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Cambridge's Independent Student Newspaper since 1947

VARSITY

Police crack down on illegal student gatherings

Christopher Dorrell

Senior News Editor

Throughout the last week, students have received warnings from both police and senior tutors about breaking the rule of six.

Cambridgeshire Constabulary have issued a plea in conjunction with Cambridgeshire County Council following a number of incidents where young people were reported gathering in large groups in Parker's Piece, Midsummer Common and Jesus Green.

According to a student, who wished to remain anonymous, on 3rd October there were about 60 people on Jesus Green, very few of whom were following social distancing guidelines.

As a result, patrols have increased across the city to encourage young people, including students, to follow the rule of six.

Superintendent James Sutherland, area commander for the south of Cambridgeshire, said: "Our message throughout this pandemic remains the same that this is about personal responsibility.

"While the majority of people are acting responsibly, there are a few

who are choosing to ignore the guidance and causing disruption for the local community."

He continued: "The rules are very clear that no more than six people can be together inside or outside and we urge everyone, for the sake of the health of their families and friends, to continue to follow the law."

Director of Public Health for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, Dr Liz Robin added: "We know how much young people have been affected by the Covid-19 pandemic and the national lockdown and that many are concerned by its effect on their education, job prospects and social life, as well as their mental health and well-being.

"Unfortunately, if young people don't follow the Covid-19 rules this will result in the virus spreading more quickly in our area – increasing the risk of a local lockdown which would make the impact of the pandemic on young people even worse."

Senior Tutors across the University were contacted to pass on the message directly to students, warning them that police patrols would

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Covid-19 Watch

positive symptomatic cases

positive asymptomatic cases

3.4k

total number of students screened



▲ There will be an increased police presence throughout Cambridge (LOUIS ASHWORTH)

Students share problems of Covid-19 asymptomatic screening

Wiliam Hunter

Deputy News Editor

Diana Stoyanova Deputy News Editor Amy Howell

News Correspondent

Last week (05/10), the University ran the first round of its asymptomatic testing programme. In its first week, the programme ran at a reduced capacity, with only two people from each testing pool

being tested. As of Saturday (10/10) over 11,000 students have signed up for the scheme and over 3,500 students have already been tested.

Despite the University-wide coordination, individual colleges have been given the task of implementing and managing the scheme. This has led to different colleges taking varied approaches to the requirements of the programme.

For example, in an email from last week, Jesus college offered pool leads,

or as they've been termed "household contacts", "a one-off £50 credit [which] will be added to your College bill for this academic year".

Household contacts are expected to attend a briefing delivered by the Senior Tutor and Tutorial Department Manager and have been assigned a variety of other responsibilities to ensure the smooth running of the programme.

Likewise, student experiences across colleges have been mixed, with some

reporting more issues than others.

Some students have reported that they found the distribution and organisation of testing to have been managed well. For instance, a third year student at Queen's College, who has requested to remain anonymous, told *Varsity* that within their "testing pool the process overall ran smoothly. There was a bit of anxiety the night before as we hadn't heard which two members of our testing pool would be required to take a swab,

but by the time the test had to be taken this had been confirmed via email".

However, they also commented that "unfortunately, as someone for whom receiving health-related test results does cause quite a large amount of stress and anxiety, waiting for my results to be communicated all morning (I received them at 2pm the following day) did definitely disrupt my focus and therefore

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EDITORIAL

Cambridge, but slower

The first few weeks of Michaelmas are always a shock to the system. Between cramming coffees around introductory lectures, rushing to supos, remembering how to check out books from packed libraries and, inevitably, misplacing your camcard, keys, or both, the days seem to just disappear. This term, obviously, is slightly different. Whether you're in isolation, or (as I'm sure we're all worrying) will be soon, the weeks are passing just a little bit slower

This issue is, therefore, designed for that which a Cambridge term generally lacks - free time. From a reflection on relationships past and future (page 10) to a personal piece on, topically, "learning how to rest" (page 12), the Features section this week is looking inwards, encouraging introspection and acceptance. Opinion and Interviews, on the other hand, are drawing attention away from Cambridge - looking outwards to urgent crises across the world, with important pieces detailing the devastating blast in Beirut (page 13) and the atrocities of Uighar 're-education' camps in China (pages 14 & 18). For those seeking lighter distractions, meanwhile, Vulture is packed full of tips for socially-distanced activities - be it baking (page 21), revamping your Depop (page 24-25), or just a really really good TV show (page 23).

In essence, whilst the news of police crackdowns, problems with asymptomatic testing, and college redundancies on our first few pages may scream doom and gloom, what we're trying to encourage with the rest of this issue is exactly the opposite. Time, this term, will stretch slightly further than usual. Give productivity a rest, spend your usual Cindies ticket allowance on a delicious meal (recommendations on page 20), and read up about what you may have missed during the last few months' Covid-heavy news cycle. Or just grab a housemate and binge watch Mrs. America. As Stephen Toope once said (in his 15 October email update), "a rather unusual Michaelmas term is underway". Your corridor is your oyster - make the most of it.

Lots of love (especially to all you Freshers xx) Meike Leonard

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▶ Continued from front page

Some colleges have already been dealing with gatherings which breach the 'rule of six' within college grounds. For example, Varsity is aware that King's had two "illegal gathering(s)" in the space of a few days last week.

The second of these gatherings had a total of 15 attendees one of whom has since tested positive for Covid-19 while two students have developed symptoms. All other attendees of the gathering are currently self-isolating.

