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VARSITY



Anthropocene of the crime: Zero Carbon go murder-mystery style for their latest climate protest. Story, page 9 ►

(MATHIAS GJESDAL HAMMER)

Seeds of change for Newnham trans stance

Siyang Wei
Deputy News Editor

Attempts to renegotiate gender recognition policy at Newnham and Lucy Cavendish are progressing slowly, following Murray Edwards' revision of their admissions policy last October.

Murray Edwards was the first of Cambridge's women's colleges to remove the requirement for transgender women to have their genders legally recognised in order to qualify for application. Shortly after, both Newnham and Lucy Cavendish announced a review of their policy.

After entering negotiations with the JCR committee, Newnham's governing body released an updated policy in November. This update brought the college more in line with Murray Edwards' policy, revising the requirement for legal recognition through the Gender Recognition Act to "formal" recognition as female "on a current passport, driving license, birth certificate or gender recognition certificate. However, JCR President Jess Lock expressed dissatisfaction with this amendment, saying that the committee "would like prospective students to be allowed to self-identify, rather than be forced to possess the correct documentation to prove their gender identity".

Lock said that the JCR intends to reactivate negotiations with college in the next few weeks. "The JCR committee remains hopeful that Newnham will change its policy in order to become a more welcoming, accessible and safe place for all women," she added, "not just those who can emotionally and financially afford to go through the process of seeking the required documentation."

Continued on page 8 ►

NUS leader pushes back against bullying claims

Todd Gillespie
Senior News Editor

The president of the National Union of Students (NUS), Shakira Martin, has insisted she is a victim of racism, classism, and shameless electioneering after she was accused of bullying and harassing colleagues.

This week, serious allegations have flown back and forth between senior members of opposing political factions in the run-up to the annual NUS elections in late March.

One NUS delegate told *Varsity* that

Martin's allies were afraid to back her publicly, fearing the "mob mentality" of the left-wing factions would trigger a "pile-on" at anyone who supported her or proposed following proper complaints protocol.

Meanwhile, Martin, who is well-known for her direct manner, said she felt the allegations were directed against her partly because she is "a black, working-class woman".

In an interview with *The Guardian* on Wednesday, Martin said: "I don't have a degree. I'm a single parent. I'm aware of how I sound. To people that know me – yeah, that's Shakira. To people that

don't know me, it's creating that picture and it's a false picture.

"I'm a strong, outspoken, articulate black woman that likes piercings and tattoos and I've got swagger. I'm not going to change myself. I'm not going to be anything but Shakira – rough around the edges, straight talking, authentic, real Shakira."

Officers have been told to work from home this week as an investigation is launched into the comments made by several senior figures in the organisation, whose work environment has been described as "toxic".

Senior elected NUS officers are bound

by a rule only to speak to the press through official channels, though this has not stopped some senior critics of Martin. Her allies among the senior elected officers, however, have abided by protocol and not responded to requests for comment.

In a statement to *Varsity*, one National Executive Council (NEC) member, Joe Cox, praised Martin as "a modernising president who has spent the last eight months working tirelessly to rebuild the link between NUS and [students' unions]." He condemned Martin's

Continued on page 5 ►

Editorial

Working on what’s right

Some things you can just rely on — summer will turn to autumn, Peter Hitchens will visit the Union, *The Tab* will stand outside Cindies and interview drunk people. These are such reliable certainties in our world that it’s hard to imagine life without them. One could probably add to that list the NUS’ yearly crisis. One year it may be anti-semitism, the next bullying. Either way, you can be fairly sure that it will happen, and further sure that there will be some shady political beef behind it.

While we should of course take the accusations against Shakira Martin incredibly seriously, we should be conscious that they come from a single political faction and play into pernicious and racist stereotypes. The veracity of the accusations notwithstanding, these regular crises beg the question of why students’ unions are like this.

Contrary to the opinion of a loud minority, the chaos of the student movement has nothing to do with its being dominated by leftists. This criticism is rooted in a misunderstanding of unions, which are definitionally anti-conservative. A union is an explicitly political vehicle which assumes a certain level of common interest among members, relying on their solidarity to achieve goals that would impossible as individuals. Students’ unions specifically presume that students are, to a certain extent, like-minded enough to settle on similar goals, which they attempt to achieve through collective action – as in the conservative model, increasing personal utility through acts of consumer choice.

With smaller ideological differences, disputes turn to matters of strategy. This is a long-standing divide across the whole union movement, but the lack of direct economic power wielded by students compared with industrial unions makes reformism a less practical strategy. The ‘moderate myth’ – that if only students pulled their socks up and engaged ‘maturely’ with their government, they could achieve huge wins on behalf of students – has been showed up by the failure of Martin’s presidency to get so much as a seat on the Office for Students from the government.

Students can have more effect in coming together to support one another on issues like mental health and decolonisation, and to organise in solidarity with other political movements, as with the Picturehouse and UCU strikes. Much of this work is already being done by hard-working activists, and it is often undervalued by more privileged students. But the student movement fails when it allows them to be overshadowed by pointless debates on Israel-Palestine.

One can only hope that the movement begins to focus more on its strength and cuts back on both Sisyphean reformism and self-righteous grandstanding.

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News

Trinity to infinity Cambridge’s wealthiest college enjoys £200m asset boost

Newly-released accounts show a huge boost in Trinity’s assets, Jack Conway and Edward Pinnegar report

Cambridge’s wealthiest college, Trinity, increased its net worth by £158.6 million in the 2016/17 academic year, £2 million more than the combined assets of the poorest four colleges, new figures have shown.

With assets totalling £1.34 billion, Trinity is worth 42 times as much as Clare Hall (£32.7 million), the poorest college in Cambridge, 34 times as much as St Edmund’s (£39.4 million), 32 times as much as Hughes Hall (£41.6 million), and 31 times as much as Lucy Cavendish (£43 million).

Despite these huge inequalities, every college has increased its assets on the previous year.

Trinity is also worth more than 14 times as much as Robinson College, the poorest college which is open to all ages and both undergraduate and postgraduate applicants.

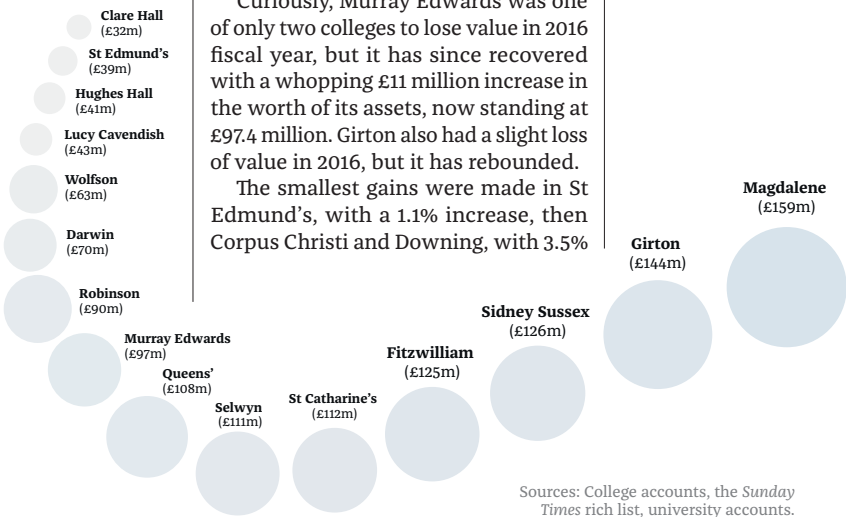
Explaining his college’s performance despite its focus on UK property, the value of which has stagnated since the EU referendum, Trinity’s senior bursar, Rory Landsman, said: “our style is to invest in quality long-term growth assets, property or equity, which [are] currently in fashion in the investment markets.”

The College owns the Cambridge Science Park, home to 90 companies including AstraZeneca, British American Tobacco, and Huawei. It also owns the O2 Arena, around 14,000 acres of agricultural land, and much of the land on which Felixstowe Port, the UK’s largest container port, is built.

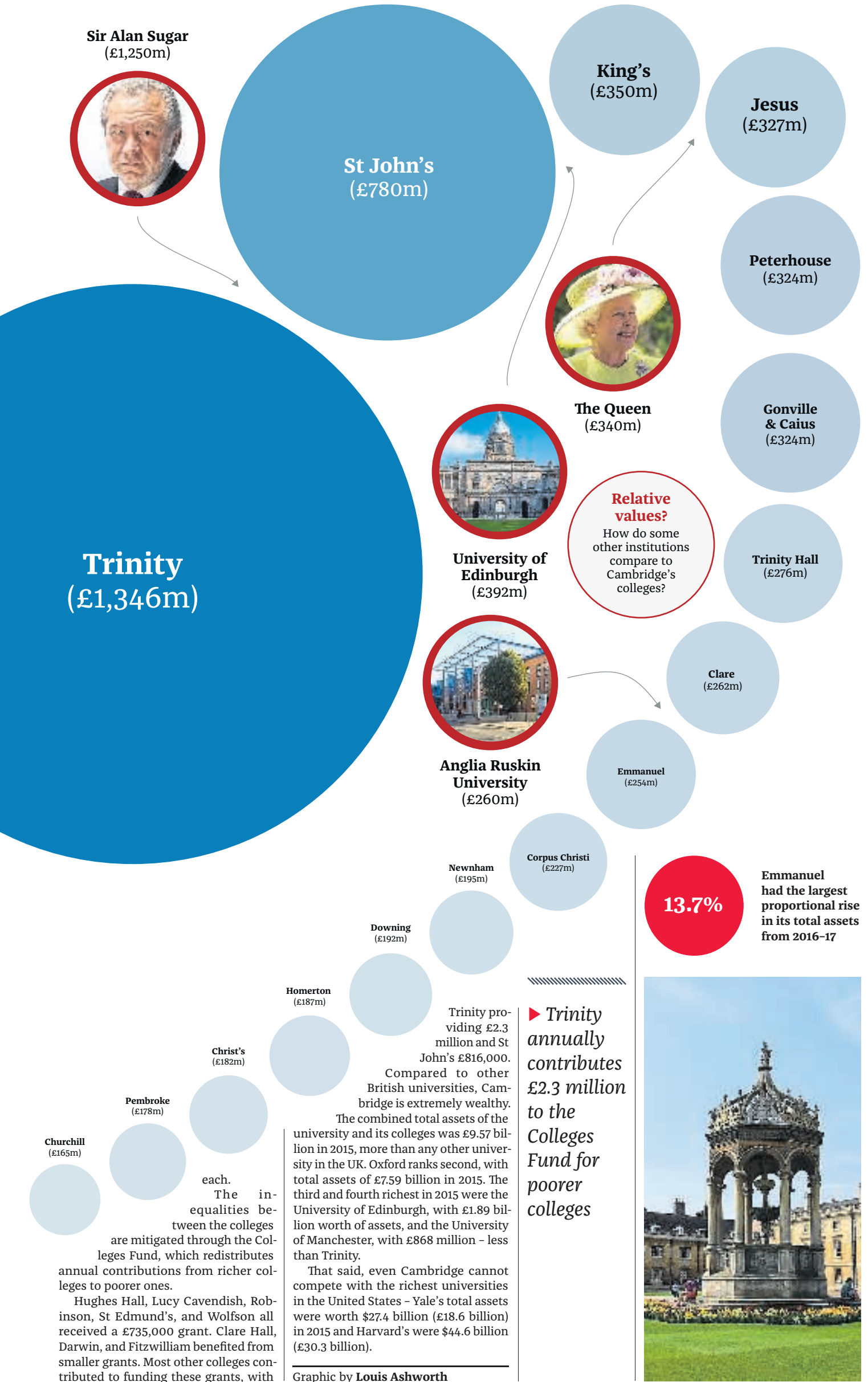
Last year, it made further investments in the 898-acre Dunsfold Park, an airfield near Cranleigh, Surrey home to the BBC’s *Top Gear*, where it is funding the development of a business park and housing development.

Assets for days

Comparing total college assets – including everything from real estate to library books – shows the striking disparities in college wealth.



Sources: College accounts, the *Sunday Times* rich list, university accounts.



NEWS

More colleges than ever fly pride flag for LGBT+ History Month

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(MATHIAS GJESDAL HAMMER)

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Vivienne Hopley-Jones

Our education system fails the youngest

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Connor MacDonald

It isn't possible to 'have it all'

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Nadia Hourihan

Brexit imitates Irish independence

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SPORT

Neville's appointment was a mistake

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News

Cambridge gender pay gap shrinks slowly – but still has a way to go

- University's women, who hold less senior posts, paid on average £7,659 less than men
- The pay gap of 18.3% has shrunk five per cent in the past decade

Noella Chye
Senior News Editor
Rosie Bradbury
Senior News Correspondent

Salaries paid by the University in 2017 clocked an 18.3% gap between average basic incomes of men versus women, analysis by *Varsity* has found.

In past years, the gender pay gap for basic income was defined as the percentage difference between the average basic income of men versus women. The average basic income gap as calculated by *Varsity* therefore allows for comparison with previous annual figures.

However, under University regulations taking effect this year, the gender pay gap will be determined using a new government-mandated methodology.

On 6th April 2017, a law came into force requiring all private and voluntary-sector employers in the UK with 250 or more employees – an estimated 9,000 companies, including the University of Cambridge – to publish their gender pay gap data annually. The legislation introduced mandatory regulations to replace those prior to it.

The government hoped to incentivise companies to minimise the wage disparity, and called on all organisations concerned to publish their analyses by early April this year.

The University, which has voluntarily published its annual pay gap data every two years since 2009 in its Equal Pay Review, was obliged under the new regulations to add information on the mean and median gender pay gap for hourly wages.

Analysis revealed that the average basic salary paid to men in 2017 was £7,659 higher than that paid to women over the last year.

The disparity this year is part of a consistent trend of reduction in the average basic income gap over the past ten years, though the level of reduction this year – a 0.3% decrease from last year's 18.6% pay gap – is the smallest in six years.

This year's reduction of 0.3% could come down to the relatively small percentage increase in the number of women at the higher end of the income scale (Grades 9-12).

Within grade 12, the percentage of female employees in the highest income band (Grade 12) has also decreased slightly – from 19.72% in 2016 to 19.70% in 2017 – compared to a trend in previous years of the percentage of women in Grade 12 increasing.

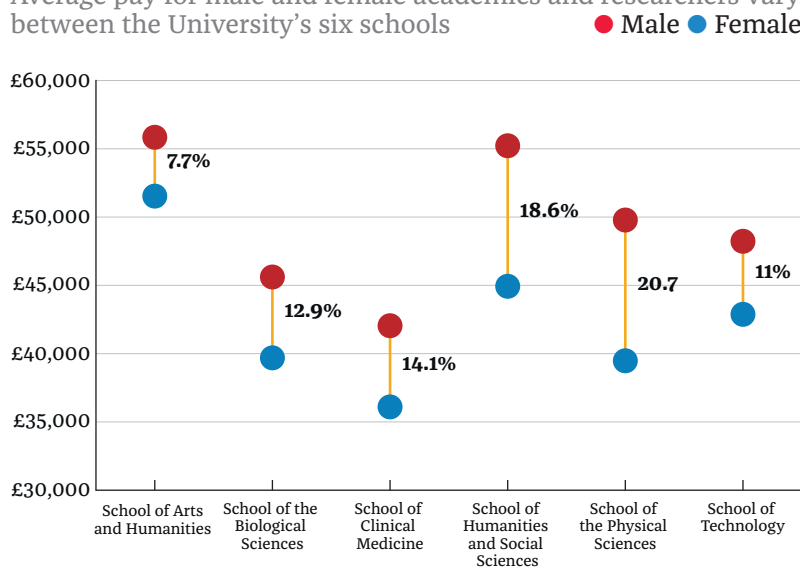
Within the eight institutions that comprise the University's workforce – six



▲ Former BBC China editor, Carrie Gracie, gives evidence to Parliament on the BBC gender pay gap (BBC/YOUTUBE)

The schools gap

Average pay for male and female academics and researchers vary between the University's six schools



Dosh for dons

How are staff salaries decided?

