to move your arms in Revs during Freshers' Week, although, in case there is a gap in the crowd, a quick rehearsal before going out wouldn't do any harm.

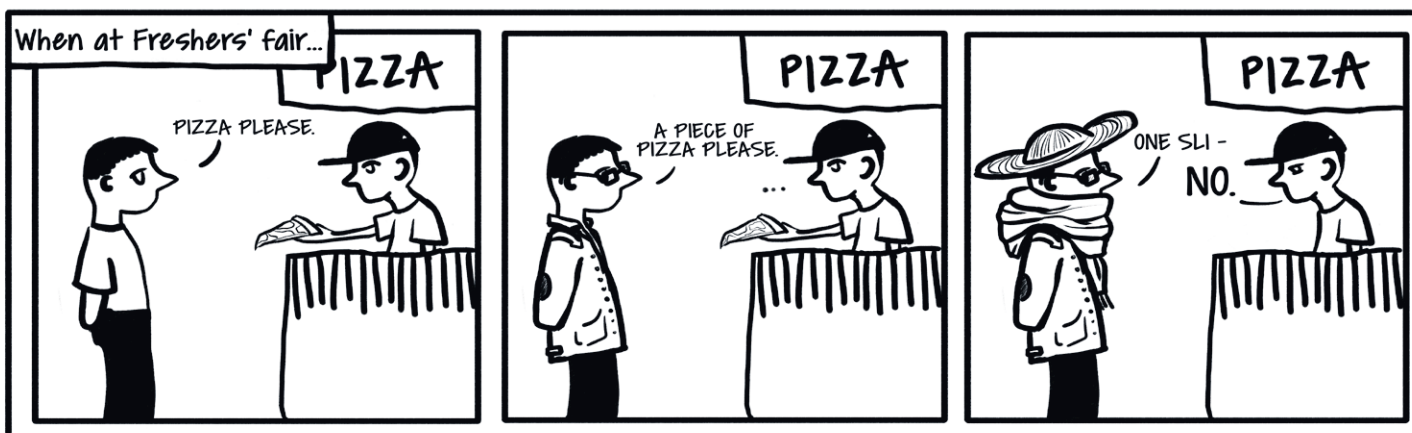
Up the hill at Girton College, a 2006 Greek-themed Freshers' Week ent spiralled into a temporary prohibition, with the Senior Tutor closing the college bar and cancelling the final Freshers' Week ent. He declared that “the level of drunkenness and alcohol-induced damage occurring in the last two days is totally unacceptable”. However, many students were confused and angered by the College's decision, given that the only reported damage was a “spilt bottle of red wine over several items of furniture” (for which the culprit agreed to pay). A second-year remarked that this was “grossly unfair to the freshers”.

More drunken fresher antics were reported in October 2013 when the anonymous “Cambridge Spy” revealed the existence of an annual drag competition at one unspecified college where “fresher boys are plied with alcohol and photos are banned lest they fall into The Daily Mail's hands”.

Unfortunately, in 2022 a Cambridge fresher did make it into mainstream media when a drinking society initiation went wrong with a “fresher on fire”. Varsity reported that a Clare College first-year was “basically immobilised” and hospitalised after being “tasked with the challenge of putting out a lit toilet roll tucked into his shorts by running into the wind”.

Freshers and fire also crossed paths in 2016 when a Sidney Sussex fresher was accidentally set alight on C-Sunday while dressed in cotton wool for a drinking society initiation. Having just completed a year as a Clare fresher, I am relieved to announce that I avoided this fiery fate, and I would advise any readers to follow this lead.

▼ RUYING YANG





*vulture.*

## Fumbles of a finalist

## Venn diagrams, burnout, and the light at the end of the tunnel

**Alice Mainwood** looks beyond the Pinterest board to Cambridge's unglamorous heart

A year ago, having finished first year, and making my preparations to return to Cambridge, I found myself drowning in an utterly consuming well of anxiety. In spite of its scenic spires, and world-class facilities, Cambridge doesn't always feel like my favourite place.

I've found so much joy in this city; from new friends and new freedoms, to coffee shops that are generous enough to let you sit in for over two hours with one latte. I'd be offering you a rose-tinted lens of the life of a Cambridge student if I pretended it was always a nice place to study, though. Cambridge can be cruel, and it leaves many of us feeling worse for wear.

Realising my first year had left me feeling pretty burnt out was hard to accept. I wanted Cambridge to be a real-life Pinterest board of cosy libraries and

friendly pub culture. It felt like admitting defeat when I began to acknowledge that maintaining healthy working habits, getting the most out of Cambridge beyond my degree, and achieving as highly as I wanted to, were three mutually exclusive circles in the Venn diagram of my life at Cambridge.

So, I'm at one with the 59% of Cambridge students who feel like we lack the capacity to fulfil our full potential here. I don't know how to fix

it, because it's not my job to know the answer to this total mess.

Maybe it's a reading week, maybe it's ten-week terms, maybe it's individualised faculty adjustments that tackle actual students' needs. But I do know that the Cambridge degree, in all its many forms, needs a pretty damning overhaul. I should be able to say 'too much' without being told it's my own job to fix it with a 30-minute meditation each day, or by stopping socialising during the week.

20-year-olds shouldn't feel guilty when they unshackle themselves from their desks at 5pm. We should be able to manage our workloads and also take a day off each week. We're kidding ourselves if we believe that libraries are open until 1am to accommodate 'different working schedules'; they're open until 1am be-

“  
There is light at the end of the tunnel. There's potential for us all to be more than matriculants

cause sometimes, we *need* them until 1am. Finalists should have the time to prepare for graduate life, but that's a luxury I know I'll be struggling to carve out time for.

Sounds grim, doesn't it? It probably seems like I'm taking dreading my final year pretty seriously. Don't get me wrong, some of the time I am. At the end of the day though, for most of us at least, a degree is a means to an end. Plenty of us find more valuable lessons outside of our degree than from within it. And I do like to remind myself that no employer is ever going to ask me what my supervisor thought of my opinions on 'commas and the threat of apocalypse' (circa a dreary Monday in week five of Michaelmas, year two).

There's light at the end of the tunnel. There's potential for us to all be more than matriculants, and it's that knowledge that is helping me go into my final year as a Cambridge student. Being a student is a blessing, and at times, being a Cambridge student is simultaneously a blessing and a curse.

It's okay if Cambridge isn't everything you hoped for. It's okay if you don't love everything about it here, or everything this institution represents. And if that sounds at all reassuring, or even slightly relatable, then welcome.

Welcome to Fumbles of a Finalist. We're all friends here. We're all a bit nervous about supervisions, and we all want to be out of the library by 5pm. We're all a bit shoddy at our degrees sometimes, and sometimes we want to have a go at being real adults, instead of being coddled and restricted by overly parental colleges.

Join me for monthly instalments of a column designed to make you feel better about being a little bit crap at Cambridge.

◀ RUYING YANG



# A fresher's guide to Michaelmas

Welcome to your official Freshers' Week Lifestyle guide, as **Jessica Spearman** looks to her past self, and **Alex Brian** looks to the stars

## Dear past me,

This is your future self talking. Weird, I know, but as I'm older and (apparently) wiser, I'm here to guide you. Cambridge is overwhelming, and even though it's only Freshers' Week, your imposter syndrome is already kicking in, especially since, despite picking a hill college, you can't ride a bike. You're anxious to reinvent yourself and find the friends you never quite had in school. Whether it's battling homesickness or deciding what to wear to matriculation, it all feels impossible.

This place is shrouded in mystery. Why all the gowns? Which is the correct fork to eat with? What the hell is a 'plodge'? You'll answer these questions within the first week because they're really not as big and scary as you'd expect. As a northern girl who has grown accustomed to eating on the sofa, you'll navigate the cutlery better than you think (start from the outside in). Cambridge thinks it's so busy being important that it simply does not have time to say words fully. Once you learn this trick, the vocab will be no harder than finding cognates in A Level German.

For the most part, these will be your people. You've always been 'the smart one', or the girl who

would do everyone else's homework, but now you just want to be you. Everyone else is in the same boat. Most of them do not have the illustrious spider's web of posh boy connections that come with the Cambridge student stereotype. Of course, there are always a few, but Cambridge is huge; if you want to avoid certain types of people, you can. You'll lose count of the amount people you've asked "What college are you at?", "What course are you doing?" and "Where are you from?", but don't fear: it's a rite of passage. Conversations will eventually leave Revs loos and become meaningful again.

Speaking of, let's talk clubbing. After 18 years of

studying, you're thinking that even though now's the time to 'become cool' (whatever that means), you're not about to fulfil the 'Geordie Shore girl' stereotype. Past me, not only does that scream internalised misogyny, but Cambridge nightlife is hardly on par with Nottingham or Newcastle. That's not to say it won't be fun, it just means the club is rarely the night's highlight. Instead, it's the pres with girls who offer cheap wine and digital cameras. It's the smell of van chips on the way home, as you stumble down the cobbled streets. More importantly, it's the Thursday debrief as you analyse every event that unfolded. Cambridge clubbing won't be as glamorous as you imagined, but it'll still be fun — as a silly fresh, you're entitled to that.