The Senior Tutor wrote to students at King's in an email saying "we are appalled that this has happened in spite of the repeated messaging you have received about the regulations you must follow while living in College accommodation"

The email continued "students belonging to the households of the students with COVID symptoms will now potentially have to face 15 days of selfisolation through no fault of their own." It also highlighted that "a further 23 students are now required to support all of those in self-isolation."

Students at Murray Edwards received a similar email from their Senior Tutor in which concerns were expressed about "reports that large groups of people from different households have been mixing in household common spaces and in each other's rooms in College accommodation...in addition to this. large gatherings have been taking place outside with no social distancing being

Such activity was described as "entirely unacceptable, dangerous and irresponsible."

The second of these gatherings had a total of 15 attendees one of whom has since tested positive for Covid-19

This was especially disappointing considering "the efforts made by the College to establish social space outdoors and to complete the work on alternative indoor social spaces for households."

At Homerton students were cautioned for "the events taking place in the marquee late on Friday night (09/10)" which were "followed by numerous incidents in rooms and corridors on Saturday

Large gatherings, students were told, were "not just against college rules but actually ILLEGAL...and we are lucky that no-one called the police."

The increased police presence around Cambridge comes amid growing concerns about an acceleration in the spread of Covid-19, with university towns across the country experiencing rising numbers of cases and students being forced to self-isolate en-masse.

Lucy Cavendish announces partial divestment from fossil fuels



Gaby Vides

Senior News Editor

Lucy Cavendish's Governing Body unanimously voted for the College to divest from its direct holdings in fossil fuel companies on October 7th.

The College will direct its divested investments towards 'green funds' or

▲ The decision comes a week after Christ's College announced plans for full divestment (LOUIS ASHWORTH)

green technology companies.

The divestment decision follows eighteen months of discussion by the College on the issue of divestment, including "a focused session on the issue of fossil fuel divestment" to which "students were invited to present their views", a speaker workshop and regular dialogue between the Governing Body and the College's Investment and Finance Committee on the practicalities of divestment.

The College will over the next year "explore how best to continue to address environmental sustainability in all its investment", their website details.

In parallel to the College's plans for divestment, Lucy Cavendish has already decided that its new building, which is planned to open in 2022, "should be constructed to Passivhaus [a company which sets sustainability standards zero-carbon standard".

Meanwhile, Lucy Cavendish, as part of its "re-formulated mission", is placing greater emphasis on Masters, Research Fellows and Postdoctoral students demonstrating "engagement in interdisciplinary research that addresses one or more of the complex, important issues facing humankind."

Lucy Cavendish is joining nine colleg-

es - Newnham, Robinson, St John's, Fitzwilliam Peterhouse,Emmanuel, Jesus, Downing and Selwyn - who are partially divested while only three Cambridge colleges - Christs, Queens and Clare Hall - are either fully divested or planning to fully divest.

The College's decision follows the announcement in the Vice-Chancellor's annual address on October 1st that the University plans to fully divest from fossil fuels by 2030.

Extinction Rebellion Youth Cambridge (XRYC), who helped to lead a campaign this summer urging colleges to divest, told Varsity that they are "delighted to hear that Lucy Cavendish College is withdrawing all direct investments from fossil fuels, and taking steps to make its estate more environmentally sustainable."

XRYC stressed that the College's decision "is a testament to the work of campaigners, particularly Cambridge Zero Carbon Society, over the last 5 years - as well as XR Cambridge's campaign of nonviolent direct action this Summer.

However, XRYC also stressed that they want to "hear more about Lucy Cavendish's plans for removing its indirect investments from fossil fuels."

Apply to be Junior Treasurer **Varsity Society**

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Applications to be the Junior Treasurer of Varsity Society are now

To apply, email president@varsity.co.uk by 5pm on the 25th October.

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VARSITY

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Direct questions to the VarSoc President at president@varsity.co.uk,

VARSITY



VARSITY FRIDAY 16th October 2020

News



▲ Students at Trinity Hall expressed concerns regarding the groupings of households (WILMATHEGOTE)

▶ Continued from front page

my work."

Students from various colleges have also reported that the program has been hampered by a lack of clarity in the instructions and communication from their colleges.

A student at Girton was asked to attend a self swab at the testing facilities at the Engineering department after their household tested positive in the pooled swab. The student claimed that, while the whole process ran "fairly smoothly", the instructions "weren't really clear" because they weren't made aware whether they could leave their room to go into the rest of the flat after their pool got a positive test.

Even though the email sent out by Dr. Ben Warne claimed students would

receive their pool test results within 24 hours, this student didn't get their results back until the following afternoon.

Similarly, there have been reports of students at Selwyn College receiving test results on Monday morning (12/10), having taken the test on Thursday (08/10).

Meanwhile, a student at St. Edmund's told *Varsity* that in the first week of testing his household never received a text confirming whether the results had come back negative or not. When asked about his evaluation of the process, the student claimed that "communication was pretty poor but the test process itself seemed ok".

Students at other colleges also encountered issues with communication. After receiving "a number of enquires about asymptomatic testing results", Chris Pope, Residences, Catering and

Events Manager at Murray Edwards sent out an email to students saying: "I would like to confirm that our current understanding is that only those with positive test results will be contacted by the testing team."