Using an independent methodology which assesses the weight and worth of a job, employees' basic pay incomes fall into one of 13 pay grades in a single salary spine. Grade 12 employees receive the highest wages, ranging from £68,834 to £161,998 as a basic salary. The majority of academic and research staff positions are concentrated in the higher end of the income scale, with 49.4% of men and 31.3% of women receiving a basic

salary of Grade 9 or above in 2017. University staff may also receive additional income from contribution increments, market supplements, and payments for additional duties. These sources of additional income serve as a mechanism for the university to reward individuals without distortion of the grading structure. The values of contribution increments are based on individual performance, and may award individuals up to three points above their salary on appointment. Market supplements enable the University to pay competitive salaries for positions where there is a market premium. The University policy for paying market supplements is criteria and evidence-based, according to a Cambridge University Report on the pay and grading structure.

schools and two non-school institutions – the overall average basic income gap was widest in the School of the Humanities and Social Sciences, which includes the faculties of Economics, Education, History, Archaeology, Anthropology, Land Economy, History and Philosophy of Science, Politics and Sociology, and is the largest of the six schools.

Among academics and researchers, the average basic income gap across the University was 16.67%, with the School of Physical Sciences reflecting the largest pay gap of 20.70%, followed by University Council Institutions, with 19.65%.

Academic-related and assistant staff across the board exhibited a pay gap of 8.52%. The School of Technology, in particular, showed the highest gap of 12.01%, and the School of Arts and Humanities the lowest, with 0.11%.

The proportion of women in the workforce across the University increased from 50.8% in 2016 to 51.3% last year, with the majority of academic-related and assistant staff (60%) being women,

while the majority of academic and research staff (58.8%) are men.

Because academic-related and assistant staff are paid a lower average salary, the minority of women in higher-paying academic and research roles is likely a contributing factor to the average basic income gap across the University.

At the higher end of the income scale, of the 191 university employees paid over £100,000 in 2017, 40 employees, or 20.9%, were women. This is a significant improvement from previous years, as in 2015 and 2016 respectively, only 15.4% and 16.7% of those paid over £100,000 were women.

The aggregate value of market pay awards, a market supplement designed to retain employees with highly marketable or competitive skills, increased by 13.5% for men and 8.73% for women from 2016.

Under the new regulations to come into effect this year, the University will include market supplements and other additional payments in their gender pay gap figure.

The issue of gender pay gaps in the public sector has come under greater scrutiny as of late, particularly after BBC China editor Carrie Gracie stepped down on 8th January in protest of pay inequality.

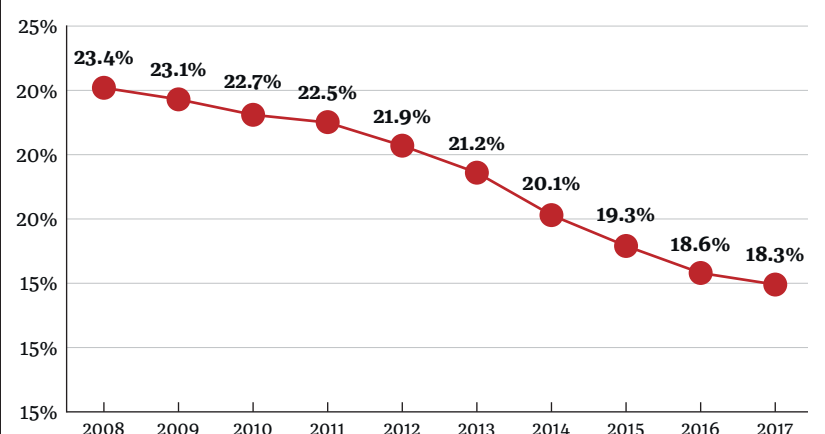
Gracie accused the broadcaster of "illegal" pay discrimination among international editors, describing a feeling of being "trapped" by "a secretive and illegal BBC pay culture". Of the BBC's four international editors, she alleged that the two male editors earned at least 50% more than the two female editors.

Compared to the public and private sectors across the UK this year, the University average basic income gap remains 2.8% below that of the private sector, and 0.6% above the public sector. The gap has inched closer towards that of the public sector over the past ten years with a difference of 5.2% in 2008, and a mere 0.6% this year.

The University is set to release its first mandatory pay gap report under the new legislation by 30th March, as is required.

A narrowing difference

Cambridge's pay gap has gradually lowered over the past decade, from 23.4% down to 18.3% – so there is still a way to go



NUS delegates respond to chaos

◀ Continued from front page

critics for pursuing “a campaign of harassment [...] which has seen a tirade of abuse being thrown at her on social media, day in and day out, for the last few months.”

Events spiralled out of control after a Facebook post by Shakira Martin last Saturday, in which she compared political criticism she had received to her experiences of domestic violence, saying she felt like she was back in an abusive relationship.

NUS women’s officer Hareem Ghani, a member of the Liberation Left faction, called Martin’s words “deeply dangerous” and announced she would submit a formal complaint against the president for allegedly bullying staff and officers. Ghani’s allegations were detailed in a *Varsity* exclusive on Tuesday.

She said that there “needs to be an honest discussion about the atmosphere of bullying, intimidation and manipulation that exists within this institution.”

Ghani has since been backed by several senior figures in the NUS, including

LGBT+ officer, Noorulann Shahid, and the trans officer, Jess Bradley, who have also accused Martin of improper conduct.

One NEC member, the parents and carers’ representative, DeeJ Malik-Johnson, said Martin used his daughter “as a knife to my throat to comply with her agenda” after she allegedly refused to write a character reference for him to see his estranged child due to his position on “the wrong side” of the political divide. He was supported by black students’ officer Ilyas Nagdee, who tweeted that the alleged behaviour was “disgusting”.

After starting out in the NUS on the left, Martin’s political journey led her more to the centre during her tenure as vice-president for further education. Last year, she defeated the incumbent president, Malia Bouattia, in an election where Martin was backed by the two more centrist factions of the NUS.

The two more left-wing factions, the National Campaign Against Fees and Cuts (NCAFC) and the Liberation Left, backed Bouattia, whose defeat followed allegations of anti-semitism made against her, partly based on her claim that the University of Birmingham, where she



“
Within
what may
be credible
allegations
are also
very clear
political
manoeuvrings
”

◀ NUS president Shakira Martin has said that she is being attacked partly for being a black working-class woman

(NUS UK)

studied, was a “Zionist outpost”.

Martin’s main rival for the presidency this year, Sahaya James, is a former ally of Martin from her earlier days on the left of the NUS. James is a senior member of the NCAFC, the hard-left faction.

Speaking to *Varsity*, Cambridge’s newly-elected delegates, who are set to attend National Conference in March, gave a mixed reaction to the controversy.

Hard-left activist Angus Satow said: “The sooner we are rid of this dysfunctional and ineffective NUS leadership, the better our chances of building a strong, grassroots student movement which can once again stand up to a Tory government intent on attacking higher education.”

However, Connor MacDonald cautioned: “Many of the voices voicing their strong condemnation [of Martin] have also employed vile and abusive tactics that typify the hard left in the NUS. Within what may be credible allegations are also very clear political manoeuvrings.”

Carine Valarché called the allegations “extremely serious” but cautioned that “NUS factionalism and chaos is unsurprising”. She claimed that such politics was also seen among the left in Cambridge and had partly led to the election of herself and MacDonald, who are considered to be towards the right of the NUS, as delegates.

This year’s other three Cambridge NUS delegates, CUSU president, Daisy Eyre, CUSU women’s officer, Lola Olufemi, and Miriam Gauntlett, did not respond to requests for comment.

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News

Record number of pride flags for LGBT+ History Month

Devarshi Lodhia
Deputy News Editor

Rainbow flags are being flown across the University for the duration of the month of February, including at 24 of the 31 colleges, to celebrate LGBT+ History Month.

The month aims to increase visibility of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people, as well as promoting awareness of LGBT+ history and the issues faced by those who identify as LGBT+.

While for some colleges, such as Pembroke, the flying of the flag is guaranteed in their constitutions, for others, including St Edmund's, this will be the first year that a flag will be flown.

The rainbow flag, also known as the pride flag, was created by in the 1970s by Gilbert Baker and is a common sight at pride parades.

Speaking to *Varsity*, the chair of CUSU LGBT+, Simon Percelay, said "CUSU LGBT+ is glad to see that once again, even more colleges will be flying the rainbow flag this year compared to 2017.

"Jesus students and representatives have managed to keep the flag flying

despite internal opposition, and St Edmund's will now be flying the flag for the first time ever. There is only now a handful of colleges left that still refuse to fly the flag on the main college pole, and we are confident that it will only take a few years for all colleges to unanimously display their support for their LGBT+ communities during History Month".

The flying of the pride flag has in the past provoked controversy. While broadly supported by students, senior officials at some colleges have blocked the erection of flags, citing long-standing college policies that allow only a very small number of specific flags to be flown.

Trinity Hall, St John's, Clare, Emmanuel, Queens', Clare Hall, and Trinity are the only colleges that will not be flying flags on their main flagpoles. Some of these colleges have made provisions to fly flags at other locations, employing creative methods to get around college policy.

Queens' will drape a flag across the Mathematical Bridge for a week, and Emmanuel will use a purpose built flagpole to fly their flag. At St John's, the flag will fly on the pavilion and the boat house. Meanwhile, Clare will use their back

gate while Trinity and Trinity Hall will fly flags in their JCRs.

William O'Reilly, Trinity Hall's acting senior tutor, told *Varsity* that the college had a policy of only flying two flags, that of the college and that of the Union. However, he continued to say that "it is understood that the JCR and MCR will display flags in the College."

As well as the flying of flags, a number of events including talks and socials have been organised to mark the occasion. Percelay said: "CUSU LGBT+ is excited to have an extensive line-up of events for this LGBT+ History Month. We are happy to be working with CamQueer-History, a group that will be organising dozens of events on different academic queer-related topics, from a discussion of trans people in Sumer and Assyria, to an open mic evening with Grace Petrie, and a talk on lesbian squatters in 1970s Hackney.

"CUSU LGBT+ itself will be organising multiple socials and talks, and will be promoting all the initiatives put forward by college reps."

Varsity has approached St John's College, Clare Hall, and Trinity College for comment.



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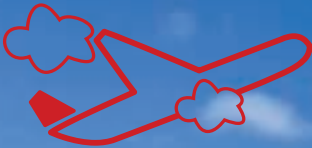
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▲ Rainbow flags will be on display around Cambridge for the month of February
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News

Cambridge is the most unequal city in the UK for second year running, report finds

Sophie Shennan
Deputy News Editor

Cambridge is the least equal city in the UK for the second year in a row, a new report by the Centre for Cities has shown.

The Cities Outlook 2018 report found that the top ten least equal cities in the UK were mostly in the Greater South East, with only two exceptions. Cambridge was followed by Oxford and London as the most unequal. These were also the three least equal cities in the 2017 report.

The Cities Outlook report uses the Gini coefficient to measure equality, which provides a value between zero and one, with zero representing total equality and one representing maximal inequality. Cambridge has a Gini coefficient of 0.460.

Recently, data from MoneySupermarket also showed that two areas of Cambridge are among the most burgled places in the UK. The CB5 area ranked as the second worst area for thefts, and the

CB4 area as ninth.

The most equal cities in the report tended to be in the north of England or Wales, and to have weaker economies, with lower average incomes and fewer knowledge-based jobs. Just ten cities from the 63 largest cities in the UK taken into account were below the England and Wales average.

The report also found that fewer jobs are at risk in Cambridge in comparison with other UK cities. While in settlements like Mansfield, Sunderland, Wakefield and Stoke, almost 30% of the workforce is in a profession very likely to shrink by 2030, less than 15% of jobs are at risk in Cambridge.

Cambridge is also predicted to have the highest growth in high-skill private

Cambridge's Gini coefficient, representing higher inequality than any other UK city

0.460



▲ The CB5 area is the second most burgled area in the UK

(JOHN SUTTON)

sector occupations by 2030, followed by Aberdeen and Oxford. Almost half of all jobs expected to be more highly demanded are in high-skilled professions.

The report revealed that in 2016, Cambridge had the highest percentage of residents with high qualifications, at 66.8%. This includes anyone with a National Vocational Qualification Level 4, the equivalent of an undergraduate degree, or above.

The city was sixth in terms of residents with no formal qualifications, at just 4.4%.

It also highlighted the fact that emissions were reduced by more than 10% in the city between 2014 and 2015. Cambridge was one of seven cities where this was the case.

The Centre for Cities is an independent think tank which publishes economic data on cities in the UK. They aim to provide data in order to produce research and run events that support better city policies and more successful urban economies. Their Cities Outlook report is published annually.

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Newnham updates transgender policy

◀ Continued from front page

Unlike a gender recognition certificate, the "formal" identification now accepted such as a driving licence or passport can be obtained before the age of 18. However, application for these documents still requires medical evidence from a doctor or medical consultant confirming that the change of gender is "likely to be permanent". A 2016 report by the Women and Equalities Select Committee condemned this requirement as "inappropriately medicalis[ing]", with the government subsequently announcing that the restriction would be broadened. Two years on, however, the policy has not yet been amended.

Speaking to *Varsity*, JCR Women's Officer Ruby Kwong echoed Lock's comments. They said that while the new policy "makes some progress" because the documentation required no longer excludes most undergraduate applicants on the basis of age, "the new policy does not go far enough in removing barriers to trans women's applications".

"The requirement for documentation is an issue of access," they explained, "because acquiring documentation is arduous and expensive. The stance of the JCR committee, as of October 2017, is that Newnham should accept all self-identifying trans women, without need for documentation."

The process has been slow at Lucy Cavendish. Currently, the college bases



▲ Newnham College's JCR is pushing for the acceptance of trans women without the need for documentation

(ANNA MENIN)

gender qualification on legal recognition, meaning that trans women must obtain a gender recognition certificate prior to entry. This policy has not been updated since the review was announced.

Speaking to *Varsity*, a spokesperson for Lucy Cavendish said that discussions are still ongoing, with the first of a series of student consultations being planned for March. The college emphasised the importance of dialogue, stating that there is no date set and it is "impossible to say" what the likely outcome would be, but that "the important thing at this stage is inviting discussion and listening to everyone's viewpoints".

Everything you need to know about the UCU strikes

Rosie Bradbury
Senior News Correspondent

On Monday, the UK's largest higher education union confirmed that 14 days of "escalating strike action" will take place in February in institutions across the country. In Cambridge, 800 staff members are estimated to participate.

The strikes will occur over a four-week period, beginning with a five-day walkout from Thursday 22nd February, to Wednesday 28th February. The following two weeks will see four-day and five-day walkouts, respectively. The strikes will be the latest development in an ongoing dispute over proposed changes to staff pensions.

Who are the parties involved in the dispute?

- Universities and Colleges Union (UCU) - The country's largest higher education union, the UCU represents university employees in national negotiations. The UCU is the organising body for industrial action in the tertiary education sector, having warned of possible strike action in November when the pension changes were proposed by Universities UK.

- Universities UK (UUK) - The representative organisation for UK universities, UUK, proposed alterations to staff pensions as a deficit-reducing measure, and acts as the advocating body for employers in national-level negotiations.

- Universities Superannuation Scheme (USS) - A national pension scheme for employees in higher education at pre-1992 universities, the USS has recently experienced a growing deficit and rising costs. The UUK has cited a £12.5bn shortfall in the scheme as justification for the pensions changes, arguing that alterations to pensions are necessary to avoid diversion of funds from teaching and research. The UCU disputes the deficit figure as overly pessimistic.

Why are staff striking?

Academics and staff who are members of the USS are protesting the recent changes to pensions proposed by the UUK last November.

The UUK proposals involve replacing 'defined benefit' pension schemes with 'defined contribution' pension schemes for incomes under £55,000. Defined benefit schemes provide a guaranteed income upon retirement, whereas the value of defined contribution schemes depend on returns from underlying investments in the stock market.

The UCU says that defined contribution schemes are riskier and less generous, citing analysis by actuarial consultants First Actuarial that staff could be as much as £200,000 worse off than under defined benefit schemes.

There is a sense of culmination in a seven-year pensions dispute in which "academics have been asked to make



Dr Sam James
J. H. Plumb college lecturer at Christ's

"It's a genuinely painful moral situation for academics"



Eleanor Blair
Computer officer in the Department of Engineering

"It just doesn't feel very fair"

real compromises", said Dr James, a J. H. Plumb College Lecturer at Christ's, in an interview with *Varsity*.