Outside of the club, let me give you some serious advice: call your parents. Just because you've craved independence since Year 12 doesn't mean it's wrong to miss them, and they

miss you just as much. If it gets too much, and the homesickness turns to something more dark and lonely, there are so many people and places you can turn to in Cambridge. You're paying nine grand a year, so make the most of the resources on offer.

Cambridge is synonymous with hard work, sleepless nights and a to-do list that will end as soon as Sisyphus gets to the top of the hill. Before you feel incapacitated by the number of pages you have to read, a weekly essay of 1500 words is manageable; just think how many essays you did across three A Levels. Make sure you work hard and get your reading done, but also take a break; you can't run on nothing. As anxiety-inducing as it may seem, asking for help or an extension is entirely normal and necessary when you're struggling; your supervisor was sitting on your side of the room once.

In conclusion, you're going to be fine. It's almost as if you've gotten through every other stressful thing in your life! There will be tough moments, sure, but welcome to Cambridge! You'll make friends, you'll write essay upon essay, and you'll still be wobbly on a bike. But guess what? It'll all be okay. I promise.



LAURA FORWOOD ▲

## Freshers' horoscopes

### ♈ Aries (March 21 – April 19)

You may lose some of your naturally competitive tendencies and resolve that academic rivalry. You've had the summer to reflect and, in hindsight, it seems a little ridiculous. Here's to reconciliation!

### ♉ Taurus (April 20 – May 20)

We know you love the grind, but Libra season is all about balance, harmony and being kind to yourself. Work hard, yes. Play hard, certainly. But don't forget to take time to relax, watch a movie and practice self-care this term.

### ♊ Gemini (May 21 – June 20)

Gemini freshers, watch out. Those already known for their passionate and impulsive natures must not let this intense period drive them to sign up for far more societies than they can handle at Freshers' Fair.

### ♋ Cancer (June 21 – July 22)

This Freshers' Week, you're going to end up being the parent on every night out. Being the parent requires a certain flexibility between assertiveness and sensitivity — a difficult feat that may prove easiest on October 9.

### ♌ Leo (July 23 – August 22)

Your lively and extroverted nature might help you make friends this Freshers' Week, but may not go down so well with your DoS. The world will be ripe for uncovering new enemies. Perhaps one of them will be your DoS.

### ♍ Virgo (August 23 – September 22)

You know how it is: one minute, it's Freshers' Week and you're having the time of your life, the next minute, term has started and it's time to lock in. Thankfully, you'll have no trouble adapting to the rhythms of Cambridge life.

### ♎ Libra (September 23 – October 22)

This is Libra season. This is your Freshers' Week. Own it. Your balanced nature will come into its own at this time, allowing you to find the perfect middle ground between making new friends, and spending time alone.

### ♏ Scorpio (October 23 – November 21)

Now is the perfect time to achieve your ambition of holding a committee position. An astrological influx of dreams and creativity will combine with your resourceful and stubborn nature, helping you rise to the top.

### ♐ Sagittarius (November 22 – December 21)

With the start of term comes a rush of possibilities. Could you finally get that blue? Direct that play? Well, there's only one way to find out! If you've been hesitating about trying something, now is the time to say yes.

### ♑ Capricorn (December 22 – January 19)

You're going to be an amazing college parent, I can tell. Capricorns are serious and independent. But you're going to make the most of the planetary alignments to pour that same intensity you bring to everything else into making sure your children are prepared.

### ♒ Aquarius (January 20 – February 18)

October 11 is the last time Pluto will be moving forward in Capricorn during our lifetimes — the end of an era, if you will. It's the perfect occasion to embrace your deep and imaginative personality and reflect on your time at Cambridge.

### ♓ Pisces (February 19 – March 20)

October 17 is your time to shine. Venus entering Sagittarius means people will be more open to getting to know you on an intellectual level. Don't be afraid to stay up into the early hours with those you've just met. You might just meet the one. Be wary, however, of oversharing.

## BROADWAY CYCLES

- **Large selection of good quality used cycles Quote code VARSITY10 for a 10% discount**
- **New cycles also available**
- **Cycle Hire**
- **Repairs**
- **Competitive prices and friendly service**

Come and see us at: 72 King Street, Cambridge, CB1 1LN

Tel: 01223 661435

## ADVERTISE WITH US.

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

**VARSITY**

tel: 01223 33 75 75  
email: business@varsity.co.uk  
web: varsitypublications.co.uk

# Flop of the pops?

**Georgia Emanuel and Oliver Cooney** debate whether the industry has got a new buzz or if it's finally lost its hit

**A**n unskippable album. This is the bold claim I make of Sabrina Carpenter's latest release, *Short n' Sweet*. And its release only rubber-stamps her domination of the last six months. Opening for Taylor Swift propelled her into the global sphere; her release of hits 'Espresso' and 'Please Please Please' (Morrissey, eat your heart out), along with her recent VMA win for Song of the Year (for 'Espresso', of course), cemented this. But she hasn't been saving pop on her own.

Pop has exploded this year: Olivia Rodrigo's *GUTS*, Taylor Swift's *The Tortured Poet's Department*, Charli XCX's *BRAT*, and Chappell Roan's *The Rise and Fall of a Midwest Princess* have all garnered mainstream attention. Because pop is, well, 'pop'-ular music. It's the default. And because of this, over the last several years, it's become dangerously bland. The 2010s are lauded as a bygone era of hit after hit, the recession-era anthems of our childhood. But Carpenter's recent rise to new levels of stardom signals the need for a re-examination of pop today. Has it, at last, transcended its predetermined fate as mere radio fodder destined to assault the ears of retail workers?

The last several years have been dominated by songwriters, not pop stars; Taylor Swift's storytelling style has, by and large, reigned supreme. As such, Carpenter's release has heralded a welcome return to lighter, sillier music. Her breakthrough can be traced back to the virality of her 'Nonsense outros': nonsensical three-line jokes, usually puns, typically layered with a healthy dose of innuendo. I would argue that this defines her (carefully cultivated, no doubt) approach to music. And the public laps it up — so what does that say about us? In a world facing increasing economic divides, political unrest, and general uncertainty, we want music to be an escape. We need catchy earworms and singalong lyrics; we need that "me espresso". We don't want pop to take itself too seriously. See here how Charli XCX's *BRAT* revolves around not being too serious and, more importantly, not taking oneself (the artist) too seriously. And nobody can deny the appeal of the neon green.

Fans are becoming more discerning, more policing. This shift accompanies a growing desire from artists to remain just that: artists, adored for their work and nothing else. Sabrina Carpenter's agents have instructed journalists not to ask questions about her personal life, following Chappell Roan's infamous statement placing her personal privacy above her music career after family members were harassed at their workplaces by 'devot-

ed fans'. Many influencers invited to the final UK leg of Swift's coveted Eras Tour, who admitted they were not lifelong fans, were lambasted online. However, as Swift herself typically remains silent on such matters, this has in turn earned her much criticism for existing within the bubble of her celebrity persona. Yet some fans are changing for the better. A growing atmosphere of cynicism is preventing many from latching onto celebrities in the parasocial manner that has become the norm. True popstars are starting to return: people who can do wrong, who can mess up. We no longer want the sanitised perfection of Taylor Swift; instead, we crave Sabrina Carpenter's self-dubbed 'ovulation album', or the emotionally raw lyrics of Charli XCX's 'I think about it all the time'.

“  
*The last few years have been dominated by songwriters, not pop stars*

But how does this new attitude to pop reflect in performance? Do the final few straggling dates of the Eras Tour symbolise the end of such large-scale productions? Or are we in the midst of a re-calibration, with performances returning to the individual performer — a movement away from the overwhelming euphoria of attending Taylor Swift in concert?

We seem to be constantly reaching new heights of commercial success. Records are constantly smashed, and deluxe and remixed versions of every album are popping up tenfold. Taylor Swift has now released 34 variations (digital and physical) of *The Tortured Poet's Department*, yet the delightful irreverence on display from pop's new generation is promising. Will this be subsumed by the capitalist machine that churns through the genre's music?

The answer is no — hopefully not, at least for now. For now, pop appears to be turning over a new leaf, spelling out a tentative new beginning for itself.

GEORGIA EMANUEL



**I**f I were asked to define pop music, the first place I'd look would be the 2010s. Lady Gaga topped the charts with *Born This Way*, Ed Sheeran's 'Shape of You' played on the radio every school ride without fail, and by the middle of the decade, I finally figured out that Ariana Grande didn't just look like the girl from *Victorious*, but actually *was* her. It was the heyday of pop culture, and our formative years as listeners.