However, a student at Murray Edwards told *Varsity* this had created confusion because students had already started receiving texts saying they were negative. Murray Edwards told *Varsity* that they had emailed students with what they knew at the time in order to put students' "minds at ease" but now acknowledge that "this may have caused some confusion and appreciate students' patience in this matter".

Confusion was also sparked among Trinity Hall students, whose households, in some instances, were "aggregated into one [testing pool] to maximise testing capacity." These households, according to one anonymous student, "don't interact at all."

For this student, the issue was complicated by the second household testing positive, whereas their own household tested negative, causing both households to be asked to isolate at 1pm on Thursday afternoon, having already attended an in-person class with several other students earlier that day.

A household at Girton tested positive in the pooled sample but received a negative test from their individual samples, having received confirmation from the testing team that they had originally received a false positive.

Trinity Hall, Selwyn and St. Edmund's did not respond to Varsity's request for comment

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Cambridge researchers assist Covid-19 response across the world

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Napoleon's desert island



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Why Cambridge college workers need a union

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Cloudy with a chance of... earthquakes?



▲ (ANGELO GIORDANO

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DIY SOS:

Decorating your college room

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Cambridge City Council to guarantee rent payments to combat homelessness

Sam Crawley

News Correspondent

Cambridge City Council has announced a new initiative whereby they will guarantee monthly rent payments for landlords willing to let their property to homeless individuals.

Funded with a grant of £96,000 from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG), the scheme will last one year and cover up to twenty properties.

Homelessness is a major problem in Cambridge: in 2018-19, 158 people were verified as sleeping rough in the city across the year. Meanwhile the Office for National Statistics estimates that 13 homeless people died in the area between 2013-17.

The funding follows an almost £500,000 grant from the MHCLG in January which was earmarked towards recruiting and retaining specialist staff,

building more housing units and establishing mentoring schemes for homeless people.

The new investment into the Council's Next Steps Accommodation Programme totals over £960,000.

The individuals who will benefit from the new scheme will be rough sleepers who are leaving the emergency accommodation which was provided to them at the start of the pandemic or people who are moving on from hostel accommodation.

Since the national lockdown in March, the Council and its partners have found safe accommodation for over 140 people who had been sleeping rough or at risk of homelessness.

Under the terms of the new initiative, each potential tenant will be assessed to ensure that they can manage the tenancy and will be supported by a dedicated worker provided by the Council.

The scheme will also be beneficial to

participating landlords, many of whom have seen the Covid-19 pandemic damage their business, by providing financial security. A survey of over 4,500 landlords in May 2020 found that 29% expect to face a degree of financial hardship due to the virus.

The new scheme builds on work undertaken by Townhall Lettings (THL), the Council's social letting agency which was established in 2014 with the aim of providing housing to single homeless people. THL offers fee-free management services, guaranteed rents, deposits to cover damages and support for tenants and landlords.

Councillor Richard Johnson, Executive Councillor for Housing, said in a statement "It's great news that we have received this new funding from the government"

He continued: "Along with our partner organisations, we remain committed to supporting people with a history

of sleeping rough as they move into safe, long-term accommodation - and the council will provide assistance to any landlords who can help us in this task."

Mark Allan, the Chief Executive of Jimmy's Cambridge, a charity which has supported the city's homeless community for 25 years, told *Varsity* that "Jimmy's welcomes this offer to landlords from the City Council. A massive effort was made during the pandemic to get people who were homeless into a hotel or bed and breakfast as part of a public health initiative. And rather than having to move people out of the hotels back onto the street, the Council are looking to move people into further accommodation."

He went on: "While this offer won't help everyone, as it's not easy finding affordable homes in Cambridge, each new opportunity is a big step forward and will help another group of people."

News

Cambridge celebrates Black History Month

Cameron White

Senior News Editor

Cambridge marks Black History Month (BHM) this October in Covid-secure style. BHM comes amid a year steeped in racial issues. St Catharine's, Churchill, Lucy Cavendish and Pembroke colleges, as well as the University and a member of Pembroke's JCR Committee, all detailed their plans for BHM to Varsity.

A number of colleges have chosen to fly flags in acknowledgment of BHM. St Catharine's has honoured its history by flying the national flag of the Bahamas from the 1st until 31st October, in order to commemorate" the College's connections with the Bahamas thanks to its earliest known Black student, Alfred F.Adderlev CBE [1891-1953] .'

A St Catharine's press release continues to detail that the College "took the opportunity to fly the Bahamas flag after a recent research project found that Adderley arrived from the Bahamas to study law in 1912, making him the earliest Black member of the College on record." After graduating and receiving legal training, he returned to the Bahamas to practice law, "where he distinguished himself in court and became a leader in national politics, religion and sports."

Danielle Wright, one of the College's Black History Month organisers and JCR BME Officers, said that "given [Adderlev's breadth of interests and legacy of support [for the college], I like to think he would welcome the wide-ranging pro-

this year", continuing that "Josie Archer [the college's other JCR BME Officer] and I have been working very hard to help St Catharine's embrace our black history. and we are looking forward to students, staff and Fellows joining together - largely online in the current circumstances for these activities and writing the next chapter in our Black history."

The college's programme of events will encompass celebrations of black composers through spoken word and art, an exhibition of photographs and inspirational quotes from past and present Black members of the college community, dedicated services in the college's chapel and an event focused on supporting Black and BME students' mental health in higher education.

At Churchill a statement directed to students from the Master, Dame Athene Donald, expressed the College's stance of "dignity and respect". The text continued that "The -isms (racism, sexism and so on) have no place in the College context [...] we must not hide behind privilege but recognise that we are all born equal."