Despite a general reluctance among academics in taking strike action which may adversely affect students' education, UCU members in Cambridge see the strike action as a necessary alternative "to accept[ing] an unacceptable proposal," said James.

How will the strikes affect students?

Lectures normally taught by academics who are UCU members and are participating in the strike will not take place during the 14 days of industrial action. Because the strikes also include action 'short of a strike', picketing lecturers will not reschedule classes lost on strike days, and will refuse to cover classes.

Whether examinations will include material missed during days of strike is unclear, as that Cambridge examinations are written by individual faculties.

In a statement to *Varsity*, the University of Cambridge said: "The University is considering a range of precautionary measures to minimise any disruption to its day-to-day operations."

Lectures taught or covered by non-union members or those not on strike will go ahead during the days of industrial action, as well as any teaching organised by individual colleges. Because college teaching officers are paid by colleges which do not have a stake in national negotiations, union members are legally incapable of withdrawing their labour from teaching and research not paid for by the university.

CUSU Council recently voted in support of a motion backing industrial action taken by university staff, and have organised a rally in solidarity with UCU striking workers on the first day of strike action in February.

How did the dispute escalate?

17 November 2017 — In order to mitigate the USS financial deficit, the UUK proposes replacing defined benefit pension schemes with defined contribution pension schemes. The UCU condemns the plan, and subsequently releases a ballot for strike action to its 40,000 members at universities across the UK.

22nd January 2018 — The UCU ballot results indicate overwhelming support for industrial action in which 88% of UCU members across the UK backed strike action, with Cambridge staff voting 89.4% in favour of striking. The ballot surpasses the legally required minimum turnout of 50% among eligible union members in 61 institutions nationwide.

23rd January 2018 — Talks between representatives from the UCU and the UUK reach a stalemate as both sides refuse to allow further concessions; the independent chair Sir Andrew Cubie sides with the UUK scheme.

29th January 2018 — The UCU confirms that the strikes will go ahead in late February in higher education institutions across the country.



▲ Protesters gathered outside the University Investment Office (MATHIAS GJESDAL HAMMER)

Zero Carbon pushes for transparency

Stephanie Stacey
Senior News Correspondent

The Cambridge Zero Carbon Society gathered outside the University Investment Office to protest the University's "lack of transparency" regarding investments in the fossil fuel industry on Thursday afternoon.

Donning lab coats and bright orange gloves, campaigners posed as forensic detectives beginning a criminal investigation into Cambridge's links to fossil fuel companies, and filmed a mock news report of investigative forces were informed that "oil had been leaking out of the investment office drain."

A security guard emerged almost as soon as filming began and attempted to forcibly remove the campaigners from the premises, pushing one young woman to the ground in the struggle.

A spokesperson for Zero Carbon said, "the University's financial position affects everyone within Cambridge and so total transparency surrounding investments is definitely within the 'public interest'."

The protest on Thursday follows several divestment demonstrations last term, including a protest in front of King's College Chapel, where campaigners dressed in black set off smoke grenades.

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News

Professor Helen Thompson

On the rise of podcasts, politics, and punditry

Harry Robertson talks to Prof. Helen Thompson, star of Cambridge's Talking Politics podcast

In the last couple of years podcasts have seen a renaissance. From a lull at the end of the 2000s and early 2010s, the number of different shows and number of listeners has boomed. Podcasts like *Serial*, *This American Life*, and *WTF with Marc Maron* have reached huge audiences globally. Celebrities have piled into the game, too. Russell Brand, Lena Dunham and Shaquille O'Neal all have podcasts. Even Snooki from *Jersey Shore* and her makeup artist are podcasting.

One perhaps surprisingly successful entrant into this competitive industry has been Cambridge's own *Talking Politics*, drawing as many as 50,000 listeners to its weekly podcasts. Academics more familiar with half-full morning lectures are now reaching huge, international audiences with deep dives into the political issues of the day. Among them is Helen Thompson, Cambridge's Professor of Political Economy, who moonlights as a weekly panellist on the show.

Thompson was a founding member, but back then the show reached only 1,000 people a week. She puts its rise in popularity down to our extraordinary times: "I think there is a sense that increasing numbers of people do want to try and understand the world in which they live, and are willing to expend some time on trying to understand it."

Thompson tells me that the podcast was the idea of David Runciman, Professor of Politics and head of department (POLIS), who had wanted "to see if politics podcasting could be done in a different way to what the established media outlets were doing, thinking that some people in the department could make a more distinctive kind of contribution."

Runciman chairs the podcast, which is produced by Catherine Carr. More often than not it features a round-table discussion of political events with Thompson and fellow department members Chris Brooke and Chris Bickerton, and occasional guests. I wondered whether Thompson and the others found it hard to make things understandable while also offering something academic and distinct. "For me I didn't really, because one of the things I like about it is the fact that we're not talking in academic politics language. I'm more at ease with worldly language about politics than I am with political science theorising."

When *Talking Politics* began as a show about the 2015 general election, Ed Miliband was trying to woo the electorate with some cautious spending pledges and changes to the energy industry. Since then, politics has changed totally. Thompson remarks that at that time



▲ Helen Thompson (left) with the *Talking Politics* panel
(MATHIAS GJESDAL HAMMER)

“Increasing numbers of people want to try and understand the world”

it was easy to think about politics in "fairly narrow, British, parochial" terms. In early 2016, with Sanders and Trump threatening huge upsets in their respective primaries, politics was blown open. "The question of how you explain this, what are the origins of this – if you think about things seriously – is going to throw you back into long term, historical change", Thompson says. It quickly became clear that British politics, too, needed to be understood in a different way. "The very nature of Brexit, of being an overthrow of something that had been in place for 40 years, encourages historical analysis."

I venture into the shaky and complex area of explanations for the two humungous events since *Talking Politics* began: President Trump and Brexit. Thompson always avoids simple answers, and is wary of grand narratives linking the two. "The Trump story is fundamentally a story of what happens in a polity that is the hegemonic power, where the domestic politics has become more and more oligarchic and dominated by money." On top of this, Thompson says, the US "has had the usual problems of a

domestic economy that has created losers". Combined with the erosion of the US's dominance and the overwhelming influence of lobbying money it is not surprising you end up with Trump, she says. "I think if you tried to understand Brexit in those terms you wouldn't get very far."

Occasionally the *Talking Politics* panel move away from historical analysis and put forward some predictions. Recent political events have shown this to be a perilous business, however, and Thompson is skeptical of the value of political predictions. "I can't see the point of it. People want a prediction about what's going to happen next week or two weeks' time and my instinct is, well, why can't you just wait and find out? There's an element of egotism to the world of predictions." It is much more important, she says, "to concentrate on trying to see things as they currently are, as clearly as possible. Trying to do that is much more difficult to do well than people think it is."

As Professor of Political Economy, Thompson often steers conversations on the podcast back to the economics

underlying the politics. To her, this is the key part of seeing things as they currently are. "You can't really think about present politics questions without really thinking about political economy, or without thinking about what's going on in the economic part of the world. One of the things that's happened since 2008 is that actually more people have seen that that's the case, that some understanding of political economy is necessary in order to think seriously about politics."

As our topic changes to economics, we hit upon the issue of quantitative easing, or QE. Quantitative easing is when a country's central bank digitally creates money and uses it to buy bonds (effectively IOUs) from private sector investors like banks, businesses, and pension funds. This puts more money into the economy in the hope that this will boost lending and spending. Through QE the Bank of England has pumped £435 billion into the economy; globally around \$14 trillion has been created.

Thompson wants to highlight the huge importance of this policy, which is often neglected. "Some people would talk about fiscal austerity as the response to 2008, but if you look at the scale of changes in public expenditure or our increases in tax they're just nothing in comparison to the amount of money that has been created by central banks. The scale of money is just enormous."

I ask what the consequences of it are and am informed that nobody really knows, although a few are currently noticeable. "It's led to an increase in inequality of wealth. It looks like in a number of countries inequality of income has come down since the crisis, but what QE has done is to significantly increase the value of assets, shares, house prices in a number of cities, the value of bonds. Assets are held by people who are already rich."

Pumping money into the economy creates asset bubbles, like the pre-2008 housing bubble, as people invest it in certain areas. When such bubbles burst there could be a financial crisis. "The answer to the question about whether there'll be a financial crash because of the bond bubble and other asset bubbles is that anybody who thinks about it hasn't got any idea whatsoever."

We are now living, Thompson says, "in a monetary world and a financial market world that nobody's got any experience of because it hasn't existed before", but she is concerned that "the discourse about electoral politics doesn't really grapple with this problem at all." Perhaps the growth of political podcasts can alert more people to these issues in ways that conventional news would not, and get them thinking and talking about politics.



Talking Politics ▲ have their own tote bags
(TALKING POLITICS)

Cambridge among worst for state intake in 2016

Anna Menin
Associate Editor

Cambridge had the fifth lowest intake of state school students of any UK higher education institution in 2016, according to government statistics.

It is already thought that Cambridge's state school intake for October 2017 will be a record high.

Although the exact proportion is not known as figures for have not yet been published, *Varsity* reported in September that it will be between 63.3% and 64%. The proportion of state-educated students admitted to Cambridge has been growing steadily over the past decade, and has increased every year since 2013.

Figures published yesterday by the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) examine how successful UK institutions have been at widening participation through various statistical measures, including state school intake.

For the first time, they offer a comparison of the UK's higher education for the year before, which places Cambridge

among the worst for state intake.

HESA reported 62.6% of Cambridge's 2016/17 intake of home students came from state schools, a slight increase on the previous year's figure of 61.9%, and 0.1% higher than the University's own statistics.

Cambridge admitted a higher proportion of state school students than Oxford in both years – Oxford's state intake was 55.7% in 2015/16, and 57.7% the following year.

The figures make Oxford the institution with the lowest state entry rate for 2016 in the Russell Group. Queen Mary University of London had the highest rate, at 90.1%.

The only institutions to admit a smaller proportion of state school students than Oxford and Cambridge were the Royal Academy of Music, the Royal Agricultural University and the Courtauld Institute. Nationally, 90% of students entering higher education came from state schools.

HESA's figures come shortly after UCAS reported that Cambridge offered more places to women than men for the first time in its history last year, al-

Seven universities with the lowest 2016 maintained intakes

Imperial College, London	63.5%
University of Durham	62.9%
University of Cambridge	62.6%
University of Oxford	55.7%
Courtauld Institute of Art	55%
Royal Agricultural Academy	52.5%
Royal Academy of Music	44.1%

though more men went on to take up their offers.

1,660 women were given Cambridge offers in 2017, compared to 1,645 men. However, only 1,275 female offer holders took up their place, slightly fewer than the 1,315 male offer holders to do so.

PAYSTATION

Paid to play at Addenbrooke's

Healthy men aged between 18 and 49 are wanted for a video game experiment at Addenbrooke's. For £150, volunteers will complete two four-hour video game-playing sessions at the hospital. The experiment is being run by Dr Sam Chamberlain, an Honorary Consultant Psychiatrist at Cambridge, with Cognition Research of Cambridge (COGCAM). While women are not permitted to take part, men who make it through the application process will take an approved drug and give a saliva sample before playing games.

(VERY) HOT WHEELS

Fiery pothole fixer to hit Cambridge

Cambridgeshire County Council has upped the ante in its fight against potholes with its latest weapon: the 'dragon patcher'. The machine can fix a pothole in three minutes by firing flames onto the road, and is the first machine of its kind to be used in the area, part of a £3m increase in the county's pothole repair budget. It is hoped that this will transform the state of Cambridgeshire's pothole-plagued tarmac, and has already repaired 1,700 potholes in a month.

HITTING AN ICEBERG?

Clare's Lettuce Club: starting to wilt?

Crisis is coming to a head at the Clare College Lettuce Club, as incumbent President Mat Best does not appear to have organised its Annual General Meeting. The Clare student union describes the society's aim as to "eat lettuce faster than everyone else to become the new leader." This traditionally takes place at the AGM, where the new President is chosen through a competition: a race to finish one of the society's uniform heads of lettuce. But with no meeting in sight this year, questions now 'romaine' over its future.

BURIED IN BLING

Anglo-Saxon burial cross on display

A valuable cross unearthed with a buried Anglo-Saxon teenager is to be displayed at the Cambridge Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology. Made out of gold and garnet, it is estimated to be worth £80,000. The girl's body was found in Trumpington in 2011 by University archaeologists. She is believed to have been buried between 650-680 AD, with the cross indicating she was a Christian convert - despite having been buried in the traditional pagan style.



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A whisker away? Why the lab rats have failed to produce a 'cure for cancer'

James Fraser

In the UK, someone dies of cancer every four minutes, accounting for over a third of deaths in under-75-year-olds. Although 50% of people diagnosed with cancer survive for at least ten years, simply mentioning the word is enough to send shivers down the spine, and it's clear that the proverbial "cure for cancer" remains elusive.

The course of academic progress never runs smoothly, with biomedical research marred in general by publication bias (the binning of inconclusive data in favour of the positive and dramatic), misunderstandings over statistical significance, inadequate peer review (especially by lesser journals), and basic scientific flaws.

Yet cancer poses particular problems to researchers, and these idiosyncrasies account for the failure of many discoveries and novel therapies in the field to live up to their initial hype. Cancer is, in fact, not one but a plethora of diseases – caused, yes, by dysregulation of largely predictable genes, but in patterns that vary widely across people with tumours of the same organ, let alone malignancies of different organs. No two cancers are definitively the same, and thus, no disease is remotely comparable in variability.

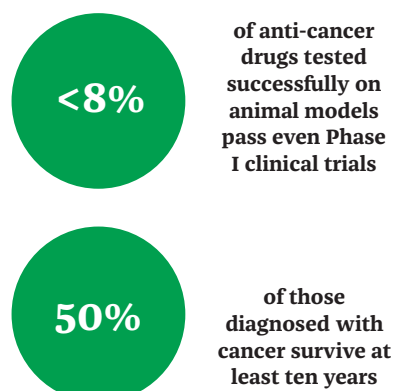
This raises important questions about the experimental approaches taken in cancer research. If ostensibly similar cancers are in fact different in vivo, do cancer cells behave in remotely the same way once we grow them in a Petri dish or when grafted into another mammal?

For many years, so-called PDX (pa-



▲ **No two cancers are definitively the same** (PADRINAN)

The Breakdown



tient-derived xenograft) mice have been the bedrock of cancer research. The idea is simple: take tumour cells from a human with cancer, and transplant them beneath the skin of an immunodeficient mouse, itself genetically modified so as not to reject the human tissue. In doing so, we produce a model organism for human cancer (specifically that of the patient in question) to test all manner of putative anti-cancer drugs for humans. Previous studies have proclaimed PDX mice the gold standard of cancer models, providing a more realistic physiologi-

cal backdrop for malignant cells than culture fluid in a test tube.

However, analysis from the Broad Institute of MIT and Harvard published in Nature Genetics last November has cast doubt on this pedestalled experimental technique. The researchers tracked copy number alterations (CNAs – duplications or deletions of portions of DNA) across 1,110 PDX samples, covering 24 cancer types. Tumour cells in PDX mice acquired these mutations at the same rates as tumour cells in patients, demonstrating an equivalent level of genomic instability that one would hope for a model to be valuable.

Nevertheless, the genetic alterations themselves were different in nature. Equivalent sections of DNA that had increased in copy number in the xenograft data set were found – in the non-transplanted data set – to have decreased in copy number more often than to have also increased. Equally, sections of DNA that decreased in copy number in the xenograft set had undergone increase in copy number in the majority of cases.

An increase in copy number indicates that a portion of DNA is of benefit to a cancer cell's survival and proliferation, a decrease one that is a hindrance or at least irrelevant to malignancy; as such, these divergent patterns of change imply that tumours in PDX mice are subjected to physiological selection pressures that do not accurately match up with those within the original tumour environment.

If this is indeed the case, and tumours grafted into mice evolve to differ con-

siderably in genetic and biochemical nature, then testing possible therapeutics on PDX mice is likely to be of limited value. And frankly, why should this necessarily be surprising? Grafting, say, a human pancreatic adenocarcinoma under the skin on the back of a mouse doesn't strike one as the best simulation of the original tumour environment. What is more, these mice are severely immunocompromised, in spite of years-old research on the relevance of the immune system to cancer development and prevention. To nitpick further, successful xenografting typically necessitates the use of fast-growing cells within a malignant population, introducing a selection bias even before transplantation has occurred.