Yet as I scroll through Spotify's numerous 'popular music' playlists, I recognise almost nobody. I also recognise none of the sounds. As a certified Music Journalist (thank you, *Varsity*), I consider myself to have my finger on the pulse of current music trends. But hitting shuffle on the current charts gives me whiplash, as I bounce between Gracie Abrams' soft guitar and the eerie electronics of Artemas' 'i like the way you kiss me'.

'Pop music' is often taken to simply mean what is popular, but popularity comes in waves, and with that comes sweeping trends in what is considered 'pop'. Often, there is more cohesion in the genre than diversity. Since the turn of the century, pop charts have been filled with electronic synths at danceable tempos accompanying strong female vocals. While I hated his tone, my dad had a point when he said Demi Lovato's 'Cool for the Summer' is Ariana Grande's 'Into You' from an alternate uni-

“  
*Where Katy had simple, relatable lyrics, Chappell Roan tells of her unique experience as a queer woman in the American midwest*

verse. The same can't be said for the country twang of Shaboozey's 'A Bar Song' or the 80's synth in 'Good Luck Babe', which both appear in the top five.

Pop used to be the Goldilocks of music: the hits weren't slow, but they weren't rave-paced; the lyrics weren't boring, but they weren't Shakespearean. Production was steady, adding enough elements at the chorus to keep it interesting, but not so many that it became distracting. Everything was just right.

A prime example of this is Katy Perry. From 'Teenage Dream' to 'Last Friday Night', Katy has always had a keen ear for memorable choruses, easy-to-digest production, and universal themes. Her sound didn't revolutionise

music, but it got the job done. Until it didn't. Her recent single, 'Woman's World', rose to notoriety not as a hit, but a meme-worthy flop. The song had everything her previous hits had: an inoffensive beat, a catchy melody, and an accessible, generic theme ("go women!"). Yet the Internet hated it. This same year, she won the VMA for most iconic performance for 2013's 'Roar', a generic-sounding celebration of self-confidence. The songs couldn't be more similar (shout-singing chorus, impersonal lyricism) but their reception was wildly different.

The difference lies in the context. Tastes are shifting. The age of simple production and generic lyricism is over. Where Katy had bright, minimalist synths, Charli XCX's *BRAT* has a heavy, textured sound. Where Katy had simple, relatable lyrics, Chappell Roan tells vivid stories of her unique experience as a queer woman in the American Midwest.

Katy's brand of pop

hasn't simply become corny and overdone, it's become unfit for

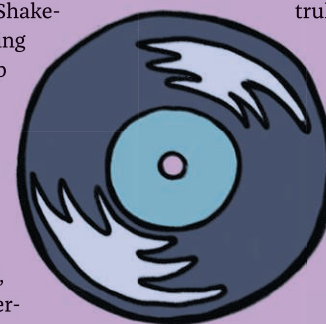
purpose. In pop music's heyday, radio was the aim of the game. Songs were easy to listen to because we listened on the morning commute. But as streaming continues to boom, we listen to whatever we want, whenever. It doesn't matter that The Last Dinner Party's 'Caesar on a TV Screen' darts wildly between distinct sounding sections tied together by impenetrable poetry, because you can listen to it when you're awake enough to appreciate that. If you hate it, skip the track. Artists no longer need easy listening or universal appeal. In fact, they benefit from avoiding it.

Speaking of corny and overdone, let's talk streaming algorithms! These create micro-factions of listeners, divided by their unique tastes. The more unique a sound is, the more likely it is to reach the right audience, so artists need to do their own thing.

The fact of the matter is 'Woman's World' cast its net too wide, but that's how Katy's generation of pop musicians were taught to fish. Can she truly be blamed for this? The game

has since changed, and pop music as we once knew it is being washed downstream. We may have been able to group 2010s pop into a single genre, but there is little that connects 'Hot To Go' and '365'. Perhaps pop music in the 2020s really is just music that is popular.

OLIVER COONEY



# Sax and the city: on a summer spent busking in Cambridge

JACK MARLEY

**B**usking is something I've always thought about doing but never quite found the courage to go through with. That was until this summer, when I found myself back in Cambridge for a few weeks. The conditions were perfect: relaxed council regulations, peak tourist season, college accommodation near the city centre, and best of all, almost no one around who would recognise me. If not now, then when? And so, with some trepidation, I made my little sign, emptied my instrument case, applied some sun cream, and set off.

I quickly realised the worst part of the experience wasn't the music itself, but finding a spot and setting up. Peak times mean lots of tourists carrying loose change, but also lots of other buskers. Lugging my saxophone in circles around a sweltering central Cambridge, with one pop backing track blending into another, made me want to quit before I'd even started. However, I stumbled upon a hidden gem of a pitch between Trinity and John's, on the pavement opposite the Craft Market — busy, spacious, and always available. Even with a spot secured, setting up can

feel awkward, as there's nothing quite like getting on your knees in public and pulling out a rickety music stand while people stream past, looking confused.

After all that stress and doubt, you're finally ready to play. One thing that makes busking unique is that the people you're playing for didn't sign up to listen. My English propriety was screaming at me for imposing my music on the general public. But once I started, I found that people either appreciated the music or totally ignored it — neither of which made me feel like too much of a nuisance. I'd designed my act to work as either a performance or as background ambience. Thankfully, some people did stop to listen. A Cambridge busker's best friends are tourists, boomers, and families with young children. It was heartwarming to see starry-eyed kids nervously stepping forward to toss in the pound their parents had given them. My favourite interactions, however, were with those who stopped for a chat — even if just to justify taking a quick breather. I could probably estimate the percentage of saxophonists in the general public, given that every single one felt the need to stop and tell me. During one particularly hot and unfruitful session,

someone even bought me a lemonade, which was really sweet. My most memorable encounter was with a French woman who told me, "It is such an honour to meet a student of the Cambridge University." Either way, I always appreciated people taking the time to stop, listen, and have a word.

Now for the real question: is the money worth it? When I told friends and family I was planning to busk, the general sentiment — after "wow, you're brave, I couldn't do that". But, when I found a good pitch on a busy weekend afternoon, I was earning roughly £25 an hour (though sadly, this wasn't scalable beyond two hours a day, when the muscles in my mouth gave up). Weekdays were a different story. The low point was a seemingly busy Friday when I gave up after an hour, just £6 richer.

Profitable or not, I'm glad I did it. It was tiring and exposed work, but it was gratifying to share the fruits of endless private practice with people. I would definitely recommend anyone considering busking to just go for it. The stakes are pretty low once you get past insecurities, and with the right act in the right place, you might even fund a few nights out.



## J. S. Wilson & Son Bookbinders Ltd Cambridge Established 1830



Thesis Binding • Conservation  
Leather Binding • Journal Binding

Tel (01223) 212420

[www.jswilsonandson.co.uk](http://www.jswilsonandson.co.uk)

## THE MAYS



We are currently seeking to appoint a student Editor-in-Chief for The Mays.

Now in its 33rd year, The Mays is a book of the best of new student poetry, short stories, creative photography and art from the Universities of Cambridge and Oxford.

The Mays is credited with launching Zadie Smith's career. The publication has featured a wide range of high-profile guest editors over the years, including Kate Bush, Stephen Fry, Arlo Parks, Rupi Kaur, Nick Cave, Patti Smith, Jarvis Cocker, Ted Hughes and Oscar Murillo.

Joint applications will be considered. To apply, please send your CV(s) via email to [business@varsity.co.uk](mailto:business@varsity.co.uk) together with a covering letter of no more than 600 words detailing your vision for the book. Applicants with excellent leadership skills and a high level of expertise with Adobe InDesign are encouraged to apply.

The application deadline is 6pm, Friday 1st November 2024  
[www.themaysanthology.co.uk](http://www.themaysanthology.co.uk)

(Student submissions for art, poetry, short stories etc will open during Lent 2025)

**Arts**

# Communion in a coffee shop

**Amie Brian** questions the slow secularisation of religious spaces in Cambridge, wondering whether this shift might offer something sacred

**N**estled into the side of Trinity Street sits the distinguished form of Michaelhouse Café, a towering mass of ancient stone. The first written record of St. Michael's Church, as it was formerly known, dates from 1217, although historians suspect the building is even older. Across its history, the Church served as Chapel to three colleges: Michaelhouse College, Gonville, and then Trinity.

Its steeple, however, is not an idiosyncratic sight in Cambridge — in the city centre, you're never more than 500 metres from a church, and there are 39 Christian churches in Cambridge. It is, perhaps, emblematic of how secular and religious thinking have always co-existed and interacted in Cambridge.

In fact, the city may have more churches than it knows what to do with, and this is indicative of a larger trend. There are 16,000 churches in England, and many of them run services with empty pews. In contrast, Michaelhouse Café stands out for the variety of roles it serves its local community. In it, the secular and religious collide — behind glass doors, it houses an active chapel, occasionally a site for book sales. But it is also a community centre, an art gallery, a rentable venue for events, and, of course, a café.