An earlier statement from the college in mid-June in the light of the Black Lives Matter movement and the death of George Floyd had acknowledged "an additional responsibility, given the name that the College carries".

The statement warned that "Churchill, as a successful leader in time of war, must not be mythologised as a man without significant flaws; on race he was backward even in his day [...] we aim to lead an ongoing critical dialogue about his own legacy in global history [...] [with] these strands [papers from the Churchill Archives Centre] offer[ing] us a unique opportunity to contribute to the debate about system racism in our global society as it has grown out of history and to work to eradicate the injustice so horribly illustrated by Floyd's death".

As part of BHM 2020, Churchill is flving the Pan-African flag and has ensured mandatory JCR workshops for Freshers on Privilege, as well as providing online presentations and videos to "be made more widely available after a further little editing."

A spokesperson for Lucy Cavendish informed Varsity that a Working Group was established in the summer to work in conjunction with their BME SU Representative, and other BME members of the Student Union, as well as the college's President and Senior Tutor.

"This group made two aims for the first part of the academic year. Firstly, to make discussion of anti-racism a core part of all incoming students' inductions and use this also for further staff training, and then to aim for a keynote talk per term around race awareness, the lived experience and anti-racism", the spokesperson detailed.

This comes as the University has announced plans to roll out 'unconscious bias' training for all its staff after it recorded a record black student intake for

2020-21, with 91 Black Freshers admitted in 2019-20 compared to the 137 admitted this academic year.

Lucy Cavendish will also be delivering two training courses in October entitled 'Being an anti-racist: what does that mean?', by former BME Representative for the National Union of Students (NUS), Fope Olaleye.

In a statement to Varsity, Pembroke regretted that "due to public health restrictions [...] events planned to mark Black History Month are less ambitious this year than anyone would have wanted", as "staff have had to prioritise their work over the summer months to ensuring buildings are Covid compliant, [meaning] any planning of talks or exhibitions has been limited."

Nonetheless, the spokesperson assured that "this doesn't mean colleges are any less committed to diversity", adding that "the virtual commemorations that have been organised are supported by [staff] and we hope these will be well attended in terms of their online engagement."

A programme of events has been put together by Pembroke's Junior Parlour Committee, led by Ethnic Minorities Officer Maya McFarlane, including a 'Black Contributions to Science Panel' from the college's Stokes Society and a 'Black Talent Showcase' from the Pembroke Players.

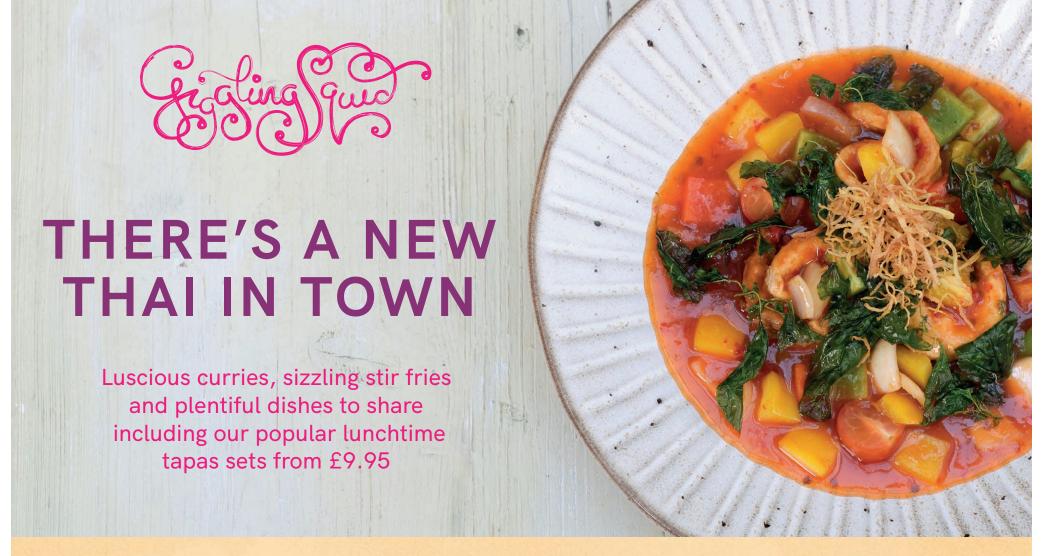
Kwakye and Ore's book aims to make black girls in particular "feel empowered, comforted and validated in every

emotion [they] experience, or decision that [they] make", while simultaneously instructing others that "it's time we stepped away from seeing this [the feeling of 'taking up space' in a predominantly white institution] as a problem that black people are charged with solving on their own."

Cambridge graduate, vlogger and face of the Black access social media campaign 'Get in Cambridge', Courtney Daniella, will also feature in the talk, which will allow the women to "discuss their experiences and offer solutions for how black women can be better served edu-

Additionally at a University level, an exhibition entitled 'Past & Present: Black Legacies in STEM', curated by Africans in STEM, was launched online on 5 October. The project oversees two events in recognition of BHM 2020: the first, "a poster and online exhibition of notable Black scientists around the world" free of charge, with the second being a virtual panel organised in collaboration with the Department of Pharmacology at the University of Cambridge entitled 'Spotlight on Black Female Scientists in Cambridge'. The panel "will feature scientists who will speak about the research that they do and how they navigate academia and Cambridge."