This may seem purely academic. Indeed, it's worth saying that the news isn't all bad: similar contemporary stud-

ies have been much less damning, and PDX mice still represent a more effective and flexible experimental paradigm than basic cell culture. But given that fewer than 8% of anti-cancer drugs tested successfully on animal models pass even Phase I clinical trials, there is enormous scope for improved experimental paradigms to accelerate the development of novel therapies.

Already, these are being investigated: transgenic mice with components of the human immune system, reliable ways of seeding and measuring tumours in more appropriate locations, and even the creation of extracellular scaffolds in vitro to mimic the tumour micro-environment more authentically. For now, mouse models are here to stay – but experimental flexibility will be crucial to fast-track therapeutic discovery in a field where cures have proven evasive.

▼ **For years, PDX mice have formed the bedrock of cancer research. Now their effectiveness is being called into question** (PIXINIO)



“
For now,
mouse
models are
here to stay
”

Opinion

Rigour is ruining the education of young children

The British education system fails to recognise students' varying needs



Vivienne Hopley-Jones is a first year at Fitzwilliam studying HSPS

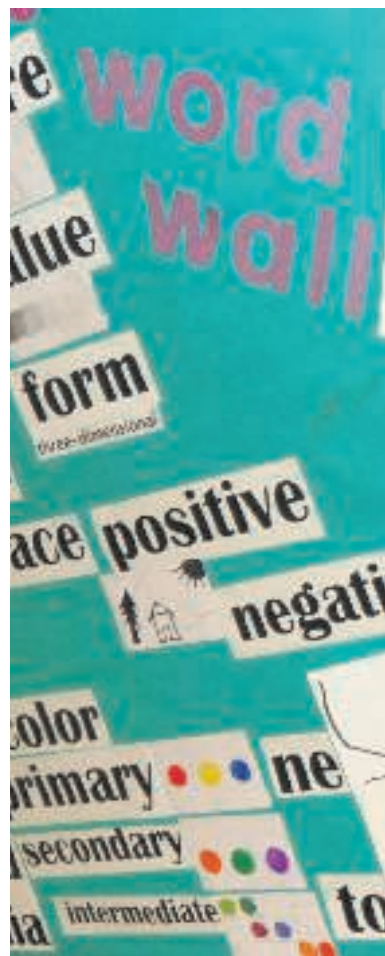
Vivienne Hopley-Jones

As children we are told that school is a given; it is an ultimate and unquestionable presence, and thus the institution becomes our sole understanding of education. That education may exist outside of the standardised tests and exams which constitute our educational experience remains unthinkable to children. I believe this is incredibly damaging.

The schooling system in the UK treats education as a mission of 'attainment'; progress being singular and linear, judged by exam results and little else. The setting children encounter when they first step into school is reflective of the judgment, measurement and comparison that will define the rest of their education experience. The all-important 'word-wall' on which children's spelling, reading and language was ranked based on ability marks my own memories of education. We need to move away from an understanding of learning that assumes intellect is measurable on a standardised scale. Yet the current educational policies of the government, guided by misinformation and neoliberal ideology, are doing exactly the opposite.

Indeed, children entering school today face a much more intensely narrow and restrictive educational process than I did, with 'rigour' emphasised, arts deval-

"We need to move away from learning that assumes ability is measurable"



▲ Primary school 'word walls' are markers of a reductive and limiting education system (NICOLE YEARY)

ued, and spelling and 'first, fast and only' phonics tests ubiquitous. Such a notion of education and intellect is painfully devoid of all nuanced understanding of how people learn. This is more than just a policy issue. It is a fundamental problem with the way we understand the learning process.

A state-educated student myself, I am all too familiar with the normalisation of testing, which I came to see in its true damaging and unnecessary light during the years of primary school for which I was home-educated. My parents, dissatisfied with the way our local state-school accommodated for (or rather, didn't accommodate for) my brother's dyslexia, offered both my brother and me the choice to be home educated. Me, my brother and my mum spent several years outside of traditional education. Despite a very occasional 'lesson' in maths (which essentially consisted of *all three of us* battling through some simple division), it looked from the traditional homogenous lens of education that I had nothing to show for those crucial years, i.e. the all-important SATs years. However, when I returned to school years later, instead of being bottom of the class, I excelled. It turns out that during all those years spent reading books *I had actually been learning*.

For me, this was a formative realisation; that education is not limited to the institution of education, a notion which, incidentally, is definitive of the attitude to learning at Cambridge. Why do we still promote a system of education that is

neither efficient in educating, nor enjoyable for students and teachers alike?

I can say with assurance that without my experience of home education I would not be studying at Cambridge today. But this is not just an issue of how many students from 'normal' backgrounds get into Oxbridge. The issue is much wider than that. Entering school at such a young age, how are children expected to be equipped to deal with brutal intellectual comparison, based on a misinformed understanding of the learning process? To understand that they may learn at a different pace or in a different way to the child next to them? Furthermore, how are they expected to see that the binary and restrictive path of education lauded by the system is not in fact the only signifier of intelligence? And even more salient: how are children ever going to come to love learning?

A system of education that sets, judges and compares, that does not recognise that children learn at different paces and in different ways, and that destroys all passion for learning, is a terrible and destructive thing. This system influences where those students end up in later life; students who, because of their location at the bottom of a reception 'word wall', never believed in their ability. We are left with children who subscribed to the narrative of intellectual conformity into which they were predestined by a society with no open mind, no nuance; with a government that favours 'rigour' and routinisation over independent thought and a real passion for knowledge.

Ardern cannot 'have it all' – and neither can her husband



Connor MacDonald is a finalist at Emmanuel studying HSPS

Connor MacDonald

This week, the Prime Minister of New Zealand announced that she was pregnant. The world rightly sent their well-wishes and a victory for feminism was hailed. In particular, there was praise for her husband who will become the primary caregiver. Women could, in 2018, indeed have it all. However, the adulation that has emerged from all corners of the world has been wildly misplaced: men and women cannot, will not and should not ever have or want it all.

By this I do not mean, as some troglodyte columnists and twitterati have suggested, that Ardern will not be able to carry out her duties as Prime Minister. Such a claim is obviously absurd. Pregnancy will stop the Prime Minister as much as expansive drinking habits likely stopped Churchill (i.e. not much). However, those rightly praising the Prime Minister should also recognise that being Prime Minister while raising a child will require significant sacrifices in her personal life, and her relationship with her child.

Allow me to offer a personal anecdote.

When I was about 17 or 18, my mother and I had a conversation about my desire to lead a career-oriented life. She impressed upon me the importance of finding a partner who will have time to be the primary caregiver, but crucially made a second even more important point (and I paraphrase): 'be under no illusions – your relationship with your children will not be as deep as your partner's. You will not know your children like they will.' She then spoke about my parent's choices: they could have lived in Toronto, been highly career-oriented and been far more successful financially. Instead, my mother and father chose to move to a quieter, slower and more rural place to raise the three of us.

Make no mistake, my parents would both have liked more professional fulfilment. But imagine if the situation was reversed – we would have wished for closer relationships with each other, and I'm sure my parents would have wished for more time to see us when we were growing up. The fact is either course of action – to seek professional fulfilment or

to invest in raising children – are fraught with a plethora of choices, of which each has costs and benefits.

Which brings me back to Jacinda Ardern. I reject completely the notion that her choices amount to having it all. There will no doubt be times when the vagaries of her office mean she will not see her family for days on end. That will surely take its toll. We should not pretend that choosing a career-focused path is necessarily the obvious or surest one; it comes with its own costs as well.

This also has implications for men. One of the most bizarre developments, I would suggest, of the modern age is that 'having it all' has become so closely associated with how men lived their lives in the late 1900s: wife with the children at home, long hours in the office. Yet, my mother remembers my grandfather bursting into tears as she went off to university: "just as you get interesting, you have to leave the house". That relationship simply didn't have much there before she was an adult. I do not accept that this model was costless, nor one to necessarily emulate: it contains choices

"There will be times when she will not see her family for days on end"

and trade-offs too.

The subtext that then flows under much of Jacinda Ardern's announcement, that her husband is foregoing career fulfilment to stay at home with the kids, is invidious also. While it may be a sacrifice on his part, it is also a choice that provides benefits – to be closer to his children, to build stronger relationships with them and to be there at every moment as they grow up and flourish. At the same time, the Prime Minister will have to forgo such benefits. In both cases, there is no such thing as a free lunch.

If nothing else, praise for Jacinda Ardern reveals two things about where we are as a society. First, we are (thank goodness) at a moment when the vast majority of opinion can line up *behind* a professional women at the top of her field, not against her. On the other hand, we have still not yet reached a place where we can have a mature conversation about professional life, and the sacrifices it entails.

Until that time, young men and women will go out into the world still chasing an elusive dream.



Lara Erritt

Accomplices are vital to decolonising the curriculum



Waithera Sebatindira is studying an MPhil in Multi-disciplinary Gender Studies at Trinity Hall

Waithera Sebatindira

Campaigns to decolonise the University should be familiar by now and real progress is being made. From students and faculty organising together to departments successfully being engaged in conversation, small and extremely important steps are being made in the right direction. Students of colour and their accomplices are working hard on this, but there's always need for more help! There are a couple of ways that anyone even vaguely concerned with decolonisation can get involved.

The first is helping with the unglamorous work that decolonisation entails. The numbers that rallies and protests draw is heartening – this work would be significantly more difficult without those expressions of solidarity. However, we need more accomplices behind the scenes. Much of the work is being done in faculty-specific working groups. These include English, History, History of Art, Philosophy, History and Philosophy of Science, Education, MML, AMES, Law, Gender Studies, Sociology, Politics, and Social Anthropology. Future and existing groups need as many accomplices as possible to help audit their courses, research decolonial efforts in other departments and universities, draft open

letters, organise meetings and campaigns, and plan for the future.

Many hands make light work, so if you're interested in joining one of the groups or setting up one of your own, message the Decolonise Cambridge page on Facebook or get in contact with one of the sabbatical officers at CUSU.

Secondly, beyond providing support for students of colour leading working groups, white accomplices are essential because they can help shield coloured students from targeted national press. Students from our university as well as others across the country have been subjected to racist and sexist harassment (including death threats) as a result of malicious national reporting on their anti-racist and decolonial work. The underlying narrative in all these cases has been that these students pose an existential threat to the "British way of life" and that they're unwelcome in this country despite being citizens of it. This is not a narrative that could so easily be applied to their accomplices.

Many students of colour (including myself) are extremely cautious about openly engaging in decolonialisation work due to overwhelmingly negative press coverage. While white accomplices

publicly championing the cause and taking ownership of it alongside students of colour won't entirely eradicate the problematic press coverage, it will serve to make students of colour significantly safer.

You can also support decolonising the curriculum in your day-to-day work. If you're a STEM student, try and find out what debates are taking place within the History and Philosophy of Science (both in Cambridge and beyond). Examine the impact of your studies and research on the wider world, be it looking into the ethical practices of corporate funders operating in the Global South, or uncovering biases that are perpetuated in tech. Conversations surrounding decolonising STEM are particularly difficult, but they need to be had nonetheless.

If you're a humanities student, decolonise your citation practices where you can. In her blog *feministkilljoys*, Sara Ahmed describes citation practices as a "rather successful reproductive technology, a way of reproducing the world around certain bodies". If we only cite white men in our work, we recreate a world where only knowledge produced by them is important, while knowledge produced by others is peripheral. There

“We need more accomplices behind the scenes”

are, of course, cases where white men have to be primarily cited, which speaks both to wider issues about the way that our syllabi are constructed and also to how aspiring academics must cite in order to be taken seriously.

However, it's particularly important that accomplices engage in decolonial citation practices because when students of colour do this (particularly undergraduates) they are often either accused of promoting an agenda or including irrelevant information in their essays. Decolonial citation practice works best if we all do it, and if we do it with purpose (as opposed to being tokenistic). There are so many historians, philosophers, sociologists, and literary critics of colour whose work is directly relevant to our own. These academics offer new, radical ways of exploring canonical work and who themselves produce groundbreaking contributions. Find them and use them.

This university won't decolonise itself, and it also won't decolonise without the help of white accomplices. Find ways of meaningfully getting involved that suit you, follow the guidance of students of colour, and be a part of historic changes to come at Cambridge.

Opinion

Why we still need to fight for LGBT+ rights



Simon Percelay is in his third year studying HSPS at St. John's

Simon Percelay



◀ LGBT+ flag flying in Cambridge to mark LGBT+ History month
(LOUIS ASHWORTH)

As History Month approaches, it is always comforting to reflect on how much LGBT+ rights have improved over the past 25 years. In that time, the WHO declassified same-sex attraction as a mental illness, the age of consent for same-sex relations was lowered to the same level as for heterosexual relations, multiple organisations and charities were founded defending LGBT+ rights, discrimination on the grounds of LGBT+ identity was made illegal, section 28 was repealed, civil partnership and same-sex marriage were legalised. Most importantly, public opinion has changed dramatically: in the space of a single generation, the majority of the population has come to support the rights of homosexual people, while transgender individuals are becoming more visible, accepted and supported.

This situation has led some to question why LGBT+ rights need to be fought

for any more. A simple look at online comments for any LGBT-related topic will feature people seemingly supportive of LGBT+ rights, yet who are “tired” of seeing these issues being discussed all the time. In a Daily Mail article reporting on the LGBT+ inclusive services held in the chapels of King's, John's and Trinity in Michaelmas 2017, many comments complained that these services excluded non-LGBT+ people. A commenter called willowbrae even went on to note that “being LGBT or gender fluid now seems to be the new normal”. Now that we've reached equal rights with same-sex marriage and LGBT+ identities are the new trend, why won't we just be quiet?

Although these comments often hide deep-rooted homophobia and transphobia, the idea still deserves some thought. In fact, it has spread within the LGBT+ community itself, with some of its members arguing that it is time for LGBT+ individuals to stop being so vocal. Others

believe that, given the now wide acceptance of homosexuality by society, there is no longer a need for segregated spaces. The idea is that we should be grateful that society has become tolerant of the existence of LGBT+ people, and that enough has been done.

It would have been much harder to hear these comments coming from LGBT+ people a few decades ago, at a time when inequalities were glaring. Yet, it is clear they come from a position of privilege which fails to acknowledge the current situation of LGBT+ individuals at large. For instance, gay conversion therapy is still formally legal in the UK – nothing forbids mental health practitioners from identifying homosexuality as the root cause of their patients' problems, and attempting to change their sexual orientation as a solution. Within the UK, there also remains geographical disparities, as same-sex marriage has yet to be legalised in Northern Ireland.

“LGBT+ people still face challenges, from discrimination to violence”

Finally – and most importantly – a lot remains to be done for the rights of transgender people. From the legal conflation between gender and sex, to the lack of recognition of non-binary individuals and the general pathologizing attitude towards transgender identities, many issues remain. Nicola Sturgeon's 2016 pledge to introduce legislation that gives legal recognition to non-binary people is a step in the right direction, which could pave the way for further rights to be given to trans people.

Beyond legal protection, LGBT+ people still face many challenges, from casual discrimination to bigotry and violence. The “safe spaces” that are often derided in reactionary media are often little more than places where LGBT+ individuals can seek support and socialise with other LGBT+ people without their identity being questioned. Coming out is still a daunting process, which forces many youths into homelessness every year, as they are rejected by their family. HIV affects more than 100,000 people in the UK and sexual health specific to LGBT+ people has yet to be taught in school. We may no longer face a structurally homophobic state, but we are part of a society that is indifferent to LGBT+ issues.

LGBT+ communities are still essential in providing information and welfare that LGBT+ individuals may not find elsewhere. These spaces also provide a sense of “normality”, where LGBT+ identities are not simply the tolerated exception, but the implicit norm. Rather than focusing excessively on queerness, these are environments in which it can be put aside specifically because it is assumed from everyone – LGBT+ identities are then no longer uncertain. As long as society keeps expecting heterosexuality and cisgender identities as the “norm”, LGBT+ spaces will remain essential.