I am very drawn to this repurposed church, and the question of what its secularisation suggests in regards to how we engage with church buildings in modern England. Renovated churches are popping up all over Cambridge. Pembroke College's new auditorium is the converted Emmanuel United Reform Church, beautifully converted into a music rehearsal space and conference hall. I attended a poetry reading in the auditorium earlier this year, and sat amazed as Sean Hewitt's lyrical voice reverberated throughout the room in a hauntingly sacred manner. The space, undoubtedly, affects the event — the vaulted ceilings echo the striking keys of pianos at musical events, while the stone closes, harsh and cold, around heated debates.

I was surprised to discover that Michaelhouse Café rents out several of its spaces for

events, including its chapel and 'Montefiore Room', bringing to mind questions about the nature of this place. If you rent out the chapel for £100 an hour, how does this setting affect your event? Can a sacred space truly become secular? It seems that they can, and they are. In general, these conversions re-

“

*The history of churches is speckled with the evidence of community at its heart*

fect the increasingly secularised way in which people view churches. For my non-religious friends, churches have become historical sites, tourist sites, and places to experience music, as much as somewhere to connect with a god.

Although, this doesn't answer the question of how the secularisation of church spaces serves our community. What is the driving need fueling these conversions across Cambridge?

I believe that it is a vital one: the lack of third-party, non-commercial community spaces. In Cambridge, this issue is particularly relevant. Unlike at other universities, our SU doesn't function as a neutral space to relax in, and most colleges are barred for entry without a college-specific Cambridge fee-

is not a sociable community space. We are divided between colleges, divided between courses, divided from non-student Cambridge citizens, and as a community there are few places where we can gather together. Where is our third-party community centre? Is it the library in the Lion Yard which most Cambridge students haven't heard of, or Jesus Green and Christ's Pieces, those open outdoor spaces where everyone is free to gather, to see the fireworks on Bonfire Night, or lie in the sun? Where do people of all backgrounds come together for free, to talk to sit, to work, to celebrate? In the cold, or the wet, community scatters back to its rooms and cafés — shut off, and charged for entry.

In the face of this, I ask: does the secularisation of church buildings represent the natural progression for structures that were always intended to be English community centres, but now exist within societies which are no longer predominantly Christian? If so, what does this secularisation achieve?

In the 19th century, the Christian Church built parish halls and community centres in order to discourage people from spending their leisure time at public houses. Sacrilegious events — trading, drinking, bargaining, were held in these 'church

house(s)' while other, less controversial secular events, such as education, will-readings, festivals, dances, and plays, were hosted inside the church building itself. Furthermore, the BBC reports that, in the Middle Ages, over 1,200 religious sites in England and Wales designated themselves as 'hospitals' for the sick and injured.

The history of churches is speckled with the evidence of community at its heart. It is a legacy acknowledged in the government's 2017 'Taylor Review', in which they argued for the maintenance of churches on the basis of their position

as "places of celebration, culture, commemoration and community gatherings, places of sanctuary and worship, and a resource for people of all faiths and none." The government thus asserts the centrality of churches as a place for community beyond their religious purpose.

The secularisation of St Michael's into Michaelhouse Café is not in conflict with its other religious endeavours. Churches have always been gathering spaces, and now, in a multifaith society, the secularisation of one or two of them in a town with dozens might go a long way to rekindle that community gathering space. This purpose is now fulfilled by Michaelhouse Café, who manage to balance their religious dedication to their Christian community with a space to house art, events, and tea. Although, in an ideal world, their space would be free to sit in, they do declare on their website that they provide concessions on renting rooms for community events — a small ideological victory.

Churches do not have a duty to become third-party, secular spaces, nor does one have to feel comfortable or neutral about a church being made into one. But sitting in Michaelhouse Café, or Pembroke's new auditorium — places of education and meeting points for the elderly — I can't help reflecting that in some small, perhaps insignificant way, these ancient stone buildings have found their way home.

These ancient stone buildings have found their way home.

“

*Churches have become historical sites, tourist sites, and places to experience music, as much as somewhere to connect with a god*





# Making a mark: grafitti and immortalising our presence

**T** HEATHER LEIGH

he train rattles ominously as we travel deeper into the cave. It's cold. It's dark. A baby begins to cry. I'm devising a last-minute escape-plan when we jolt to a halt, and lamps illuminate walls covered with prehistoric cave art. Mammoths amble across the rocks while bison, horses, and woolly rhinoceroses roam 'the Great Ceiling'. With my neck craned upwards and my mouth hanging open in a deeply unflattering state of awe, I'm struck by how universal our desire to create art is. 16,000 years ago, our ancestors living in 'the Age of the Reindeer' (the cool name for the Magdalenian Era) entered the Rouffignac Cave in France to make their mark. They carved into the rock face with flint, bone and wood, they sketched using manganese dioxide as black pigment. They even made imprints by running their fingers through soft, chemically-altered layers of rock, creating the kind of abstract art you'd expect to find — and pretend to understand — in the Tate Modern today.

As I admire the prehistoric display, I'm startled by a bison with huge, black letters scrawled on top of it: "BOUTIER 1906". Such graffiti — made by lines of soot from a candle flame — covers a substantial area of the cave, some of it dating back to the 16th century. The rock here is a mess

of marks made by different people from different times. While it's a shame that parts of the prehistoric art have been disfigured, there's something strangely beautiful about the way we're united by the desire to make our mark — a twist on Descartes' "I think, therefore I am": "I mark, therefore I am". Outside, I find some chalk and

“  
*Cambridge's pubs and clubs are covered with scribbles and scrawlings*

stoop to write my name on the pavement. We all want to leave a tangible trace of our existence, to prove that we were here, that we mattered. Creation becomes legacy.

Art is an outward manifestation of an individual's inner world and the society in which that individual operates; it's clichéd but true. Our values inform our art, and so art doesn't just reflect values, it becomes a physical embodiment of them. In this way, tracing the changes in humanity's mark-making habits offers tangible insights into our ancient ancestors' worldviews. Of the 250 animals displayed inside the Rouffignac Cave, only five are hu-

man. This art bears testament to a biocentric worldview which has been lost in the modern age. Our Magdalenian ancestors understood their place within the wider ecosystem, and were able to view life with a perspective which wasn't polluted with anthropocentrism. Centuries later, the trend of graffitiing one's own name stands in stark contrast, marking a shift away from community and towards individualism. And as I look at a rock where animal forms are eradicated by graffitiing human names, I am reminded that, just as our obsession with the self and our prioritisation of our own species is reflected on the cave wall, it's also reflected in our real-life relationships with the natural world.

I left the cave feeling sombre, but upon entering the female bathroom outside, I'm told "you're so damn beautiful girl!" by curvy lettering on the cubicle door. It's not as mammoth as the wall-art I've just seen, but it's a form of mark-making in its own right. In the male bathroom, the boys have taken a different approach, opting for some classic iconography: the timeless cock and balls. Once again, the marks we choose to make reflect certain preoccupations.

Closer to home, Cambridge has a wealth of graffiti to explore. Robert Athol, ex-archivist for Jesus College, conducted a survey from 2016-2018, during which he found 1,076 examples of graffiti dating from the 16th to the 20th century. These included etched names, ritual protection marks, coats of arms, and depictions of various figures. "I enjoyed finding the names of individuals and then matching

those names with the archives to discover who they were", says Robert. Students are still marking their territory today — rest assured that my beloved first-year accommodation has my name written under the desk (if you're a porter reading this, it doesn't).

Cambridge's pubs and clubs are equally covered with scribbles and scrawlings, and taking an intellectual interest in the city's graffiti is the perfect excuse to spend yet another evening in The Eagle. Or you might prefer The Prince Regent, where you can immortalise your Cambridge romance by scratching your partner's initials into the toilet wall alongside the city's other lovebirds. And let us not forget the "empathy has its limit's too sometime's" graffiti that decorated the Hills Road bus stop last Lent, which my drunken post-Revs self found unimaginably profound. (It seems the council's empathy also reached its limit, as this graffiti has since been painted over.)

Pay attention to what we create: the art we choose to produce and consume reveals a lot about ourselves and our society. Robert agrees: "Graffiti can tell us about [...] individuals [and] how they interacted with the built environment around them, but also provide an insight into common superstitious belief, as well as details of personal lives and relationships, evidence of which might not survive anywhere else nor appear in the written record".



▲ LAURA FORWOOD

## Postscripts: Clearing Out

EVE CONNOR

When we redid the plastering in our house everything was bare, there was unforeseen space, nothing on the walls, no souvenirs from our lives. I had a fear of touching anything. The corridor seemed to stretch me; there was so much whiteness but the house felt darker. Stacked portraits kissed the backs of each others' heads at our feet. We had nothing to look at but ourselves.