And so, in a year steeped in racial issues, the Cambridge community recognises the achievements and value of its Black members both past and present through Black History Month 2020.



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VARSITY FRIDAY 16th October 2020

News

Homerton students launch rent-strike

Orsolya Petocz

News Correspondent

Gaby Vides

Senior News Editor

Homerton students have founded the Homerton Rent Strike Committee in order to voice concerns surrounding "the safety and wellbeing of students in Homerton".

The Committee encouraged students to sign their open letter and pledge to withhold their Michaelmas rent if the demands of the rent-strike are not met by the College.

The open-letter, signed by more than 50 students and alumni, focuses on demands related to "investment in student mental health", "increased number of safe social [...] study spaces", as well as decreased or no rent for students in college accommodation outside of term for reasons related to Covid-19.

The open-letter makes a number of demands related to international students quarantining; firstly calling for the College to "reimburse all students who have been charged the increased rate of £20 per night" when quarantining upon arrival and also demanding that Homerton does "not charge any other students who may need to quarantine outside of term time in the near future."

Another demand of the letter asks the College to "clarify your plan to all students as to what you will provide if any student has to self-isolate and make sure you have the provisions available." This follows student volunteers assisting quarantining students being compensated with £200 for their support, which involved up to 7-hour shifts over the 10-day period.

Other demands of the letter include guaranteeing "an unconditional commitment to allow students to go home for Christmas" and if due to legal issues this is not possible for no student to be charged rent during this period; allowing students to book other rooms on-site to use as study spaces, and maintaining the precedent of providing accommodation to all students unable to leave Cambridge in the event of a lockdown.

Responding to the open-letter, an email from the college's Principal, Senior Tutor and Bursar pledged to support the mental wellbeing of the student body, highlighting the presence of "a new counsellor ready to help out if needed."

The email emphasised that "the counselling provision at Homerton is one of the largest in the University, if not the very largest." In addition, with regards to study and social spaces, the email outlined the provision of the JCR and a Marquee, but contends that "recent unsafe behaviour in the marquee has sadly led us to restrict rather than expand the availability of social space".

The College communicated that it was unable to decrease rent or reimburse students who had to quarantine in College, explaining that students coming from certain countries were required by law

to quarantine. Homerton also communicated that no restrictions on students wanting to leave College accommodation and travel during the Christmas break would be implemented other than those required by UK law.

Following this email, The Homerton Rent Strike Committee asked for a virtual open meeting to be held. On Monday [13/10] the Homerton Rent Strike Facebook page read , "a virtual open meeting has been arranged with the Vice-Principal of Homerton, Louise Joy, the Senior Tutor, Penny Barton and the College Bursar, Deborah Griffin, at 3pm on Wednesday 14th October."

The post "encourages" all students to attend this meeting, to which a link has been shared. The post furthermore calls off the rent strike following the "positive" response by the College to the open-letter but encourages students to "attend the public meeting" before paying their College bills.

While the Homerton Rent Strike Committee told *Varsity* that they are "deeply disappointed that it took student pressure for the College to be more transparent", they welcome the meeting and hope that it will "provide a meaningful avenue of participation for students to express their worries" about how the

College is conducting itself during the pandemic.

The email sent by the College in response to the open-letter stresses the value the College places on students' voices, emphasising that "as the spread of Covid-19 changes, all the measures we have put in place will be reviewed and that HUS [Homerton Union of Students] and MCR representatives will be consulted at every significant stage – this is an ongoing dialogue, and we have no wish to impose more restrictions than are necessary for the safety of our College and our community."



Game-Changers

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▲ Homerton held a virtual meeting with students on Wednesday to discuss the demands of the open-letter

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Applications open: 14 September 2020 Application deadline: 31 October 2020 6 FRIDAY 16TH OCTOBER 2020 VARSITY

News

Cambridge researchers assist Covid-19 response around the world

Alexander Shtyrov

News Correspondent

In his annual Address to the University, Vice Chancellor Stephen Toope emphasised his "tremendous pride in the University's accomplishments" during the coronavirus pandemic.

Varsity spoke to some of the researchers who "jumped into action" when Covid-19 struck, reorienting their work towards fighting the spread of the virus.

Professor Lisa Hall CBE, who works at the Department of Chemical Engineering and Biotechnology (CEB), is leading an international group of scientists developing a coronavirus test for deployment in sub-Saharan Africa.

"Every one of the 55 African countries faces a different set of challenges but common to all of them are severe issues accessing COVID-19 tests," she told *Varsity*.

"Cost is an obvious challenge when you look at local health funding and people's average income," she continued, pointing out that \$25 per test is not affordable "in a country like Ghana, where 30% of the population live on less than \$3.20 per day."

Even if there is funding, the reliance of African nations on imports means they are "competing with other countries that do have manufacturers and are starting to impose export controls...to ensure they can meet their own needs".

"Once there are tests available, they need to be deployed in over-stretched and under-resourced health systems where many people live miles from hospitals and medical laboratories."

Further to logistical problems, infectious diseases are a major cause of mortality "even in normal times", explained Hall. Patients of other widespread diseases, such as malaria, tuberculosis, and HIV, have very similar symptoms to Covid-19. The need to diagnose the cause of these symptoms exacerbates the existing shortage of tests.

To address the crisis faced by sub-Saharan Africa, Hall's group is modifying standard coronavirus tests to make them "quicker, ideally taking less than one hour, and deployable outside of a laboratory context".