Universities' finances cannot rely on soaring rents



Ben Beach is studying an MPhil on Architecture and Urban Design at Hughes Hall

Ben Beach

As part of austerity measures designed to marketise education, the 2010 trebling of tuition fees brought with it huge reductions in central government funding. Undeterred by fierce resistance from students and education workers, university managers – principally through the Russell Group – lobbied in support of the fee increase; despite the prospect of steep funding cuts being planned for as early as 2009.

This seemingly contradictory approach can be reconciled if understood as a process of financialisation: unlike public sector funding, the private nature of individualised student fees enables their use to securitise debt, in turn financing capital investment, which is a key objective of the Russell Group. Put simply: your fees are being leveraged to fund previously impossible expansion programmes, with returns supplanting lost government funding.

Maximising revenues from university estates – principally in the form of rents – is central to this strategy. Consequently, universities are undertaking massive urban investment programs in sectors such as student accommodation, often with questionable academic benefits and the

exacerbation of gentrification issues. The *Financial Times* reports that in 2016, \$1.39 billion of UK higher-education bonds – secured on fees – were sold to global investors, funding projects such as UCL's new Stratford Campus. Threatening over 700 social housing tenants with eviction, UCL's 'campus' is predominantly private housing, student halls and commercial rental units with negligible academic space.

Universities as diverse as Cardiff, Sheffield and Strathclyde are now borrowing heavily to invest in rent-yielding accommodation blocks, with UCL currently facing severe criticism for displacing communities in south London. Cambridge is no exception, with the estate management strategy explicitly designed to improve the University's financial position. Owing to the £1 billion North-West Cambridge project, the University is now the largest property developer in the region. The University claims the North-West Cambridge development will provide “affordable accommodation”, yet a room at Swirles Court is £6,080: 72% of a maintenance loan.

The housing charity Shelter calculates a genuinely ‘affordable’ rent as under

“Universities are dependent on rental income”

35% of income, equating to £2,950 of a maintenance loan. But the majority of college accommodation is significantly more expensive, leaving many students paying much more than they can afford. Data from Jesus College suggests just 8 undergraduate rooms would meet Shelter's test of affordability, while at Murray Edwards first-years are exclusively offered rooms priced at £1,825 a term. The University itself estimates living costs for 2018-19 at £9,160. The maximum maintenance loan available to low-income students is £8,430.

High rents are essential to financing the post-2010 marketisation of universities and across the country, and the impact on student welfare has been disastrous. A recent NUS survey found over 50% of respondents could not afford rent and basic expenses, fuelling an escalating mental health crisis and even growing food-bank use. Among Cantabrigians, the Big Cambridge Survey has demonstrated widespread disaffection with maintenance issues and accommodation costs, with an astounding 77% of residents at Newnham voicing grievances over pricing and quality. Stories of hardship are tragically common,

illustrated by a student informing Cambridge Cut the Rent they had been forced to discontinue their studies.

Universities' dependence on rental income presents an Achilles heel for managers and a vital pressure point for students. Tired of having petitions and protests ignored, last year over 1,000 UCL students took part in a series of escalating rent strikes, winning over £1.5 million in rent cuts and bursaries for low-income students. Similar tactics at SOAS and Goldsmiths led to over £650 in compensation.

With institutions increasingly debt-burdened, any interruption to revenue streams is a serious concern for managers who, due to public image concerns, are constrained in their options for enforcement. As Cut the Rent groups continue to spread across Cambridge, over 500 students have signed up to growing calls to take action. High rents are exclusionary, socially damaging and integral to the market-orientated model of the neoliberal university. But as a private issue becomes a collective conversation, the pressure for change is rising. Rent is everyone's problem: university managers will ignore it at their peril.

Opinion



Don't use Ireland as a Brexit model



Nadia Hourihan is a columnist in her second year studying English at Trinity

Nadia Hourihan

You've finally stood up for yourself. You will strike out of the Union and become a sovereign nation once again. You're the first to strike out from a great union in decline. You might pave the way for others to follow.

But now the negotiations have started. You're miles from home. You're an economic pipsqueak next to the mammoth market you're hellbent on leaving. Your negotiating skills look just a little rusty next to the other guys. You made massive promises to people at home, and you're quickly learning that you won't be able to keep very many of them. You're going to get a nasty deal, to warn off any other departures. Increasingly, your government looks primed to self-destruct as soon as a disappointing deal is reached.

Oh, and if you can't cut a compromise then 'swift and terrible war' will follow.

I'm not quite talking about Brexit. I'm talking about Irish Independence. In the above scenario, the year is 1921 and you are Ireland. The gentlemen promising to destroy you if you dare dangle 'no deal' across the table are Winston Churchill, David Lloyd George, Lord Birkenhead, Austen Chamberlain, Sir Laming Worthington-Evans, Sir Gordon Hewart and Sir Hamar Greenwood.

I'm not the first to draw this parallel. Oddly enough, prominent Brexiteers have referred to the Irish struggle for independence as a model for Brexit.

I come from a staunchly Republican family. Every Christmas, when my family gathers together, one of my uncles will start to praise Ireland for having toppled the British Empire. Look at us go. Weren't we impressive? Weren't we great?

In the highfalutin rhetoric of the Brexiteers there are echoes of my uncles after a few too many drinks.

One has to wonder if they're aware of the civil war that followed the Anglo-Irish treaty. Or the assassination of Irish politicians thought to have broken promises of a truly independent nation.

Or that, some fifty years later, Ireland entered a new Union: the European Un-

In Jacob Rees-Mogg I can almost see Éamon De Valera

ion.

The irony of Brexiteers trumpeting the Irish struggle for independence as a model for their own is as unsettling as it is entertaining.

Today's Brexit negotiations are taking place in a very different context to the Anglo-Irish negotiations of 1921. But they have in common the capacity to deconstruct political dreams and sour the moods of nations. Almighty concessions have been made, and there are more to come. Like the negotiations of 1921, the Brexit talks have been confused by domestic politicians who are exploiting the weakness of your negotiating hand to shore up support within their parties.

In Jacob Rees Mogg I can almost see Éamon De Valera. In much the same way that De Valera published his proposals for external association, Rees Mogg has been preaching from the sidelines, currying favor with hardliners at home and confounding and confusing those abroad. They are ideological purists, happy to let others dirty their hands while crowing that the nation is being cheated of glory by the treachery of others.

Paddy Power thinks that he's the most likely candidate to lead the party after Theresa May has been ousted. He may yet lead a newly independent nation, and fashion it into a bastion of (Catholic) conservatism as the economy shrinks and shrinks.

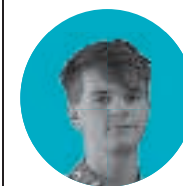
In school, I would sometimes relay some of what I picked up in class to my friends who didn't study history. To hold their attention, I had to be funny. I turned the Anglo-Irish treaty negotiations into a five-minute stand-up routine. It's surprisingly easy to rework it into a (dark) comedy of errors.

It requires little imagination to see future historians treating the Brexit negotiations with the same irreverence.

We may yet find ourselves laughing together.

▲ The Secretary of State for Exiting the EU, David Davis

(ESTONIAN FOREIGN MINISTRY)



Felix Peckham

The Davos conference's oblivious elite

OPINION

Elitism and privilege are issues that *Varsity's* writers grapple with on a weekly basis. At Cambridge, privilege can be seen in the disproportionate number of private school students. At the international level, politics and business exacerbate this trend, with many of the most prominent figures in society coming from backgrounds of immense privilege.

This week the Swiss town of Davos was transformed, as it is every January, into a conference venue for the world's most powerful. The concentration of wealth and influence is incomprehensible. The entire ostentatious event, complete with private jet congestion and luxury hotels, is indicative of a global elite who remain oblivious to the resentment that so many bear towards them.

Despite globalisation, and the ease with which we can hold these figures to account, their consumption of goods and services is conspicuous in a way that it has never been before. Their patterns of frivolous expenditure go unchanged.

It seems not to matter anymore that the divisions in wealth are so stark. Even though the global financial crisis of 2008 still lingers in our conscience, the activities of those who govern and employ us are unimportant, and attract less and less attention from the general public.

If Donald Trump, perhaps the most glaring example of brash and vulgar consumerism, can be elected to the highest office in the United States, then why should the rich bother trying to pretend to be modest?

The World Economic Forum (WEF)—whose headline event is the Davos conference—is an outdated ideological lens through which to look at global economic affairs. It's a limp and lifeless scheme of self-promotion for the world's wealthiest. This *modus operandi* is ironically self-destructing: it will ultimately be the downfall of the very system that Davos promotes.

The theme for the 2018 conference was "Creating a Shared Future in a Fractured World". What exactly this means is unclear. How issues like climate change and global inequality might be solved by flying in the world's wealthiest is also unclear, especially as they are the ones set to benefit the most from maintaining of the status quo.

John McDonnell was far from a headline figure at Davos, and yet he provided the most important and pertinent message, telling the attendees they face an 'avalanche of discontent'. History suggests they won't listen—they'll be back in 2019.

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Belonging between borders

by Julia Lasica

From my very birth, my Ukrainian, Polish and Russian heritages began to shape and define my experiences. Memories of the snow-laden streets of Kyiv and the fields of golden corn outside the capital, skirted by pine forests and railway tracks, made up the majority of the early years of my childhood. I learnt the Ukrainian words to describe the glimmering icicles hanging from the trees in winter, my father taught me his native Polish and I quickly picked up Russian from the nostalgic, Soviet era cartoons and picture books.

Soon after, however, I moved to London. I went to school there, and learned English, reading the brightly coloured Dahl...
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Downsizing review

Not for the first time, our opinionated Film & TV Editor Lillian Crawford takes issue with the big release of the week

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Make It New

With a huge selection of pieces, from elegant silk gowns to edgy jumpsuits, these Cambridge stores will have you prepared for any occasion.

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James Blunt interview

Our Features Editor interviews singer-songwriter James Blunt, who sang and spoke to a Union audience this week

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Vulture review round-up

After introducing anonymous reviews at the start of term, our reviewers give their honest take on Cambridge Theatre this week



'This art exhibition will be a step to help queer up the city'

Cambridge's upcoming LGBT exhibition is part tender, part explosive, but never tame
Nesta Smith

This coming Friday the *Bohemian Like Me* exhibition will be opening at Cambridge Artworks & Artspace in celebration of LGBT history month, and will be open until 5th February. Featuring pieces which embrace and explore queer identity from the perspective of LGBT artists, the show will comprise of a mix of photography, sculpture, and painting, including work from Cambridge artist David Kefford.

The exhibition is part of a growing number of exhibitions within Cambridge that focus on representations of those whose experiences are often excluded or forgotten. *Bohemian like me* takes a place alongside *third space*, an exhibition of BME art, and Womcam's upcoming *Survival and Feminist Persistence* – all of which encourage students to question the white heteronormative and male-centric narratives in art.

Interestingly, *Bohemian Like Me* is slightly different in that it is not a student-focused exhibition but draws together those who live in Cambridge with those who study here. By bringing together both these groups, the show aims to explore and counter the sense of being an outsider that can come with queer identity on a more general scale. This marks an important and positive shift in art exhibits in Cambridge, and such events can only thrive with the support and engagement of

Cambridge students and also residents. Art can and should become a form of activism which supports marginalised voices within Cambridge.

The artworks exhibited will be on sale, with 40% of the profits going to local LGBT charity The Kite Trust. The organisation works with schools to help staff and students understand LGBT issues, as well as being a positive social network and support system for young trans people.

The show, in some sense, draws off the excitement of the Tate Modern's recent *Queer British Art*, which included works of previously unappreciated expressions of queer love, taking place 50 years since the partial decriminalisation of male homosexuality in England.

While the Tate's exhibition was lambasted by *The Telegraph* as "a tame take on gay art history", *Bohemian like me* follows a slightly different vein, and is filled with brightly coloured and overtly sexual paintings and photographs which explore gender and sexuality. Moreover, the exhibition also aims to capture the tenderness and difficulty that comes with being LGBT. One piece, a poem by Cian McConn, takes the commonplace saying, "some people are gay, get over it", and produces a stream of consciousness that will be printed and displayed around the exhibition:

"Some people want to sit on the grass and get damp. Some people feel unknown. Some people wake up in the morning and want to die. Some people reject love. Some people have naturally blonde hair" (Extract from 'some people have no shoes' - Cian McConn)

Seana Wilson, one of the curators of the ex-



hibit, sees the exhibition as embodying feminist academic Sedgwick’s notion of queerness, as a creative enquiry into the “open mesh of possibilities” which produces art from the “excesses of meaning” found in our gender or sexuality.

She adds that “part of my practice as a feminist artist and curator is to call out heteronormativity and patriarchal systems. Cambridge, like London, has seen the shrinking of queer and LGBT spaces and I hope this art exhibition and celebration will be a step to help queer up the city.”

An afterparty at the Boat House will also be taking place at 9pm following the opening, and will feature spoken word poetry and performances as well as music by all-female Cambridge-based DJ collective: *You Know it Makes Sense*.

At Cambridge Artworks and Artspace, *Bohemian Like Me* is open until 5 February ●

▼ **A piece by Alan Rogerson, which will be included in the exhibition**



What’s On This Week



THEATRE 30TH-3RD, CORPUS

Bromley Bedlam Bethlehem

Bromley Bedlam Bethlehem is a drama exploring the effects of mental illness on three generations of an immigrant family.

ART 2ND-6TH, CAM ARTSPACE

BOHEMIAN LIKE ME

An art exhibition & party event with live DJs. A celebration of LGBTW art with the theme of identity, equality and visibility



FILM 3RD, GRAD UNION

L’Argent de Poche

The second Cine Club of term is showing the classic ‘L’Argent de Poche’ (1976), one of François Truffaut’s most successful films.

THEATRE 23RD-27TH, CORPUS

Rêver peut-être

In this play by the International Theatre Festival, actor Gerard B is accused of murdering Polonius in a dream.

RADIO THURSDAYS AT 3PM, CAM.FM

The Vulture Show

Our hosts Pany Heliotis and Martha O’Neil bring all of *Vulture*’s culture chops to the airwaves, with interviews, previews, and all the best stuff from our print edition.

THEATRE 30TH-3RD, ADC

The Oresteia

The Marlowe Society brings Aeschylus’s classic cycle to the ADC Theatre for five nights of vengeance, justice and bloodlust.

COMEDY 31ST-4TH, ADC

Pen Pals

Cambridge Footlights present Pen Pals, an hour of sketches, skits and songs based around the theme of letters that get lost in the post.

FILM 3RD, CHRIST’S

The Red Turtle

Christ’s Films is showing this beautifully animated fantasy drama film about a shipwrecked man who makes a new life on a small island.

THEATRE 5TH, CORPUS PLAYROOM

Smorgasbord

The Fletcher Players present Smorgasbord: a festival of the most exciting extracts from emerging student playwrights.

THEATRE 6TH-10TH, ADC

Porterhouse Blue

A satirical take on Cambridge life: at Porterhouse College, swan served in hall and no one has achieved a first since 1956.



From our Chief Designer...

Need some artistic inspiration? Our Chief Designer Sophia Luu is here to help

It’s actually a lot harder to describe an image than you think, but a really good way to try communicating visually. Ask a friend get a postcard or image (which you can’t see). You then have 30 questions you can ask them about the picture: where is it? What colour are the objects? Try to draw them as accurately as possible. You might find that you have a really accurate representation, or you might find that you’ve created something completely different!



ONLINE THIS WEEK

THE DEATH OF THE FIRST CELEB CHEF

From Kyiv to London, the EU is shifting our national identity

“Europe is a pivot around which Ukrainian and English identities are formed”

Julia Lasica



[continued from page.19] ...and Beatrix Potter in the quiet corners of the classroom. I never pondered deeply which country I belonged to before my fifteenth birthday, but found myself drawn to the ‘English’ identity I found scattered around me in the Turners and Constables in the Tate, or the images of the long canals, draped in green, which I imagined were inhabited by creatures like Toad and Mole.

Then, in the winter of 2013-4, the central square of Kyiv ran awash with the nation’s blue and yellow flags. The protests first begun by students, angered by the then president’s refusal to allow closer integration with the European Union, grew into what became known as the Revolution of Dignity in Ukraine. It was referred to as such by Ukrainians since it was (and is) seen as the moment at which a modern Ukrainian national identity was formed. Antagonised by centuries of colonial oppression, moving in turn from Imperial Russia to the USSR and then Putin’s policy, Ukrainians sought to win back the dignity to develop and thrive without bowing to the pressure and influence of the Kremlin. Ordinary people left work unattended and rushed to the centre from all corners of Ukraine to defend their country’s liberty.