And when it was done and we put it all back in the same places, it was like they weren't in the same places, and once I caught Dad glassy eyed, vacant, as if he was looking around for something he knew wasn't there: boxes full of him that I've tried to tear into with scissors, but stay shut.

Clearing Out

Joe Wright

**According to the OED, the word 'souvenir' relates to the Latin verb 'sub-venire', meaning to rescue from someone or something'. 'Clearing Out' appears to invest in this etymology — what do we need saving from?**

This poem is, in some ways, about how we know the people we love. Families tend to build up things like shared codes and artefacts, and I wanted to explore what might happen when we take away all that baggage. Is that even possible? Would we know them better, or feel cut off from them? I suppose what we might need 'saving' from is the sheer size of that question.

**Twice in the first stanza, the house and its contents animate as though in response to the plastering: 'the corridor seemed to stretch me' and 'stacked portraits kissed the**

**backs of each others' heads at our feet'. Something altogether more rebellious is going on. Are you interested in the relationship between spaces and their occupant?**

When writing the poem, I had in the back of my mind the Renaissance trope of the poem-as-house, which I feel is a rather tired conceit these days. The word 'stanza' comes from the Italian for 'room'. We often think about 'filling up' a poem's form with words. I wanted to play around with the house/poem comparison — the furniture in this poem is familiar to the speaker, but cannot be controlled by him. In that way, I wanted the poem to have an unsteady relationship to the space around it (a lot of line endings leave the thought incomplete, wandering into the space), like the white corridor in the poem. I find myself thinking about spaces a lot in my writing — about how they change us and shape us.

**Can you talk about formatting the poem?**

This is linked to the last question — I wanted the poem to look and feel tightly contained and sparse, much like the emptied house. Also, like quite a few

of my poems, it's not too far off from the dimensions of a sonnet. That wasn't planned, but it fits with how the poem subconsciously plays on those tropes from Metaphysical poetry. It's not a sonnet, but works itself out in a similar way. I suppose you could also think of the two stanzas as 'boxes', if you squinted a bit.

**Although final lines are tough customers, 'Clearing Out' manages a last, raw gasp I guess most poets would yank your arm off for. How do you hold your nerve approaching the end of a poem?**

That's very kind! Often the last line comes to me first, and then the game is to try and find a way to get there. I think the key with last lines for me is listening, trying to find the point where the rhythm clunks into place. In this poem, however, I wanted to try and throw the rhythm off a little, which hopefully gives the sense of attempting to open something, before the last three words close it off again. You could almost say they are the sellotape on the box.

**Matriculate in style**

**A VARSITY STYLE GUIDE**

**Alice Mainwood** and **Grace Cobb** offer their pearls of wisdom, helping you tackle the most trying of freshers-fashion conundrums



**W**elcome, freshers, to Cambridge. Freshers' Week is an inevitably stressful time of making new friends, trying to describe the geography of your hometown, and navigating a new city overrun by cyclists on every corner. To top it all off, you have to endure matriculation: a day designed to test your inherent ability to master the Cambridge wardrobe. It's a nightmare waiting to happen for fearful freshers.

Fear not, first-years, *Varsity* is here to save your panic-stricken soul with a style guide to make sure you master your matriculation fit.

**Ditch the heels**

It's tempting. For me, matriculation was the first real opportunity to get out the fancy heels, and I took it. Matriculation is no short event, though, and I regretted my shoe choice within 20 minutes. Your shoes won't even be in the photos, so docs, or even an old pair of school shoes that still fit, are perfectly acceptable options at most colleges.

If you are brave enough to go ahead with the heels, then make sure you choose a chunky option. Stilettos leave you at risk of sinking into soggy grass, which isn't a classy look on anyone.

**Don't be enticed by the business-wear**

For all the glamour and tradition it represents, matriculation can end up being slightly boring. Use your fashion sense to make the day more fun; you can dodge anything that resembles business wear in favour of something frillier, more frivolous, and just a bit more fun.

If you're going for a suit then choose something that doesn't resemble funeral wear, and instead opt for a patterned or brightly coloured choice. Alternatively, if you're going for a dress or shirt and skirt, then choose something with a unique shape or trim that can express a bit of personality even from beneath the all-consuming gown.

Enhance any all-black outfit with a generous dose of accessories, be it jewellery, hair adornments, or even the odd idiosyncratic sock. Find the line between personal and tacky; now isn't the time for novelty sunglasses or Cambridge merchandise.

**Timeless > trendy**

When dressing on matriculation morning, it's important to remember that what you chuck on from your wardrobe will probably be hanging on your parents' wall for the next 20 years. It's best to avoid indulging in any crazy current trends and opt for something classy — something you'd be happy to show your kids in the distant future as you reminisce about your student days.

**Don't get caught out by crinkles!**

When you've just lugged all your suitcases of clothes up several flights of stairs, the last thing you want to do is hang up every single item. But you'll be regretting that decision when you've got lines going every which way across your formalwear and no time to iron out those creases (unintentional stripes are so not in).

Plan ahead by keeping your outfit in a suit jacket to ward off any moths and dust, and take out shirts from the packet a few days beforehand to avoid any awkward grooves. For silky dresses, it's time to get steamy! Rather than risking burning a hole in your favourite slip, opt to steam delicate fabrics over reaching for the iron. Finally, keep your new gown in mint condition by spot-fixing any patches of fluff or dirt with a sticky roller or a piece of tape! **It won't be warm!**

It gets pretty breezy in October, so if you don't want to be framing a picture of you blue and shivery then layer up over a dress with a sneaky cardigan under your gown! If you're looking to stay toasty in the inevitably long wait to be placed in height order, opt for a timeless V-neck knit.



# A beginner's guide to the Cambridge film scene

**C**AMENIE GROVES  
Cambridge is renowned for its zines, poets and especially its theatre, but the film scene has often gone overlooked. However, in recent years a steadily growing filmmaking and film-loving culture has emerged, bringing with it not only some fantastic societies and opportunities to learn new skills, but also invaluable experiences that have launched many careers. Just in the last year, I've had the privilege of directing and acting in a few short films, working behind the scenes at Watersprite Film Festival and being part of the CUFA committee, and even learning how to sound design for a mockumentary. Film in Cambridge is only getting bigger, so here's my guide on where to begin.

## Where to find opportunities:

Year by year, the opportunities to get involved in Cambridge film have only increased, and now you can pretty much guarantee you'll spot a few ads per term on Camdram, requesting actors, camera operators, sound designers- you name it! The fantastic thing about Cambridge is that beginners are encouraged to have a go at something they've never done before, so don't let a lack of experience stop you from applying. Through Camdram ads and chatting to those involved in projects, I've learnt invaluable skills in cinematography, lighting, sound, and producing, all of which I had no prior experience in. You'll meet some incredible people working on film projects,

and you never know, you may even end up making something together in the future...

Also make sure you join the Cambridge Theatre, Cambridge Film and Cambridge Filmmakers groups on Facebook. Opportunities will often get posted here before they are listed on Camdram, and these groups are a useful way of keeping up to date with what's happening in the film scene each term.

## Societies:

There are quite a few film societies around, each with a slightly different focus. Look out for these at the freshers' fair:

**CUFA:** CUFA hosts a range of opportunities from filmmaker social events to a regular film club, workshops with industry professionals and a Fresh2Film program, which encourages freshers and those new to the scene to make their first short film. Sign up to their mailing list: you can always cancel an email subscription later on!

**Watersprite:** Watersprite Film Festival is an incredible chance to get real industry experience. It is not only the world's largest student film festival, but it's also entirely run by students! I had the pleasure of being their Head of Communications in my second year; a valuable experience that has opened so many doors as I plan to enter the industry after my degree. You can join a range of departments, from events management to marketing and communications, and the festival itself is a fantastic weekend with some high profile guests making an appearance. (Last year David Yates at-

tended the awards ceremony!)

**The Shadwell Society:** Shadwell, though not strictly a film society, are one of the greatest supporters of film in Cambridge. They host filmmaking talks and networking events, and provide funding for the majority of short films being made by students. They're worth following on Instagram, to see when applications open!

**Film@Jesus:** Film@Jesus functions as more of a regular film club, where each term a series of films will be screened at Jesus College following a particular theme. They also run lots of competitions throughout the year for both filmmakers and screenwriters, and the Master of

Jesus College will occasionally host impressive industry speakers in the Master's Lodge to a select number of ticketed students. Keep your eyes peeled for these spots, as they go quickly!

For real film enthusiasts, it's also worth checking out the Cambridge Film Festival; this event dates back to 1977, and boasts an impressive roster of speakers and events each year. Here you can also catch screenings of films yet to come out - last year my friends and I were able to see Yorgos Lanthimos' *Poor Things* months before its worldwide release, so keep an eye on the CFF website in case a movie you've been anticipating turns up on their list of exclusive screenings!