Hall and her colleagues began using a technology called LAMP for malaria tests before the pandemic began. LAMP relies on a polymerase, an enzyme which copies viral nucleic acids.

They have since adapted the test for Covid-19, but the cost of the enzymes required remains prohibitive. Much of Hall's work, therefore, focuses on "producing these enzymes for nucleic acid diagnostics by growing them in bacteria and then purifying them by binding them to silica, a cheap chemical that can even be obtained from beach sand".

The scientists hope to set up manufacture in Ghana "in the coming months".

Cambridge's biochemists are not the only ones assisting the response to the

pandemic in Africa.

Dr Lucia Corsini, a research assistant at the Institute for Manufacturing (IfM), was one of a team from the University of Cambridge, the Bahir Dar Institute of Technology, the University of Malawi Polytechnic, and the Centre for Global Equality who set up local production of personal protective equipment (PPE) in Malawi and Ethiopia.

Corsini explained to *Varsity*: "As the coronavirus pandemic started to unfold in the first half of 2020, health workers in Malawi and Ethiopia were facing extreme shortages of PPE."

"At a time when it was impossible to import face masks and face shields, our project started using digital fabrication (3D printing and laser cutting) to support the local production of PPE in Malawi and Ethiopia."

Over 2,000 face shields have already been donated to hospitals in Malawi, and over 3,000 have been sold to local businesses.

Corsini hopes that digital manufacturing could help the humanitarian sector in the developing world, which "mainly relies on importing solutions from developed countries" at present.

"In Malawi, the team are already exploring how the new digital fabrication facility that has been set up could be converted into a design and production hub for tackling other pressing health-care challenges in the post-coronavirus era." she says.

In CEB, Hall is also hopeful that her work will "generate greater autonomy for countries in Africa to deal with future pandemics".

"There is scope to revolutionise accessibility of diagnostics but a whole ecosystem needs to be built to support that and we are just at the start."

Closer to home, Dr Sarah Foley, a research associate at Cambridge's Centre for Family Research (CFR) has been studying the strain Covid-19 has put on family ties.

"With the charity Stand Alone and Dr Lucy Blake at Edge Hill university, Dr Susan Imrie and I at the CFR conducted an online survey to look at family estrangement and the Covid-19 crisis," Foley told *Varsity*.

The results of the survey, which received 801 responses, showed that "55% of respondents felt more alone and less connected" as a result of the pandemic.

On a more positive note, 16% of respondents "had experienced an increase in contact" with estranged family members.

Foley and her colleagues are now involved in an international study "examining the experiences of families with children aged 3-7 years old".

Many other academics in the University have received attention for their work on Covid-19.

The Cambridge Institute of Therapeutic Immunology and Infectious Disease

(CITIID) "pivoted almost the entirety of its research towards understanding and treating Covid-19", according to the Vice Chancellor.

CITIID leads the Cambridge Fighting COVID initiative. One of its senior members, Professor Ravi Gupta, has recently been named in Time Magazine's list of 100 Most Influential People of the Year.

Gupta was recognised for his role in bringing about the second known cure of a patient with HIV, but has recently applied his expertise to understanding the evolution of coronavirus in patients.

Gupta told a University press release that: "we made 'pseudo-viruses' that are part coronavirus and part HIV, but are very safe and don't cause disease to try and understand how antibodies were working in people infected with the virus."

At the Department of Applied Mathematics and Theoretical Physics (DAMTP), Professor Paul Linden has discovered that a common type of ventilation system, which mixes the air in a room to maintain a constant temperature, increases the risk of exposure to coronavirus compared to stratified systems, where air is allowed to form layers.



▲ Academics at the Department are developing a coronavirus test for sub-Saharan Africa (LOUIS ASHWORTH)

"Despite the various mechanisms generating disturbances indoors, it is clear that in many cases stratification 'wins'," writes Linden and his co-author Dr Rajesh Bhagat, also at DAMTP.

But the wisest course of action remains unchanged, according to Linden: "Keep windows open and wear a mask appears to be the best advice," he said in a University press release.

With this "best advice" still in force, Cambridge staff and students are beginning a new term of research.

As he concluded his Address, the Vice Chancellor seemed optimistic about their achievements in the coming months.

"I look to the coming year with some trepidation, I admit – but also a huge sense of possibility."

"I trust that all of us, together, will continue to show creativity, resilience and empathy to make this academic year a success – no matter what the world throws at us."



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Varsity investigates opinions on university testing disparities

Iona Fleming

After the University's asymptomatic screening programme began on Monday 5th October, Varsity investigated how students - in Cambridge and beyond - felt about it.

Alice Gilderdale, Cambridge SU Welfare Officer, told Varsity: "The SU has been pushing for mass testing of staff and students before the proposal was formulated, and therefore welcomes this testing programme which goes

some way to eliminate transmission by asymptomatic students."

However, she adds that "by no means does this programme go far enough to tackle the challenges facing us this term $\,$ [...] the SU has pushed for all students, staff and members of the local community to be offered tests, yet at present only students within halls of residence are offered tests."

Under the screening programme all undergraduates and postgraduates in College accommodation are eligible to participate - meaning those living out of

Testing capacity is at approximately 2,000 tests every week (subject to national testing needs), allowing about 16.000 students to be screened weekly due to the pooling system. Despite being in its second week, the programme is still operating at a reduced scale.