It was into an atmosphere of national unity and rapture that I was launched when I visited my family that Christmas. Across the country, statues of Lenin were felled daily, bridges and walls were painted blue and yellow, people greeted one another with the revolutionary slogans. European, national and regional

flags hung from every windowsill, fluttering in flurries of snow. Spending New Year’s Eve and many other days on that square, all that I had imagined of my national identity was swept away by revolutionary euphoria and unity. Returning to London, and witnessing first the shootings of peaceful protesters on the Maidan by the special police forces, followed by the sudden apparition of Putin’s unmarked green soldiers in Crimea in spring of 2014, my Ukrainian national identity was only cemented. I platted blue and yellow ribbons onto my bags and around my wrist, sang Ukrainian folk songs to myself as I walked to school, and learnt poems by Shevchenko.

It was an intense feeling of belonging which I had never felt before and it pervaded my very sense of being. In London, I suddenly felt like a stranger, yearning for summer to arrive when I could finally fly back to my Ukrainian family. Countless times strangers, who would turn out to be Ukrainian, would stop me in the street after noticing the colours of my bracelet and we would greet one another in our mother tongue. I felt utterly disconnected from England then, and hardly paused to give the ‘English’ part of me a second thought as the war in Eastern Ukraine began to rage.

And then yet another event occurred which shook my perception of national identity once more. On the 23rd of June, I had canvassed for Remain and my day seemed to culminate in intense optimism as I watched a European flag held up on stage at the end of a concert in Shoreditch. The organiser’s closing remarks, that she hoped we woke up in a ‘European

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“
Britain
woke up to
confusion
on that
cold, grey
morning
”

▲ A woman holds a flag at a London protest outside 10 Downing Street in February 2014 to show solidarity with Euromaidan demonstrations in Kyiv (FLICKR: IVAN BANDURA)

Britain’, were greeted with cheers by the crowd.

But we didn’t. Instead, Britain woke to confusion on that cold, grey morning, as the divisions between the countries making up the UK, the urban and rural areas, the young and the old, ran deeper and clearer than ever. My little bubble of optimism, in which it was assumed that Europe (despite its many failings and faults) was ultimately associated with security and progress, was shattered. I had taken it for granted that such strong anti-European sentiment coursed through English identity, and turning to it then, I found little to connect with.

Since coming to Cambridge, time has passed from both of these momentous events which have shaped my national identity. My Ukrainian idealistic fervour has been numbed to an extent, and I have had exposure to nuances in the Brexit debate. However, Europe is clearly a pivot around which Ukrainian and English identities are formed in my experience, whilst the former is solidified positively by its European associations, ‘English’ identity is splintered under such pressure. I first visited the Parthenon marbles when I was six in the British Museum, and it seemed very ‘English’ to me for many years. Yet seeing the other half of Poseidon’s body stand fragmented in the Acropolis Museum last year, separated from his torso in London, I was reminded very forcefully of the contentious, strained relationship stretching from the white cliffs of Dover across the Channel, and the effect it has on the ‘English’ identity

Coping with grief, line by line, page by page *Ana Ovey*



Just as, after my dad’s death, grief became one of the lenses through which I saw the world, literature has *always* been one of those lenses. Some of my favourite early memories include my dad sat on my bed, reading me books — or, better yet, me and my brothers sat on my parents’ bed as our dad made up amazing and outrageous stories for us. This may not be a sentiment so applicable to others suffering loss, but the written and spoken word has provided me with such consistent catharsis that, in writing about coping with bereavement, it would feel farcical if I didn’t include literature in healing.

If songs provide glimmers of wisdom, truth and relief to turn back to, films may provide whole portions of these. But there is something different in the vastness, the intimacy, of books and poetry. During the days between the news my dad had died and my flight home from Australia, my brother sent me an extract from a book. A family friend had given it to my brothers and mum; he passed it on. I was almost surprised he knew me so well, that he was aware that a cluster of words from a story would bring me, though perhaps not joy, certainly comfort.

In my first week of term, one of the set texts was Tennyson’s *In Memoriam A.H.H.* It’s a poem near one hundred pages long. Even in a class of eager first-year English students, frustration and defeat at the poem’s immense length seemed to be the prevailing mood. But not for me. I knew, of course, why stanza after stanza of grief could be so tedious to one who’d never experienced it. Art is of course accessible through sympathy, but sympathy is limited, and empathy exceeds it infinitely. It’s one thing to read a poem about the death of a loved one and think, “Wow, I bet that sucked”, another to read it and think, “Wow. I know *how much that sucked*”. As such, I loved the poem — all one-hundred and thirty-three heartbroken, melancholic, desperate cantos of it. I felt so affirmed, so vindicated, that year after year Tennyson wrote of and articulated a hurt as great as mine.

I worried, and still worry, that after the one-year anniversary of a death, you lose the right to grieve. I set out false parameters in my head: after one year, you stop crying about it to friends. After three, you stop bringing it up in conversation. After five years, maximum, you feel better about it; you no longer think about it every day; you no longer cry about it on your own.

But sorrow doesn’t have a sell-by date. And I was setting myself up for failure, expecting too much of myself and too little of the people around me — who, I thought, would grow sick of my sadness. But Tennyson wrote *In Memoriam* for seventeen years. *Seventeen*. He revisits his heartache over and over. He relives it just as any griefster does, and will.

My dad read all his children the Narnia books, eagerly, and with so much joy and wonder that a love for the fantastic infected his children — at least, certainly his daughter. Even when I came home after bad days as a teenager, feeling miserable or tired or crushed, my dad would offer to read me C. S. Lewis to cheer me up. Perhaps this ought to be embarrassing to admit. But he *loved* literature, and I love it all the more for the pieces of him I can find in it.

I reread all the Narnia books after his death — some of it, admittedly, isn’t palatable, and Lewis’s books have faced justified criticism for their various jumbles of prejudice. But, in a children’s book, to find lines as succinct and touching as “Farewell. We have known great joys together”; “It were no virtue, but great discourtesy, if we did not mourn”; “The dream is ended: this is the morning”, is a rare and precious thing indeed, especially to those who have lost someone unspeakably precious to them. But why should words matter to us so?

Grief leaves us feeling isolated, and isolation leaves us feeling defeated. But the end of the quote my brother sent me, “So he passed over, and the Trumpets sounded for him on the other side”, made me feel ineffably comforted, and proud of my dad, and privileged to know that he’d been a man we loved so dearly it was agony to say goodbye.

In the stories, poems and fables of word-smiths we admire there is *so much victory*. Perhaps it’s the immersiveness of literature, that we invest so much in it that we are able to then, in return, gain so much. But we view the world in terms of narrative: we impose an order on what often seems terrifyingly like chaos so that there is structure and sense to it. Structure and sense seem most acutely disrupted in the face of death: yet they return to us in the clarity and close of narration, of a story well told, of a poem well written.

And so, even by their covers, I remember my dad’s face, his warmth, his love, in the books that line my shelves ●



MORE REVIEWS ONLINE
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Growing Paynes

After a promising start, this absurd drama fails to impress
Lillian Crawford

FILM REVIEW

Downsizing

Dir. Alexander Payne
 In cinemas now

★★★

Norway is the closest many have come to experiencing the numinosum. Drifting down the fjords, the airs of Grieg throbbing in one's ear – everything suddenly seems small. We take note of minute details, the overwhelming prevalence of the world's divine teleology almost onanistic. Our human egoism starts to fade, and we at last become one with the nature that surrounds us. A powerful, almost poetic idea, is it not? Alexander Payne certainly seems to think so.

At the climax of *Downsizing*, Hong Chau's Ngoc Lan Tran touchingly shares this doctrine with Paul Safranek, the most Matt Damon-like character to date, who bizarrely grasps it after watching an old man eat his supper. The film is similarly convoluted, giving the impression that the magnificent Norwegian landscapes have been included for cinematographic value rather than as a necessary plot point. Indeed, why these characters end up there is entirely inconsequential, and is never satisfactorily explained.

That the film would be moving toward this denouement is likewise unforeseen. *Downsizing* opens with an uncomfortable act of animal cruelty that sets up the environmental themes that follow. And what an intriguing premise it is! Dr Jørgen Asbjørnsen delivers an address at just five inches tall – awestruck laughter ensues, we revel in the delights of the prospective small world. Payne seems to be taking us down a Charlie Kaufman-esque

path of social reflection through the absurdly unimaginable, and there is seldom cause to hold back.

It is in the 'big' world that the concept thrives. Kristen Wiig is both charming and hilarious as Paul's wife, Audrey, and her initial hesitation thankfully drags out the comic play between little and large. Jason Sudeikis pops up at a dinner event in miniature, allowing for sparkling Lilliputian interactions to ensue. Neil Patrick Harris gives us a tour of his house where Laura Dern bathes in \$80 diamond jewellery, the middling sort living like "kings" in Leisureland. We are then treated to an exquisitely balletic sequence of the mirthful yet deftly beautiful downsizing process to the tune of Rolfe Kent's breakout score – it seems that a masterpiece is beginning to form.

And then it stops. As soon as Damon awakes in the land of the small, Payne's storyboards appear to have run as dry as a giant cracker. Wiig is written out of the picture, never to be seen again. Characters will come and go in this manner throughout, finally settling on a Vietnamese caretaker with a wooden leg, a sea captain, and Christoph Waltz doing a silly Russian accent. In another pair of hands, this might have made for comedy gold, but is here used to channel a contrived chain of controversies that rush by without conclusion. Out of the blue, the world is ending, and the band of barely acquainted misfits set sail for Norway, leaving everyone else behind in an auditorium of frustration.

There are times when *Downsizing* shines – Chau has a smattering of standout moments when she is not playing too heavily on the screenplay's racial stereotypes. A scene where Paul has to sign a legal form in enormous handwriting, and a removal van delivering unshrunk wedding rings will undoubtedly break out a smile. But when the messages at its heart are so bunglingly handled, the whole point of the film trailing in its wake, the world stops feeling small after all ●

▲ **Hong Chau and Matt Damon cruise the fjords with a pile of giant bottles of vodka in gorgeously irrelevant style** (PARAMOUNT PICTURES)

Scenes from the Stone Age

FILM REVIEW

Early Man

Dir. Nick Park
 In cinemas now

★★★

Early Man starts well. This review could plausibly finish there, but I will humour this publication's editors by providing the customary window dressing.

We open with two dinosaurs doing battle in the shadow of a volcano. An on-screen caption reads "somewhere near Manchester". We laugh. We keep laughing through the joyously silly prologue, our introduction to the various crackpot members of the protagonist's tribe and their subsequent fevered rabbit hunt. Then – lo, what wonder is this? – a villain emerges from an armoured war elephant, speaking in an utterly outrageous French accent. We laugh some more.

We continue to laugh as our hero infiltrates a Bronze Age settlement, the details to the rear of the screen just as glorious as the frivolity at the fore. Then a giant duck steps on the tribe's only football (they have to win a match against the Bronze Age champions to save their valley, you see), and is then described by Richard Ayoade's character as a "monstrous mallard". We stop laughing.

And we never really start again. A 'story consultant' is listed in *Early Man's* credits, and, whatever they might have been paid, it was too much.

Early Man's plot is catastrophically dismal, offering fewer surprises than might be expected from a three-panel strip comic, and in the meantime failing to develop its characters such that they become something more than generic caricatures.

These points would not have mattered if the jokes had kept coming, but alas a sustained bombardment of gags died down to a trickle of limp puns. Two football commentators, whom one can only assume were intended as comic foils, were given a lot of lines, but no funny ones, as the remainder of the characters disappointingly transitioned from jocular to earnest.

Early Man, indeed, does a tremendous job of engendering the viewer's good will, then squandering it. The Kaiser Chiefs' magnificent *I Predict a Riot* gives way to a stolid cover of Mud's *Tiger Feet*. The puerile and the scatological encroach where before they had no hold.

The outrageous French accent loses its appeal once it has nothing especially outrageous to say. At the film's conclusion, the hilarity of the opening seemed but a distant memory, the boredom induced by the final scenes far more prominent in the mind.

So there we have it: *Early Man* starts well. It would take an indulgent soul, however, to argue anything more ●

Hugh Oxlade

SPOTLIGHT

Five Stop-Motion Features



Fantastic Mr Fox,
 dir. Wes Anderson
 (2009)



Anomalisa
 dir. Charlie Kaufman &
 Duke Johnson (2015)



The Nightmare Before Christmas
 dir. Henry Selick (1994)



Chicken Run
 dir. Nick Park & Peter
 Lord (2000)



Kubo and the Two Strings
 dir. Travis Knight (2016)

▼ **Dug and Hognob head off on an adventure that slowly loses steam towards the end** (STUDIO CANAL)





The buttrees and the breeze-block: how each college reflects the time it was built



Despite stark stylistic disparities, the architecture of Cambridge's various colleges transcends fundamental aspects of Cantabrigian life

Joseph Krol

Cambridge engenders a curious paradox – it at once seems unchanging and steadfast in its ways, and yet ever subtle in some state of flux. My own college, Corpus Christi, is at the moment a perfect example. In one court, life goes on much as it did when it was built six centuries ago. In another, temporary buildings sit awkwardly upon the grass, providing a base for the biggest structural renovations in decades.

It is arresting for passing visitors looking in. They expect to photograph a cleaner, purer, more idyllic court which in their eyes represents Cambridge's tradition. The focus is so often drawn to these old architectural favourites: there can be few scenes more iconic than that view of King's College Chapel from across the Backs.

The tourists, snapping studiously away, will come and go thinking that Cambridge is amply represented by all these famous monuments. Many of these structures form part of the Perpendicular Gothic tradition. Developing from the 1350s onwards, it tended to use larger windows and less elaborate masonry than the styles that preceded it; King's is a key example. It was a major influence on much of the central

city, but even so, there is more to Cambridge than this.

A little experience of the city will soon show another side. The concrete of Churchill and the red bricks of Robinson, though less traditional, are as Cantabrigian as all of the more famous chapels. Many of these infamous buildings rose as part of the Brutalist movement of the mid-twentieth century, whose rugged, raw designs seem to espouse a very different view to the masons of old.

Indeed, King's and Churchill look so utterly different that one cannot imagine that the architects had any shred of common ground. Looking at the former, the colossally projecting vertical lines embodied in King's are a desperate striving toward God. They wrought majesty into their chapel as a form of hopeful reverence, as they stood terrified in the aftermath of the Black Death.

But Churchill, too, is an architectural reaction to unspeakable horrors, created by its Prime Ministerial namesake following World War Two. The religious attitude could hardly have been more different. One of the initial fellows, the geneticist Francis Crick, threatened to leave the project if a chapel were built at the

college, claiming that it would disturb the scientific focus. As a result, the design is in some sense humanist; the architects, sobered by the war, created a much plainer structure, intending to inspire introspection rather than a trivial enchantment with the exterior. By rendering the buildings more functional, it serves to remind us that the real Cambridge is formed by the people who live and work inside them.

Both colleges look completely distinct, yet both share an underlying intention that we cannot fail to acknowledge. However, the way their designs respond to the dark historical periods that preceded them are the products of two very different societies. In this manner, all architecture reflects the society in which, and for which, it is built.

In a place so steeped in history as Cambridge, it can be hard not to be sceptical of change, not to be engulfed or annoyed by the shock of the new. But, if Cambridge is to develop and grow, we must take a much wider view. We are not the first to inhabit our rooms, and we will not be the last. We all stand at the ends of unbroken chains of minds, at once overwhelmingly close and unimaginably distant from those who have gone before. Perhaps it is in this that the aura of the buildings lies – not in their intrinsic design, but in the associations we make within them, and how they commingle with the spirit of centuries past.