## Competitions:

There are a few competitions scattered around too, so if you're a budding screenwriter, director or cinematographer, check out Film@Jesus on Instagram and Facebook, where regular screenplay and

short film competitions are announced. Downing Dramatic Society runs 'Downing Shorts', to which you can submit your short films, and if you've already made a film, why not submit it to Watersprite next August?

## Cinemas:

If you consider yourself a cinephile, Cambridge has quite a few good options for you around the city too. The Arts Picturehouse is a fantastic place to catch up on the classics or enjoy new films in a smaller, more intimate cinema (and it has a fantastic café), or you can head down to the Grafton centre's VUE for all recently released blockbusters. Don't forget to check

out St John's Picturehouse too, which is entirely student run and holds weekly screenings during term time, showing everything from mainstream to indie and documentary releases.



DAISY COX

## 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](http://www.varsity.co.uk/shop)

### 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. 2011



### Find us

5a Pembroke Street  
Cambridge CB2 3QY

### Follow us

[f @luisharbershop1](https://www.facebook.com/luisharbershop1)  
[i luisharbershop2001](https://www.instagram.com/luisharbershop2001)

### Contact us

Tel: 01223 566663

Online: [luisharbershop.co.uk](http://luisharbershop.co.uk)

## Theatre

# Newcomers highly encouraged?

**Lily Butler** looks ahead to a new year of Camdram, hoping it brings fresh faces and improved kinds of theatre

**M**ichaelmas 2024 is upon us — so for those such as myself with an unhealthy attachment to Camdram, this means there's a new theatre season in which to get invested. It also means that there are indications of how this new year will pan out. The matriculation of hundreds of new freshers, but also the developed ideas of second and third years, means that we can expect the Cambridge theatre lineup to be very different to the previous year. As someone who's got many fingers in the ADC pie, I've noticed that theatre lovers and detractors alike have one word to describe the Cambridge scene — cultish. While primarily being an affectionate joke, it isn't entirely untrue.

“  
Theatre lovers and detractors alike have one word to describe the Cambridge scene — cultish

I think a lot of us are getting somewhat sick of ourselves and our entrenched sense of being a clique. For this reason, it seems that the direction for Cambridge theatre this coming year is outwards.

I fell into the Cambridge scene seemingly out of nowhere — I can't even remember how I found the person to email for my first producer gig, so I never know how to tell people how they could get involved. That's why it's positive that the CUADC are moving beyond some flyers advertising a tour of the ADC and are instead actually talking to freshers in their colleges — where they'll be based for the first few weeks. Advertising theatre as a society that is just as accessible as any other is more encouraging — and also ensures that older years who feel that they've missed the boat know that there is space for them on the stage. Productions such as *Our Town Needs a Nando's* (ADC Theatre, Week 3) specifically ensuring that their

cast and production teams are made up of those with little to no experience in theatre is a breath of fresh air. Based on Michaelmas' lineup alone, it seems that productions are more focused on finding the best people available, not the most familiar — so it'd be good to see this extend to Lent and Easter term too. The Fletcher Players' biannual *Smörgåsbord* (Corpus Playroom, Week 1) being extended to two nights rather than the standard one suggests an investment in student writing and new talent that goes beyond a token.

On the topic of Cambridge stages, it also seems that production teams are moving away from pedestalising the ADC Theatre and the Corpus Playroom and are instead investing more into collegiate theatre groups, which is really exciting. Societies like the Downing Dramatic Society are offering many slots in their own theatres, and the opening up of different venues makes Cambridge seem more like the bustling arts hub it was sold to me as. Questions about staging and what venues work for what shows become much more considered when there are more options. While perhaps these collegiate societies struggled to gain the same traction as the CUADC, for example, it does seem that committees are really trying to change this. The Pembroke Players promising rebrands and BATS committing to a night of new, wacky writing signals that theatre-lovers are aiming to provide diversity of experience and opportunity. I can confirm as an anxious

“  
Shows are committed to more distinct, purposeful ideas that don't exist solely for an aesthetic

writer tentatively trying to see what ideas stick that having these wider opportunities that don't feel overshadowed by their own reputations are definitely more encouraging than showing up in Cambridge and immediately aiming for an ADC Mainshow slot.

It also seems that many production teams are aiming to have more distinct visions that test the boundaries of what a low-budget student show can be. Last year, we saw that shows that had bold production choices and powerful

scripts like *The Normal Heart* drew in masses of viewers.

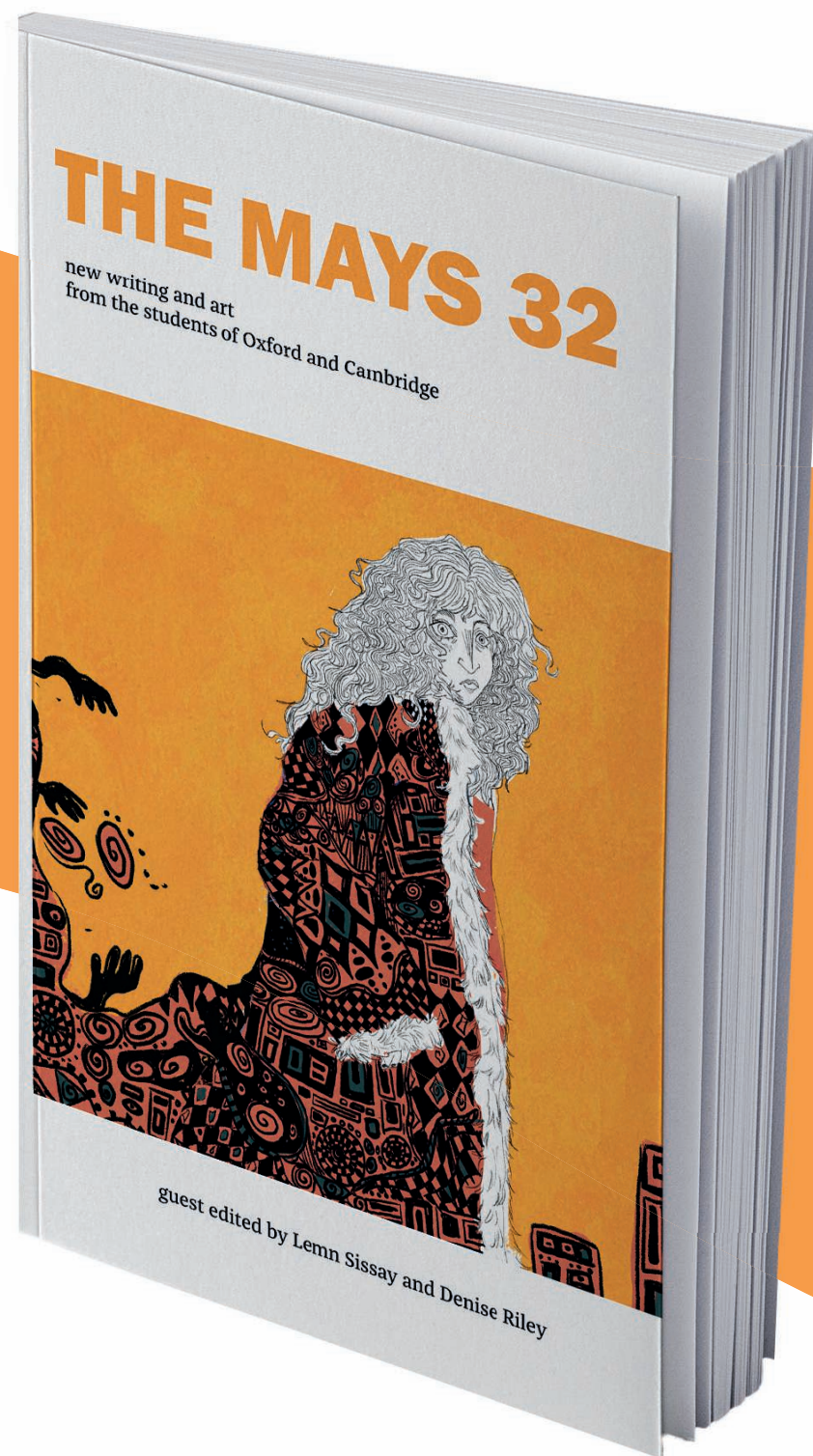
If directors take a step back to really consider what to pitch, there should hopefully be more polished shows that feel that they are doing more than just occupy a slot. The Marlowe Society opening up pitches beyond just Shakespeare for their BME Lent Term performance for the first time is an indicator of this desire to carefully consider what audiences actually want to see and what people want to be a part of, and therefore creates a genuinely heartfelt product. Even when working with pre-existing texts, it seems that shows are especially committed to more distinct, purposeful ideas that don't exist solely for an aesthetic. As *You Like It* (Corpus Playroom, Week 5) choosing to use puppets is an example of a unique USP that feels considered, rather than trying to be different for the sake of it.