Ellie Dunstone, a student not covered by the screening programme, said that she doesn't "live in college anymore so I'm not actually able to get tested unless I have symptoms." She nonetheless saw an advantage to test data "be[ing] used to investigate the use of asymptomatic testing programmes [...] benefit[ting] other students in the future."

The screening programme is a new pilot "to see whether pooled samples can help maximise the number of tests available", according to a university spokesperson. While national testing facilities are used, the University's limited number of tests are used for research purposes, with NHS Test and Trace sam-

ples taking priority.
On student welfare, Gilderdale "hope[s] the testing programme will provide reassurance to students that the University is currently monitoring the situation and responding adequately."

"However, the SU is worried that an increased number of cases may lead to safe social spaces being closed and forcing students to socialise in less safe environments.'

Instead of testing weekly, many other universities only test students when they show symptoms.

One student at University College London (UCL) revealed that testing there is only provided for symptomatic students and staff.

They continued: "this is nowhere near enough, especially considering the amount of irresponsible parties that have gone on without being cracked down on [...] I do not feel comfortable moving into accommodation in London."

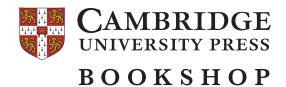
Shruthi Natarajan, a 2nd year at Manchester, thinks Cambridge's testing "is a fantastic move [...] to not only ensure consistent testing, but also to motivate students to remain vigilant."

Meanwhile a 2nd year student at Durham told Varsity that while Cambridge should be commended, it is "a reminder of [their] financial privilege [...] other universities just don't have the [same]

A Bristol student believed Cambridge's testing initially "showed a clear gulf in funding and organisation [with] most other universities who do not have the capacity to offer such services [...] the use of national testing facilities should be permitted as it was not the students' choice to return to university."

However, universities such as Bristol do have structures in place, like mobile testing sites. The student added: "there are plenty of tests and Cambridge just attempted to be proactive [...] because of the separate nature of colleges in comparison to the halls [and] private rental structure of Bristol."

Elsewhere, reserved student testing in Cambridge has been shown to be at odds with the local community. Esther Hunt of Future Care Solutions, a local domiciliary care provider, said they "are finding it hard to get tests locally and in a timely manner and are not on the priority list for testing, [which] could potentially have a huge impact on our staffing levels and the ability for us to care for our clients in their own homes."



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WRSITY FRIDAY 16TH OCTOBER 2020

News

Department of Geography introduce scholarship for black and mixed heritage students



Gaby Vides

News Correspondent

The University's Geography Department has announced that they are launching a new scholarship for black and mixed heritage undergraduate students.

The scholarship will provide support and financial assistance for black British students intending to read for the Geographical Tripos, and is to provide £10,000 per annum for one incoming student in the 2021-2022 academic year.

In an email sent to all members of the Department, Professor Sarah Radcliffe, who has been leading the Department's decolonising efforts, detailed the reasoning behind the scholarship. This revolved around the fact that "admissions and enrolment data indicate that black and black mixed heritage students are significantly under-represented in undergraduate geography programmes across the UK, and at the University of Cambridge."

The email continued to stress that the "Department is working proactively to address historic under-representation in the discipline."

For the 2019-2020 academic year, aside from Anglo-Saxon, Norse and Celtic, Geography had the lowest acceptance rate for Black and Minority Ethnicity (BME) students, with only 7.4% of home students accepted identifying as BME.

Speaking to Varsity, Head of Department Professor Bhaskar Vira and Professor Radcliffe emphasised that the scholarship is one among many efforts to address the issue of under-representation of ethnic minorities in Geography.

The Professors detailed to Varsity that the scholarship has been in the works for "at least over the last twelve months."

They continued to stress that the Department is "very conscious about widening participation and access issues." They referenced Geography's early participation in initiatives such as the Sutton Trust Summer Schools.

However, Vira and Radcliffe also highlighted the difficulties with out-

reach work; pointing out that as this is largely based out of colleges "it has not been that straightforward to think about what else we might be able to do, from a Departmental perspective."

They acknowledged the Stormzy Scholarships as "an obvious inspiration" and are hopeful that the announcement of the scholarship will be able to "coincide with the UCAS application deadlines and also, coincidentally, the start of Black History Month in the UK."

When asked whether the timing of the scholarship was in any way prompted by surges in the Black Lives Matter movement over the summer, the Professors answered: "Yes, absolutely —this was a catalysing moment that helped to focus our conversations in the Department. There was a real desire to respond, both personally and collectively."

The Professors told Varsity that "in line with the Black Lives Matter movement, we [the Geography Department] wanted to collectively consider how we can better combat and counter violence against Black and Minority Ethnic communities within all aspects of our work, but also how we can better represent,

▲ The Geography Department's scholarship will begin in the 2021-2022 academic year (BHASKAR VIRA)

foreground and celebrate the contributions of under-represented communities within our Department."

The scholarship is not the only outreach and decolonising efforts the Department is engaging with. The Professors outlined to *Varsity* that "possible avenues and concrete proposals for decolonization" have been "subject to ongoing discussions since 2017 among a working group of undergraduates, postgraduates and staff members of the Geography department."

The Department is currently focusing its attention on outreach and admissions among both undergraduate and postgraduate students: decolonising the curriculum, course content and research, providing accessible anti-racism resources in the Department, and combating institutional racism in the Department through training.