Whichever building one considers, Cambridge is greater than the sum of its years. The joys and the troubles of myriad students are all etched into the very stonework; each scholar's great ideas rest in the eaves of every hall. These courts have seen medieval pageantry in all its quaintness: the Tudor intransigence, the dramaturgy of the Elizabethan wits, the shining stars of the Enlightenment, all the decadence of the Victorians, the ecstasies of the twenties, and the agonies of the thirties. Now it is our turn to act upon the stage they set, and we must strive to make the most of it ●

SPOTLIGHT

The Brutal-list



The Southbank Centre

Despite the grey riverfront facade, there is nuance in the concrete structure of the National Theatre and the Hayward Gallery



Habitat 67

A model housing complex consisting of haphazardly placed cubic forms



Basil College of Art & Design

Poetically utilitarian, the placement of four walls around a central courtyard seemingly takes on the form of something akin to unfolding origami

▲ **Churchill College, comprising monolithic structures and large expanses of plain colour**

(CAMBRIDGE ALTERNATIVE PROSPECTUS)

► **King's College Chapel, often thought of as the peak of Cambridge architecture**

(WIKIPEDIA: SAIKO)





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For the second instalment of our vintage-inspired photoshoot with Cambridge brands, Barefoot Vintage and Fantasia, *Varsity Fashion* brings you the best in eveningwear to add some extra glitz and glam to your wardrobe, whether you're looking for a one-off party ensemble or getting ahead of the schedule for May Week. With a huge selection of pieces, from elegant silk gowns to edgy jumpsuits, these Cambridge stores will have you prepared for any occasion.



PHOTOGRAPHER
 James Luis

MODELS
 Anna Cardoso
 Ada Barume
 Olivia Miller
 Linn Møystad

STYLING
 Robyn Schaffer
 Eli Hayes

CLOTHES
 Barefoot Vintage
 Fantasia

SPOTLIGHT

①
 John Marks London by Anne Tyrrell
 Lemon and Beige Jumpsuit, Barefoot Vintage,
 £145
 1970s letter shoulder bag, Fantasia, £25

②
 John Marks London by Anne Tyrrell
 Black and Gold Stripe Halter Dress, Barefoot
 Vintage, £145
 Boots by Jeffrey Campbell, Fantasia, £73

③
 Ossie Clark for Radley Black Moss Crepe
 Wrap Maxi Dress, Barefoot Vintage, £1,300
 Shoes, model's own





James Blunt ‘I am essentially a man known for one song and one song only’



Talking Elton John and hungover Sao Paulo shows, the singer-songwriter chats with **Sam Brown**

They say to never meet your heroes. It's a good job James Blunt is only a semi-ironic guilty pleasure, then. Like many a twenty-somethings with questionable music taste, Blunt's intrusions into the sound waves of my life have been twofold: squeaky, pre-pubescent attempts at the falsetto in the 'You're Beautiful' chorus, and daring efforts to squeeze 'Goodbye My Lover' into Sunday Life pre-drinks. I jumped, therefore, at the chance to fire some hard-hitters in Blunt's direction. As it turns out, his feathers are not easily ruffled.

I met with Blunt after his talk at the Union last week. I caught his eye, as he walked on by – he could see from my face that I was eager to throw some questions his way. As was clear from his interview in the chamber, Blunt does not take himself too seriously. “I am essentially a man known for one song, and one song only,” Blunt points out, before strumming the opening chords of his ‘You're Beautiful’. “Everyone's got it wrong, though. This is not a mushy love song to be played at weddings, but one about me stalking an ex-girlfriend whilst very high.”

You would think making one's name by

producing romantic ballads would make you a hit with the ladies, but you would be wrong. “Writing songs like ‘You're Beautiful’ is not the way to find ‘the one’,” Blunt continues, “As it turns out, stalking is not a great flirtation technique. If you want to pay some bills, on the other hand, singing about stalking is perfect.” Blunt was clearly not a *wise man* in some of his earlier romantic endeavours, it seems.

A similarly self-deprecatory vein can be found on his Twitter feed. With limitless irony, Blunt proudly proclaims his No.1 status in Tajikistan and Niger, and responds to critical tweets with punchy one-liners. One poor soul tweeted: “James Blunt has a twitter, what would he even tweet about?”. Blunt replied: “Boning your mum”. Responding to a question about his Twitter acclaim, Blunt says “I don't usually try and get in spats, instead aiming for one or two witty lines.” Despite this clear knack for vulgar humour, he is friendly in conversation, only mocking me once.

Many have compared Blunt's musical style to other singer-songwriters of the early noughties. “Damien Rice, David Gray, and I were starting out at a very similar time, and, in many ways, they opened the doors for me

to the music industry,” Blunt says. “Without them, record labels wouldn't have been as open-minded enough to give me a shot.” It is true that Rice and Blunt, in particular, are not traditional chart-topping pop stars. Both have effeminate singing styles, and their lyrics are underlined by a fragile masculinity that was not exactly mainstream back before Rice and Blunt made it so.

While Blunt did not have a clear idea about what music he was going to produce when young, he slowly gravitated towards the sound of the 70s as he matured. “From Elton John, Paul Simon, Lou Reed, Leonard Cohen, Cat Stevens, and bands like Fleetwood Mac – that was an amazing era of creativity, and a big source of inspiration for me.” It was through Elton John that Blunt arguably caught his first big break, touring with the star in late 2004 and early 2005.

Elton was a mentor to Blunt in his early years, in a similar way to how Blunt has ‘apprenticed’ Ed Sheeran recently. The epitome of a high-flying ‘bromance’, Blunt and Sheeran have found themselves in many a drunken situation together. One story sticks out. At a party at Windsor Castle in November 2016, Princess Beatrice reportedly cut Ed with a ceremonial sword while trying to ‘knight’ James Blunt. It sounds the stuff of legends, and Blunt is unsurprisingly unwilling to comment. “My publicists would get very angry if I discussed this,” he says, with the wry grin of someone who is no stranger to hedonism. “We certainly have a mutual love of alcohol, long may it last,” he admits.

Asked what the essentials are for any tour bus, Blunt replies: “No food, just booze. Corona, Heineken, Vodka, and mixers. That really is it.” At the ripe old age of 43, Blunt's tour lifestyle certainly hits harder in the mornings than it used to do. “Some gigs I've played, I've just been incredibly hungover, struggling to get it out. But that's just the job.” I feel your pain, James, I reply – Thursday morning supervisions are probably a comparable experience to a rough gig in Sao Paulo.

With such esteemed musical influences as Elton John and Ed Sheeran, I was surprised that certain songs on Blunt's most recent album, ‘Afterlove’, were so clearly geared towards the club music scene. His collaboration with Robin Shultz, titled ‘OK’, is a prime example of this. Blunt physically slumps as I mention this, and gives a very frank admission of guilt. “I did not want that song on the album,” he sighs. “I never want to hear that song again, and I tried to get rid of it.” The song was a hit everywhere apart from the UK, but it still seems like selling out for Blunt: “It's not the kind of music I will do in the future, nor is it music that I want to make.”

Despite having convinced myself that I would end the interview by slipping into a rendition of ‘Goodbye My Lover’, my heart wasn't really in it. In truth, Blunt had been too sincere and genuine to mock at the last. What is clear, however, is that although I don't think I'll see him again, we shared a moment that will last till the end ●



▲ (ALISA MOLOTOVA)

“*‘You're Beautiful’... is not a mushy love song to be played at weddings, but one about me stalking an ex-girlfriend whilst very high*”

TO BE BLUNT

James Blunt claims he's known for only one song. These songs are all in James' top five on Spotify. have you heard any of them?

**‘OK’
‘1973’
‘Don't give me those eyes’**

▲ **Speaking at the Union, Blunt stressed not taking himself too seriously**
(ALISA MOLOTOVA)

FULL REVIEWS ONLINE
VARSITY.CO.UK/THEATRE

Getting closer to the poster

Part advertising campaign, part artistic creation, we examine the beloved theatrical poster

Phoebe Cramer

Theatre posters are a prominent feature of Cambridge's scenery. Clustered on railings around every college and site going, they're as natural as the gates of Trinity and the endless bicycle lined streets. It's almost sad how quickly posters blend into a typical background. Their presence is unchanging, yet every week it is a different collection of shows proudly displayed, switching as if by magic – or various producers running around with beady eyes and a fist full of cable ties.

A poster itself is a unique hybrid too. It's where advertising meets art; a combination of image, text and information that somehow has to convince people not only to spend their money, but also to invest time and interest into a story. Unlike film, theatre isn't typically already photographic. Direct images of scenes can't just be cut and edited. Instead, artwork has to be created of its own accord and somehow must convey a live performance. Here in Cambridge, publicity designers face an even harder challenge than professionals do. While some student actors are admittedly more recognisable than others, they're not quite yet at the Benedict Cumberbatch level of their faces alone being enough for a poster. More creativity is required than that.

So what makes a theatre poster a good theatre poster? Stylistic appeal is, of course, subjective. Rick Poyner, Professor of Design and Visual Culture at the University of Reading, has openly declared that "there is no formula" to a perfect poster. What a theatre poster must "absolutely have to do is grab the viewer's attention" and "magnetise the eye." Magnetism. Sounds like an easy task.

This week as usual, lots of new posters have been competing for that magnetism

around town. There's a lively yellow 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee (Henry Aldridge) and an intense looking Spring Awakening (Shali Reddy). The two ADC shows contrast enormously and yet both posters fulfil Poyner's criteria by demanding attention. Rob Eager's Footlights Presents: Pen Pals poster is bright, busy and actor-focused. It's clearly comedy, even disregarding the Footlight's stamp, but more than that you can tell it's devised sketch instead of a comedic play simply by the overly-staged headshots that expand from their stamps.

In an entirely different vein, Oscar Yang's striking design for The Oresteia, Aeschylus's immense trilogy of Greek tragedies, is nothing if not defiant. By the use of a vivid red and title alone, the poster oozes an almost arrogant knowledge that the viewer will go to see this show. It gives nothing away but sets the tone no doubt perfectly. Poyner says, "A theatre poster should make you want to find out more." It hits this perfectly.

Poyner has been discussing the subject in relation to his current exhibition at the National Theatre called - directly enough - National Theatre Posters. It explores the designs and trends of the NT's posters from 1963 to the present, presenting a rich history of art. There's distinct trends with each new artistic director: a personal favourite of mine is the 1977 poster for Bedroom Farce (Richard Bird and Michael Mayhew). It is incredibly of its time, from the font to the grainy aura of the bed. It catches the eye with perfect colourings and a wonderful clash between the font and the plain suburban image. Just like Wang's design, it's a classic example of the principle that less is the way to intrigue.

It is a testament to the unbeatable integrity

► Some of the stand-out posters from this term

(COMPILATION: ANNA JENNINGS)



and clarity of the theatre poster that they have survived as a medium. Given the inescapable digital technology of the 21st Century world, posters could be seen as obsolete. Short videos are better suited to Facebook streams and Instagram, theatre trailers gaining popularity as more and more theatre gets recorded and distributed. A quick scroll through the infamous 'Cambridge Theatre' Facebook group and you come across just as many short trailers as posters. With music, moving visuals and dialogue snippets, the appeal of these new forms of publicity is hard to miss. In his book, Street Talk: The Rise and Fall of the Poster, Angharad Lewis notes that the phrase she hears most frequently when discussing posters with designers is that it is "a dead medium".

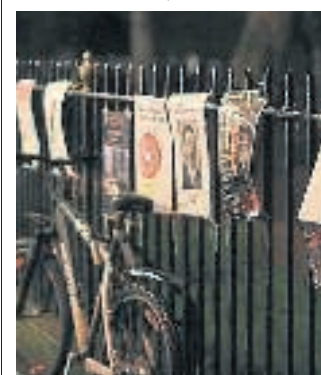
Yet, while the field for theatre publicity has expanded remarkably both, professionally and within Cambridge, the poster is far from dead. The railings of St John's Street would be remarkably bare without the overlapping masses of adverts and art.

There's no danger of the poster fading out, but it might still be worth pausing and appreciating them more ●

“The unbeatable integrity and clarity of the theatre poster”

▼ The poster-lined railings of St John's Street

(LOUIS ASHWORTH)



Kulture Review Round-up

Oresteia

★★★★

7.45pm, ADC Theatre



The production feels fated from the very off: the set is a constant inconvenience to the actors. A set should provide an architecture for acting: this set hindered the performance at nearly every instance. It took the form of two raised platforms one on top of each other, painted white. Imagine a very wide, two tiered wedding cake. Nearly all of the action happened on its top plinth, with nearly none of the principal characters using the space several metres

down stage. The result was that for the front four rows of the audience, nearly 40 people in total, our direct eye-line was a white plank. It is painful to watch the physical intuitions of the actors being confined to such a small space. Constrained and awkward, the actors creep around their diminished stage, desperately trying to avoid the creaking boards below them. The decision to have all actors positioned at the marginalia of stage throughout the duration sapped energy ●

Dear Lupin

★★★★

7pm, Corpus Playroom



(MARIANNE HAROCHE)

The performance of Will Hall is deserving of the highest praise, so too is the excellent work put in by all members of the production team. The set is cleverly divided into two halves, which are versatile spaces throughout the play, each cleverly played in contrast with the other. The depth of the stage is used very well, with the Corpus corner and centre stage being flexible spaces where anything can happen ●

★★★★★ = AMAZING
 ★★★★★☆ = GREAT
 ★★★★☆ = GOOD

★★☆☆☆ = OK
 ★☆☆☆☆ = BAD
 ☆☆☆☆☆ = ABYSMAL

Bored of the Bard? Why we keep staging Shakespeare

It's week three, and two high-profile Shakespeare productions have already graced Cambridge's stages. Plenty more Shakespeare-inspired shows fill the camdram diary, dominating the term's agenda. I boldly ask, therefore, whether it is possible to have too much of a good thing?

I know what an English teacher would tell you: Shakespeare changed the face of theatre, and for the last 500 years his figure has dominated the stage, both directly through his own writing but also indirectly through characters whose relationships, fated desires and scheming humour have transcended him, becoming tropes which we draw from every day of our lives. A linguist would draw your attention to the glorious mass of words and phrases coined by this genius; many would think it enough to praise the sheer beauty of his poetry.

But you've heard these arguments before, and the problem with them lies in the very assumption that all productions of a single Shakespeare play are the same, or indeed remotely similar. Time, place, space – mess around with these and the play can become almost unrecognisable; the effect on the audience can be completely turned on its head. Take the recent ADC production of *Much Ado About Nothing*, a wonderfully-crafted show set



◀ **Much Ado About Nothing** dazzled audiences at the start of term

(LAURA WELLS)

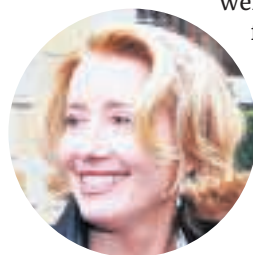
during a carnival, with the characters wearing bright colours and masks as they whirled and danced through the story. In this case, the setting of the play helped the audience to see the characters' interactions – interactions which have been re-enacted uncountable times on the stage – from a new angle of jest and good-natured playfulness.

When I watched a production of *King Lear* this summer, I was stunned to see the Globe's awesome pillars covered up by dusty tarpaulins and white sheets; the first characters on the stage were not the King and his daughters, but a rabble of travellers who banged on the stage doors and piled up their suitcases on the stage. This opening was unexpected, but the presence of the travellers put a new emphasis on ideas about travel in the play. Travel wearies the King, driving him to madness. While all these productions and many more have stuck to original Shakespearean language, they are not merely re-runs of the 16th century Globe performances. Each new director brings a new perspective, a new focus, necessarily imposing their own experiences and emotions. The play is no longer a 'Shakespeare' invention but a collaboration: antiquity colliding with modernity, creating a piece of art that resonates even five hundred years after its first performance ● **Iris Pearson**

Let's start at the very beginning Thompson & Toksvig at the ADC

In 1980 Emma Thompson and Sandi Toksvig, then undergraduates respectively at Newnham and Girton, brought *Woman's Hour* to the ADC Theatre. Their all-female show was hailed as "punchy, fast-moving and fun" by Varsity's reviewer. Toksvig and Thompson, both members of the Footlights,

were joined by two other female comedians and the troupe of actors are pictured posing majestically for a poster.



(GEORGES
BIARD)

The show consisted of a series of sketches poking fun at typical female behaviour (among other things) such as "the ridicule women bring upon themselves

through their hang-ups about the size of their thighs". While the reviewer's commentary on the show was largely positive, they also considered the catastrophic effects of a show excluding men, suggesting that shows of this type might "isolate (women) from mainstream humour by leading us to think that women can only put on good shows about women". However, this was clearly something the creators of *Woman's Hour* sidestepped, as the reviewer kindly praised the show for managing "to avoid being aggressively feminist". The show was a hit with Cambridge audiences: in the following Varsity issue a small note was published stating that "due to popular demand", *Woman's Hour* would return as the ADC late show.