An overview of this term as an early signifier for the rest of the year suggests that we don't want Cambridge theatre to feel cliquey anymore. From talking to friends who never performed in their first year but were encouraged to audition, I know the issue isn't persuading people that they can act, sing, write or stage manage (Cambridge students do tend to be just a little bit attention-seeking). Instead, this year in Cambridge theatre should be about ensuring that newcomers are, in fact, encouraged.



# THE MAYS 32

the best new writing and art  
from the students of Oxford and Cambridge



**ORDER NOW**

[www.varsity.co.uk/shop](http://www.varsity.co.uk/shop)

## Theatre

# Theatre through a laptop screen

**Elsie Hayward** bagged a show for this term — at the start of the long vacation

I found out that I'd been cast in *Our Town Needs a Nando's* while sitting on a platform at Twyford station. I was absentmindedly waiting for the first of several trains home after visiting a friend in Henley. As always seems to be the case with these things, it was when my audition outcome was very far from my mind that it finally came through. The two friends I was waiting with (before we were forced to part onto trains to different parts of the country) will remember hearing my little squeal as I opened the email.

Honestly, I think the main thing I felt in that moment was relief. I'm sure I'm not the only one who feels the pressure at the end of a term to have a show lined up for the next one. I must confess, I'm something of a serial auditionee (although, naturally, if I audition for your show it doesn't mean that it isn't also very special and dear to my heart — and you should definitely cast me). I think the logic is sound — if I go for everything that seems up my street, the odds of me securing something satisfying are greatly increased. However, by this point, I'd had quite a string of rejections, and it was beginning to dig through even my rhinolike thick skin. I remember a phone call with my dear friend, fellow Camdram warrior, and now co-editor, Milly, where

we were both bemoaning our hard luck in trying to bag an ADC Main, and commiserating over the cumulative effect of these knockbacks (don't worry, she is also very much in a show now, and the world is at rights). We both felt that our attempts to break into the heart of the Camdram world were being thwarted. So, I felt like I had finally manifested this acceptance — and, to be frank, like I deserved it after all of that heartache.

*Nando's* was, genuinely, one of the shows of which I most wanted to be a part. It's about a group of teenage girls growing up in a small backwater town where there isn't even a Nando's, which sounded quite familiar to me. However, there are two challenges that I've never encountered before — firstly, I was being cast as a swing and a more minor role. I was perfectly happy with this, as the core cast is just the five girls and I knew how many auditions there had been, but I have never been a swing before. In fact, this role is very unfa-



▲ JESSICA LEER

miliar to Camdram across the board. I suppose because we are all (famously) so busy with our degrees, people aren't generally roped in just to cover other people's roles. But in combination with my own part, it seemed an exciting prospect.

As for the second challenge: work was going to begin on this show during the long vacation. For my last show, *Still Life*, I had been cast over the Easter holiday, but this was a different beast as we knew we would all be back in Cambridge within a few weeks. Keeping momentum going for a show for months after casting is a challenge, although one that many shows face. I was quickly introduced to a whole world of video calls and very active WhatsApp groups (my fear of missing vital information amongst these messages is real). There's something about sitting in front of my laptop and saying "I am doing theatre" that is reminiscent of lockdown. However, beyond a test of all of our commitment

levels, there are advantages to this situation. We all have plenty of time to properly study our scripts, get to grips with what the show is all about, and think through our characters. It requires all of the great energy and enthusiasm of our director to keep it alive, but an extended period of internal thought before a show could be no bad thing. She's ensuring we aren't wasting time by scheduling one-on-one character discussion sessions, and working with cast members remotely on their monologues.

I am yet to meet any of the people I am working with in person, and some of them I haven't even seen on a screen. I'm aware that my status as one of two cast members who aren't playing the core five could feed into this sense of isolation, so I hope to fend this off when we finally get back to Cambridge by attending the cast socials and sitting in on some rehearsals for the characters I'm covering. In the meantime, I have plenty of time to relax in the knowledge that I won't have to spend a gloomy Michaelmas without the light of a show in my life. And unless something goes really wrong, I'll know my lines before the beginning of term. As for what the role of a swing is like — I guess I'll find out.

## EXECUTIVE CV WRITING

Assisting clients to secure interviews with world-renowned organisations.

12+  
YEARS'  
EXPERIENCE

- Professional CV writing
- CV assessment service
- Cover letter writing
- Personal statement support
- LinkedIn profile support

Two-page CV from £195

**Sarah Lovell**

Executive CV Writer

enquiries@sarahlovel.co.uk | 01909 384256 | www.sarahlovel.co.uk

## Shop Varsity!

Our online store, offering a range of Varsity branded items is open now!

Pack of Pens: £2.39

Mugs: £8.99

T-Shirts: £13.49

Sweatshirts: £17.99

Backpacks: £9.99

Tote Bags: £3.99

Postal print subscriptions are now available too - get copies of Varsity delivered directly to your door worldwide!

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

[www.varsity.co.uk/shop](http://www.varsity.co.uk/shop)

# Trumped-up: how golf exposes the mindset of America's 45th president

**Will Jonas** dives into the bizarre golfing strategies of Donald Trump

I really do not like Donald Trump. I could spend hours talking about how he undermines the very concept of democracy, how his policies would set the USA back into a societal Stone Age, and how his unjustifiably racist and sexist comments have stoked anger towards minorities, resulting in disgusting hate crimes committed against them. But this is Sport, so I am going to talk about golf.

We all know Donald Trump loves a hole-in-one, as he sidles around his beloved Mar-a-Lago looking like a dropped pumpkin in an Airtex. To a politically oblivious person, this might seem like an honest pastime to relieve himself of the stress of the job. In reality, golf is where he practices his dirty tricks to use on the national stage. Before I substantiate this claim, I will mention that this article is based on a rather excellent book called *Commander in Cheat* by Rick Reilly; I'll be using it along the way for evidence and I would highly recommend it. Right, onto how this sulphurous individual's toxicity is embodied in his 7-iron.

In the world of golf, a mulligan is a do-over — a free shot after a particularly bad one. It's usually used sparingly among casual players, but for Trump, mulligans are reportedly a core part of his strategy. Reilly even referred to him as the "Mulligan President". Trump failed in 2020: can 2024 be considered his Mulligan Election? Due to his infatuation with being superior, he cannot handle losing, and when he

does, it's always somebody else's fault. I'm no Freud, but there are some ego issues which a qualified professional should look at. It's not just mulligans either. The former president has been accused of nudging his ball out of tricky spots — dubbed the 'foot wedge' — and making liberal use of the 'gimme', a practice where short putts are assumed to go in without actually being played. Donald

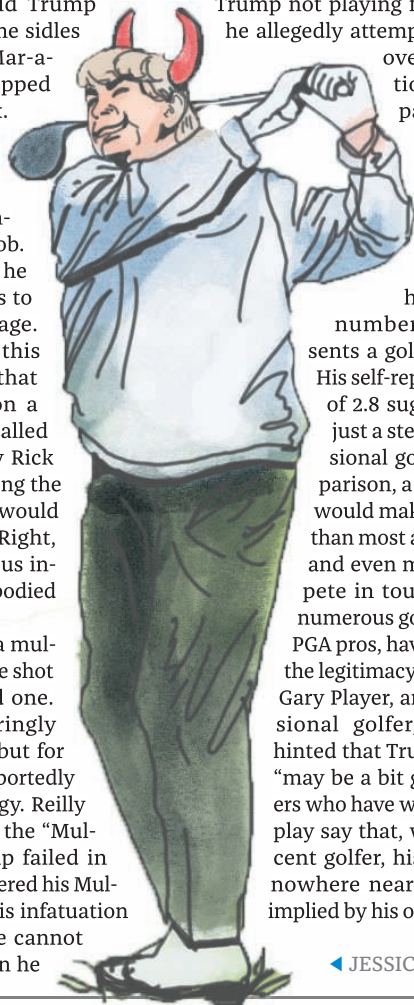
Trump not playing fair? Like when he allegedly attempted to illegally overturn an election result? The patterns are not subtle.

Donald Trump has claimed an extraordinarily low golf handicap — a number that represents a golfer's skill level. His self-reported handicap of 2.8 suggests that he's just a step below professional golfers. For comparison, a handicap of 2.8 would make Trump better than most amateur players and even many who compete in tournaments. But numerous golfers, including PGA pros, have cast doubt on the legitimacy of this number. Gary Player, an iconic professional golfer, once subtly hinted that Trump's handicap "may be a bit generous." Others who have witnessed Trump play say that, while he's a decent golfer, his real ability is nowhere near the skill level implied by his official handicap.

It's almost like when he misrepresented his assets to get more favourable loans and interest rates, which resulted in him being found guilty of fraud earlier this year. This is a man who perpetually lies to make himself seem more impressive. He craves approval and being worshipped; claiming to be better at golf than he actually is only a symptom of a wider disease.