Since their days in Cambridge, both women have gone on to become household names with Toksvig hosting programmes such as *QI* and *The Great British Bake Off*, and Thompson starring in *Nanny McPhee*, *Love Actually* and *Beauty and the Beast*. The legacy of Toksvig and Thompson's all-female show still lives on in Cambridge – watch out for *Comic Sans Men* coming soon. Described as "a brand-new comedy hour...without a script or a man in sight", this show certainly bears a resemblance to Toksvig and Thompson's creation and it is clear that female comedy shows are as much a part of Cambridge's theatre scene now as they were in the 1980s ●

Francesca Vella-Bonnici



▲ **The troupe behind 'Woman's Hour'**
(VARSITY ARCHIVES)

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Sport

Phil Neville's appointment is just the latest mishap for mistake-beset FA

● Ex-Manchester United and Everton defender has been appointed ahead of 146 other candidates

Paul Hyland

Sometimes a single word can tell you all you need to know. FA chairman Greg Clarke only needs to mutter some blithe comment about the “fluff” of institutional racism at October’s select committee hearing, and his organisation’s stance on discrimination couldn’t be clearer. They’re not really that bothered.

The inquiry had found - at the third time of asking - that England players Eniola Aluko and Drew Spence had been victims of racist treatment by then-manager Mark Sampson. Sampson had asked Aluko to make sure that her Nigerian relatives didn’t bring Ebola over with them when they flew in to watch her take on Germany at Wembley. At the China Cup in 2015 Sampson had also asked Aluko’s teammate Spence, who is mixed race, how many times she had been arrested. “Fluff” indeed.

You’d think that’d be the end of the road for Sampson. Well, not quite. The England manager was relieved of his duties in September 2017 due to reports that he’d been in a relationship with one of his players during his four year stint at Bristol Academy, with the FA citing “inappropriate and unacceptable behaviour by a coach”. Funny that the mere whisper of a relationship at a former employer warrants an immediate sacking, but racial abuse towards two of your current players has to go through three parliamentary enquiries just to be recognised.

That day Clarke and FA chief executive Martin Glenn both admitted to serious failures in safeguarding procedures at the organisation. Both have resisted any calls to resign from their posts, and thank God for that, otherwise they wouldn’t have been able to make the excellent decision of appointing Phil Neville.

For the England team it’s the definition of a coup. He not only helped to coach Manchester United to the dizzying heights of 7th place back in 2014, but he and brother Gary worked their magic to help Spanish giants Valencia to a magnif-



▼ Eniola Aluko was subject to racist treatment by Neville's predecessor, Mark Sampson (JAMES BOYES)

icent 12th two years ago. Having inspired sixth-tier Salford City to a 2-1 evisceration of Kendal Town in his single fixture as caretaker manager, it’s not hard to see how Neville is the standout candidate to take the world’s third best national side to the very next level.

And now with a series of historic, sexist tweets coming to light over the past week, he looks more than equipped to pick up right where Mark Sampson left off. Because he’s not just a great coach, he’s hilarious too. He even knows a joke or two about domestic abuse: “Relax I’m back chilled - just battered the wife!!! Feel better now!” he tweeted drolly in 2011. And after a follower asked him in 2012 why Neville had addressed a tweet only to the male members of Twitter, his wit and repartee shone through once more: “When I said morning men I thought the women would of [sic] been busy preparing breakfast/getting kids ready/making the beds - sorry morning women!”

Not only have the England women’s team been foisted with a novice whose teams only improve after he’s left — with Manchester United and Valencia now in second and third in their respective leagues — but with one who has already publicly challenged their right to operate in any space other than their homes. Clarke and co. have really outdone themselves to get such an important appointment so unfathomably wrong.

So we’re left with one of two Football Associations: either one that isn’t capable

of doing the kind of due diligence on a managerial candidate that can be carried out in five minutes by anyone vaguely familiar with the Twitter search function, or one that is capable of it but won’t be deterred by anything they find.

In fact, various media outlets reported last week that the FA were already well aware of Neville’s tweets, but went ahead and appointed him anyway. Serial defender of the downtrodden Martin Glenn said that the FA’s background checks had left him impressed by Neville’s “integrity and values”. When anti-discrimination body Kick It Out contacted the FA to clarify whether Neville would be charged for his comments on social media, they responded that his posts “did not meet the threshold” for disciplinary action. In other words, misogynist attitudes and public apologia for domestic violence aren’t deemed punishable conduct in the manager of the England women’s national team. Now, is it just me or is this all starting to sound a little, concerningly familiar?

In the past week FA head of women’s football, Baroness Sue Campbell, has defended the FA’s choice, claiming that they considered 147 different candidates before settling on Neville. If anything, to have a list of well over a hundred applicants and settle on someone so under-qualified is a perfect example of how FA recruitment procedure is in dire need of a rethink.

Campbell also claimed that the leading candidates, identified over a “massive global search” saw the job as a

▲ Phil Neville (fourth from right) has extensive business ventures in Manchester with former teammates (UNIVERSITY OF SALFORD)

“risk”, and that many were afraid of the media scrutiny that would come with the job. Though I’m not so sure what scrutiny she’s referring to given how little of it Neville was subjected to by her and her colleagues. In a sense then they got their ideal candidate, because no one seems to be safer from scrutiny than a man in the women’s game.

Talented coaches have been deprived of the opportunity to work with a great team, and vice versa. Trinidad and Tobago head coach Carolina Morace, who has also managed Italy and secured international honours with Canada, told *The Guardian* that she could not understand the FA’s claim that no women wanted the job. “I’m sorry, you can’t say there aren’t women available who are good enough to coach England and that they’re all worried about the media scrutiny,” she said. Despite her obvious interest in the role, the Italian wasn’t even offered so much as an interview. Despite never so much as applying, Phil Neville was offered the job.

The biggest problem with Neville’s appointment isn’t that he’s a man, or that he’s never worked in women’s football. It’s that he’s just plain old not very good. But as a member of that ever-vaunted “Class of ’92”, as a richly-remunerated former player turned passable pundit, and as a bloke, he has absolutely no need to be. Women more than twice as good as him might still be less than half as likely to be given his opportunities. But hey, I guess this is all just fluff.

“No one seems to be safer from scrutiny than a man in the women’s game”



Sport

Joe Root does not need IPL cricket

Thomas Hinch

County cricket is not the Premier League, it is not the NFL. The razzmatazz, massive crowds, and seven-figure contracts of the Indian Premier League is perhaps the closest cricketers can get to the worlds of the major sports. Last year's tournament was watched by an estimated 700 million people across the globe; continued growth in the IPL brand seems unlikely to abate any time soon.

By contrast, Test cricket seems in perpetual decline. England's 4-0 drubbing at the hands of Australia came as little surprise, and with little excitement, as the trend of hollow, uncompetitive and uninspiring Ashes home wins continued. It is easy, therefore, to see why Joe Root, claiming he doesn't want to be "left behind" in T20 cricket, might be drawn to India's blockbuster spectacle; it's not something he needs though.

By signing up for the league's auction, Root committed to the potential of missing the upcoming tri-series with Australia and New Zealand in order to

guarantee himself some rest time in his schedule. However, in surprisingly going unsold in both rounds of bidding, Root may have been given a blessing in disguise; it is an opportunity he must take.

It would seem that Root has developed a serious case of the fear of missing out. Despite having taken on the enormous strain of being England's test captain, Root continues to strive to be one of England's few all-format players. Root has been a stalwart of the T20, ODI and Test teams since 2012 and apparently agonised over the decision to miss the forthcoming T20 internationals. Where Root plays his cricket is not the debate that matters. Rather than attempting to put himself in contention for selection in the shorter forms of the game, Root should be focussing on his Test game, so that he is ready for Australia's return this summer. Partaking in a form of cricket where 30 is a good score and innings are shorter than Test match sessions will only aggravate the issues that the Ashes exposed.

There's no doubting Root had a decent



series in Australia, making five 50s and averaging a respectable 47.25. But, while his opposite number, Australian Captain Steve Smith, converted half-centuries to centuries on three occasions, Root failed to make a single century during the series. His modes of dismissal pose some serious questions. Top edging a needless pull shot in Melbourne on 61 and being

▲ **Root made a match-winning 190 on debut as Test Captain against South Africa at Lord's**
(NAPARAZZI)

caught for 83 flicking off his pads with just an over to survive to close in Sydney, Root seemed to lack the stamina and concentration that is demanded of a world class test batsman. He lacked the ability to grind out an innings, to dig in for long periods, and go on to make a big score of which he is undoubtedly capable. What he needs is practice, practice building scores, batting for hours at a time, and changing games as a result.

England are fortunate in that there is no shortage of short-game specialists that have brought a 4-1 ODI series victory over Australia. The likes of Jos Buttler, Jason Roy, Alex Hales, Eoin Morgan, the Curran brothers, to name but a few, are those who can compensate for the absence of Joe Root. Though Root may lose a few runs to his name, it is unlikely the T20 and ODI sides will be materially worse off for his absence.

53.28

Joe Root holds the eighth highest all-time Test batting average for an England player

Root is England's Test captain, and the opportunity is there for him to become one of England's greatest all-time cricketers. His legacy is one that will be judged on his performance in the Test arena. There is no shame in being a brilliant two-format player, even in being a single-format player. One only hopes that Joe Root can realise this.

New Cambridge Rowing Tank makes waves with boat clubs

Lawrence Hopkins
Sports Editor

Downing College Boat Club's new rowing tank is proving a hit with rowers from across the University and the city. Two years in the making, the Cambridge Rowing Tank, which contains 20 tonnes of water, offers boaties the chance to hone their skills in a more controlled environment than on the River Cam.

The Cambridge Rowing Tank, as the new facility is officially known, broke ground in June 2017 having been conceived as an idea over a year prior. Completed at the end of 2017, the tank has been seeing its first use throughout January. The facility is housed above the boat bay within Downing's boathouse.

Though owned by Downing College Boat Club, the tank is available for hire by any boat club, and all other clubs on the Cam are offered a free taster session before the £40/hour rate kicks in. The tank has already been used by over thirty other Boat Clubs, from as far away as North Norfolk.

The tank has been built by Boston-based, American firm The Durham Boat Company, who also built a similar installation at Molesey Boat Club. The team responsible for the delivery of the tank at Downing visited the Molesey tank, a similar facility in Oxford, and the Boston base of its supplier.

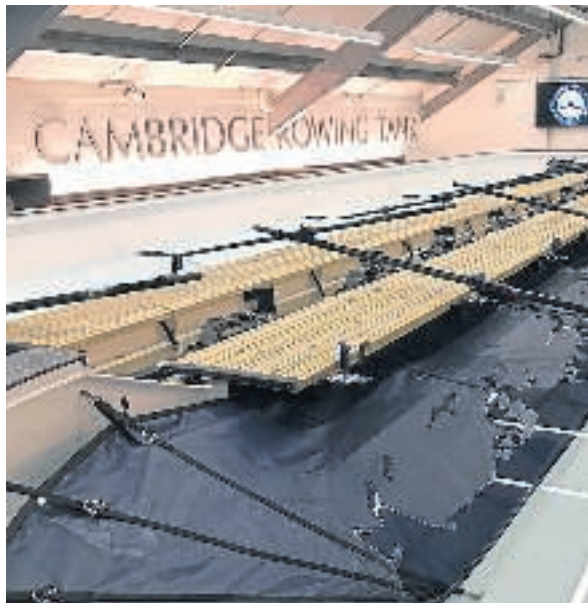
Comprised of two tanks, both 50' long, the facility is state of the art. The tank comes complete with HD screens mounted above the rowers and fed by 8

cameras around the room, giving those with oars in hand real-time feedback on technique.

Downing College Director of Rowing, Ian Watson, has described the tank as "transformational for rowing in Cambridge." His words were echoed by Cambridge Rowing Tank Officer and Downing student, Charlie Slater, who added "the tank will provide rowers in schools and clubs across the region with an opportunity to develop their technique faster and more efficiently."

The tank, whilst already open for use by clubs, will be officially opened on April 21st.

▼ **The Cambridge Rowing Tank is housed in Downing Boathouse**
(CHARLIE SLATER)



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Football: Phil Neville's appointment as England Women's manager is another FA blunder **30**



Badminton Blues rout Birmingham to boost hopes of escaping the drop

Tom Wade

The new term brought hope to the Men's Badminton team, who found themselves in the dark place that is the relegation zone of the BUCS Midlands 1A league before the start of play. Though mired in deep trouble, the Blues continued the momentum they had begun to build through a BUCS Trophy victory over Kent many moons ago to begin the uphill struggle that might see them avoid dropping down a division. The two sides that met were similar to the reverse fixture last time out in the West Country; on that occasion, the Blues had been on the receiving end of a disappointing 7-1 defeat. The result was to prove encouraging for the men of CUBaC.

First up were the doubles, and opening the exchanges for Cambridge was the new pairing of Morten Sode and Jonny Scott. The pair began confidently, improved throughout the match, and sealed a fantastic straight-sets victory. For a team that had only won one contest against the opposition before them previously, such an opening provided much needed inspiration and set the tone for the contest.

Following up the opening pair were

Marcus Liang and Thomas Sheat. A comfortable first set gave the Blues the upper hand out of the gate. Despite a brief period of uncertainty and unforced errors that cost them the duo the second set, normal service was resumed in the deciding third. A decisive margin of 21-15 in the final set gave Cambridge a lead in the match that would not be surrendered.

In the singles that followed the opening doubles, Ritish Desai stormed to victory in straight sets. Utilising his trademark relaxed playing style, Desai moved his opponent to all corners of the court effortlessly, sending the Birmingham man here, there and everywhere to no avail. Tom Wade, however, would have no such luck in his singles contest, being outplayed in two straight sets, losing out to a more consistent and fitter opponent.

At the halfway point, the realisation that the until-then impossible was actually possible began to set in for the Cambridge team. With the score at 3-1, two more victories would clinch a first league victory for the troubled side. With only three matches left in the season for the Blues, the three points on offer were vital.

Liang and Sheat got the second round

of doubles underway, attacking from start to finish to win in straight sets. The first of the two necessary victories was not, however, all plain sailing, Liang developing an unnerving tendency to fire the shuttle out of the back of the court having done the hard work left nerves fraying. In the second of the doubles, Scott and Sode struggled to deal with the attacking play of their opponents in the first set, succumbing 21-17. The pair returned fire to win both the second and third sets.

Due to the scoring system employed by the BUCS league, the remaining singles games were far from dead-rubbers. Desai upped his game to secure his second singles victory of the day. Tactical play from the Cambridge man narrowed the angles his opponent had available for shot-making, and the attacking threat on offer from the visitor was greatly diminished as a result. Desai finished the day without dropping so much as a set.

Wade, who earlier in the match had suffered defeat, dispatched his second adversary in straight sets. After a lengthy opening point that pushed both players to physical breaking point, Wade scraped through the first set. Fortunately that the opening point had not set the tone, the

▲▼ CUBaC avenged a 7-1 reverse in Birmingham earlier in the season

(TOM WADE)



Light Blue man recovered from 19-17 in the late stages to put himself in the driving seat in the final contest of the match. The second set was secured in a rather more straightforward fashion; despite vocal support from the travelling team, Wade underlined the defeat of Birmingham with his straight-sets victory to conclude the afternoon's affairs.

The first league victory for the Light Blue men should bring much encouragement; the side will hope that defeating Birmingham's second-string outfit will be the catalyst for a surge up the table over the course of Lent Term.

Three League fixtures remain for the Blues to rescue themselves from the precarious position they still occupy. If the men's team are to avoid relegation to the third tier of badminton, victory in at least one of these fixtures is required. The best opportunity to score points comes against UEA on February 28th.

Next up for the men of CUBaC is a lengthy trip to face Bath Thirds in the BUCS Trophy last 16. With their Varsity Match also on the horizon, it is all hands on deck following this victory for the remainder of the season.

CUBaC: Desai, Liang, Scott, Sheat, Sode, Wade