Former *Sports Illustrated* writer and avid golfer Michael Bamberger once played with Trump at one of his courses. After the round, Bamberger noticed that Trump's score didn't quite match the shots he remembered witnessing. It's a recurring theme among those who've shared the green with him. The question isn't whether Trump plays well — it's whether he plays fair. If he's losing he lashes out at others to make himself feel better. He may be petulant and childish but he is also dangerous. It's fairly normal to get riled up on the golf course, but Trump's insecure strops translate horribly onto the stage of his rallies. He demonises minorities and creates a populist 'us vs them' mentality to deify himself and villainise others. He simply does not have a shred of empathy, and why should we be surprised, when considering the luxurious, elite lifestyle he had growing up? He frankly does not need to care about others; he only cares about himself, even at the cost of sacrificing others.

Perhaps more than anything, Trump's golf game mirrors his larger-than-life personality: bold, brash, and always aiming to win — even if it means bending a rule or two. Watch this year's election coverage to see how his childish antics mirror his juvenile golf game. While his presidential legacy may remain divisive, one thing is clear: on the golf course, Donald Trump may forever be remembered as the king of the mulligan.



◀ JESSICA LEER

## Freshers' guide to Cambridge sport

Cambridge is a great place to get involved in sport. There's something for everyone: from picking up a new hobby, wanting a runaround on the weekend or aiming to play for the University.

Sport at Cambridge is often split into two: college sport and university sport. College sport is self-explanatory: it's sport offered by colleges, often basics like rugby and netball. Sport in college tends to be less hardcore than university sport and is more accessible for beginners and casuals. University sport has a wider range of sports available to join than college sport. This makes it great for those looking to pick up something new. Sport at a university level is also where there is the chance to gain a 'Blue', for which you must play at the highest level of university sport, including a Varsity fixture, to be bestowed the honour.

College sport is for everyone. From your Blues captains, to your mate that hates the walk to Sidgely. It's good for keeping up your fitness or if you just want to have a semi-serious kickabout on the weekend.

College sports can range from PE classics such as football and rugby, to ultimate frisbee or snooker. First teams are great for those who want to try to break out into a Blues squad, but second and third teams are great for those looking for something more casual. Depending on how sporty and how big your college is will determine what sports are on offer and how many teams they have for that sport. Beware however: many colleges' sports grounds are not near the college itself, so your Saturday morning fixture will likely begin with a bike ride.

You may think university sport is only for those who have played their entire lives and have a chance at getting a Blue. Well, you'd be wrong. The wide range of sports on offer at a university level means that there are sports not available at a college level for students to join. You can try your hand at Karate or Trampolining, or discover something new like Korfball or Orienteering. The Cambridge Adult Disability Multi Sport (CADMuS) Club also provides a programme of Disability MultiSport activities, so everyone has access to sport at a university level.

But if you think you've got the skill to play at a university level then go for a try-out and see if you can get the fated 'Full Blue'.

ROMILLY NORFOLK



◀ JESSICA LEER

## Romilly Norfolk talks to Trampolining co-president Millie Heathcote

### Who is your sporting idol?

My sporting idol would be Bryony Page, a trampolinist who won gold in Paris in her third Olympics at the age of 33. She showed that success in trampolining can happen at any age, and perseverance pays off.

get to know people better. I also have an amazing co-president, Hannah, and I think we make a great team.

### Worst bit about being president?

Writing emails.

### Best sporting moment?

Competing at BUCS and making the top 8 final in a competitive group. I had been struggling with some mental blocks leading up to this competition, so I was very pleased to have been able to put a good routine out there on the day.

### Is it tricky to balance sport and work?

It can be difficult, particularly with the Cambridge workload, however it serves as an excellent distraction from the stresses of work. I know that I can always turn to the other members of the committee, which includes past presidents, for support and advice if I need it.

### Worst sporting moment?

Crashing out at our home competition in first year. With trampolining, one slight error and the routine can be very difficult to save, so it is a sport where nothing is guaranteed.

### Is it easy for beginners to join?

It's very easy for beginners to join, and we welcome members of all experience and ability levels. We have excellent coaches to guide you through basic skills, and there's plenty of support from other members in the club to encourage you.

### What does a typical training session look like?

Our sessions are relaxed and friendly. Your training is personalised to your ability, but most people generally begin with practising their basic skills, before moving on to new skills and preps.

We work hard when we're on the trampoline and have coaches to support us, but we always have time for a chat.

### Any season predictions?

I hope that we are able to beat Oxford at Varsity after an extremely close fought contest last year and improve on our teams successes at BUCS. I hope that we can get even more members competing this year to help towards this!

◀ MILLIE HEATHCOTE

### What are your pre-competition rituals?

I always have to eat Jaffa Cakes before I compete. We often have to leave for competitions in places like Bristol very early in the morning, so I need plenty of sugar to get me through the day, as I often both compete and judge.

### What is the best bit about being president?

I've enjoyed being more involved in the workings of the club, which also helped me



# Sport

An interview with  
Imogen  
Grant  
Pg 15



Captain's  
Corner  
Pg 31



## Kick-starting a new year of Blues football

▲ LOUIS ASHWORTH

### Romilly Norfolk previews Blues fixtures for Michaelmas

The start of Michaelmas brings lectures, supos and sport! If you're struggling to get your head around University sport (believe me, I was when writing this), then here is a comprehensive preview of first team Blues football for the term ahead.

Both the men's and women's first teams had success last year in the British Universities and Colleges Sport (BUCS). The men's side won the Midlands Conference Cup and came 2nd in the Midlands Tier 2 League, which gained them promotion to Tier 1 for this coming season and entrance to the National Trophy. The women's side came 4th in the Midlands Tier 1 and made it to the semi final of the National Trophy, which keeps them in both competitions for this coming season. They also beat Oxford convincingly in the annual Varsity fixture.

The women's first fixture of the term will be against rivals Oxford, who have been recently promoted to Tier 1 of the Midlands League. This will be a tough

first game for a new squad, with last season's co-captain (and former *Varsity* Sports editor) Abbie Hastie having now graduated. But if the 3-0 scoreline of the Varsity fixture during Easter is anything to go by, the Light Blues may have the upper hand. The two teams will face one another again later in Michaelmas, but in the other place (yuck).

Their remaining fixtures in Michaelmas shouldn't cause too much issue for the Light Blues, with only Loughborough 2s and Birmingham 1s having triumphed over the team last season and Nottingham Trent 1s having now been promoted to Women's Premier North League.

The women's team will start their National Trophy journey against Loughborough Women's 3s in October, which shouldn't trouble them too much, with Loughborough 3s being a newly promoted team into the National Trophy. But the Light Blues haven't played this Loughborough side before and Loughborough's sporting prowess does not lie, with Loughborough 2s in the same

Trophy and their first team being in the league above. But after the good cup run they had last season, prospects look bright for the Cambridge squad.

Fixtures against the stronger sides in the league last season may prove tricky however. Loughborough 2s and Birmingham 1s finished on 19 and 18 points respectively, compared with Cambridge finishing the season on 13. The second and last fixtures of Michaelmas will be against these sides and will force the Light Blues to keep up performances throughout the season.

Michaelmas holds the majority of the women's team's league fixtures, with the National Trophy mostly being played in Lent, so this term will be a vital one for the Light Blues' hopes of promotion into the Women's Premier League North.

The men's first team will have a difficult season ahead of them; they will have to prove themselves after being newly promoted to the Midlands Tier 1 League and also the Men's National Trophy.

Nearly all of the men's Light Blues' fix-

tures will come against sides they didn't face last season. Some universities are familiar, such as Loughborough, Nottingham and Warwick, but Birmingham will be a new university for the Cambridge men's squad to face. But with the exclusion of Loughborough 3s, the rest of the teams will be the more senior squads of their respective universities.

The men's team will start their National Trophy run against Loughborough 2s, who made it to the quarter finals last season and came 3rd in Tier 1, making it a tough start in the cup for the Light Blues. But the two teams will have a run in three weeks before this, so Cambridge will have an opportunity to eye up the competition before the National Trophy begins near the end of November.

The start of the season will be tricky for the men's side though, with last season's top goalscorer Joseph Dalton having now graduated. Dalton scored 7 of the team's 31 goals last season in the league, making him the top goalscorer for the Midlands Tier 2 League; and in Midlands

Conference Cup, he scored another 7 out of the Light Blues' 14 goals during the campaign.

But the squad will likely retain key player Deniz Ozer, who will be fit to replace the gap left by Dalton in his second season with the Blues squad. Ozer shined in the Varsity fixture against Oxford, which only spoke for the season he had. Scoring 5 goals in the league last season and contributing 10 assists, the most of any player in the league. He also scored 2 in the Midlands Conference Cup and assisted 3. Ozer will look to be a key player for the Light Blues' success as they look ahead to the challenge of a new set of teams to play.

Michaelmas looks like an exciting time for Blues football, but will pose challenges for both the men's and women's teams. They will mourn the loss of those graduated, but fresh blood has proved key with the likes of Ozer, so the future is bright.