▼ The scholarship follows BLM protests, which took place this summer along Kings Parade (ANNA OAKES)



HIGH SPIRITS

Cambridge spirit company among winners of Great Taste awards 2020

Linden Leaf Botanicals, a spirit company founded by three Cambridge scientists and engineers has just been awarded the 3-stars Great Taste award. The award follows 14 weeks of judging. Out of a record breaking 12,777 entries only 205 entries were awarded 3-stars. Judges this year included food buyers from Selfridges, Fortnum & Mason and Waitrose.

WHAT A WONDERFUL

Sir David Attenborough films The Green Planet at Cambridge University Botanic Gardens

The University's Botanic Gardens were one of two locations used by the BBC for their new series "The Green Planet", featuring nation-wide heartthrob Sir David Attenborough. The rescheduled shoot followed strict Covid-19 procedures with a reduced crew wearing masks at all time, and Sir David Attenborough having to micup himself. Despite this, according to executive producer Mike Gunton, Sir David was still 'on top form' as ever.

ON TRACK?

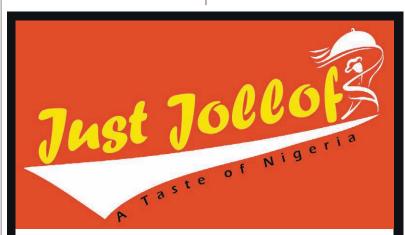
Autonomous shuttles to be trialled on Cambridge University's West Cambridge site

Trials of 12-seater autonomous passenger shuttles began earlier this month on the University's West Cambridge site. The initial trial which was planned to start in summer was forced to be scaled back, If the trials are successful, this could lead to a roll out of self-driving vehicles elsewhere in Greater Cambridge.

TANGLED UP IN (CAM-

Cambridge University Press acquire rights to new writing on Bob Dylan

Marking Bob Dylan's 80th birthday next May a new book exploring his life and work will be published in April next year. Cambridge University Press acquired the rights from the co-editor of the volume Sean Latham, who is also director of the Tulsa University Institute for Bob Dylan Studies, The book benefits from access to Dylan Archives from the centre. Latham praised the book's assembly of a "stellar cast of the best music writers, rock critics and scholars to look afresh at Dylan".



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Features

Napoleon's Desert Island

Deputy Features Editor, Nick Bartlett, reflects on relationships after a dinner table conversation with his family

um likes to wonder into my room a few times a day. "Just checking in, darling," she likes to say," How are you feeling?" "As good as I was forty-five minutes ago, thanks Mum. How are you tracking?" I usually respond. She's very caring, my Mum. She loves to stay connected to people friends, family, mentors, mentees - whoever it may be. In the afternoon, I'll saunter downstairs, distracted from study by a pang of hunger. With my head sticking in the bottom draw of the fridge, hunting a cold orange, I'll hear Dad laughing to himself in the living room. I think he finds books funnier than people. Oil and water, they are, my parents.

My Mum likes people, my Dad prefers dogs. Mum listens to Gloria Steinem and Brene Brown, Dad reads Mary Beard and Aeschylus. Dad is careful and considered. Mum is busy and daring. People often say that opposites attract. I'm not so sure. Until lockdown, I had never properly considered the practical implications of the difference in my parents' respective characters. After my departure date from Melbourne had been confirmed last week, we sat down for a family dinner, joking and teasing as to how my absence would change the family dynamic. With a little brother in his final year of school, and preoccupied with the equivalent of his A-level examinations. Mum and Dad were going to effectively be living alone with one

"Do you think you would last if you were left on a desert island together?" I asked them, after Dad had passed me the beans.

'Like Napoleon?" Dad clarified. "Yeah, I guess, but for eternity." Dad didn't hesitate. "We wouldn't make it." I looked at Mum, and she nodded her assent, completely unperturbed by Dad's response. I waited, hoping that Mum would take up the baton, "I think I'd go crazy," Mum said with a degree of affection, "Dad doesn't talk that much." I looked back at Dad; he smiled in agreement. I shook my head in disbelief. A wry smile appeared across my face. What a bizarre way of showing your love for someone. Adoration in honesty. "Fair enough," I concluded, and walked my dishes towards the sink. "Which island was Napoleon exiled to again?" Dad called after me. "Elba." "What about the other one?" He pressed, as I walked upstairs. "No fucking idea!"

It was slightly unnerving to hear their response. Of course, that sort of isolation would incur its own challenges and aggravations and irritations. I imagine that most relationships would be strained or broken under that kind



▲ "Do you think you would last if you were left on a desert island together?" I asked them, after Dad had passed me the beans (HOODH AHMED)

People
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of existence.

But, for the most part, I had always envisaged living with someone whose company was so appealing that I sought long periods of time with them. Someone whose company on a desert island would fill me with confidence and make me less likely to balk at the prospect of such perennial solitude.

How could my parents acknowledge their relationship's inevitable demise under the constraints of a desert island existence, and still accomplish twenty-seven years of a happy and fulfilling marriage? I understood that their response to the dessert island hypothetical hinged on a disconnect in their interests and personalities. But I could not quite comprehend how such a successful marriage would be so swiftly brought to an end by a solitary existence, at least in their eyes. How then could this disconnect prevent them from careering around on a desert island, while never interfering in the longevity of their relationship in the real world?

Perhaps, love is not solely limited to common interests as I had imagined. Two men who never run out of conversation on a desert island may have no more strong a relationship than my Mum and Dad, the couple who has openly admitted to running out of things to say to one another as the years

have crept by, but who love each other and the family they have created more than anything.

Dad once said to me that if your partner does not share your values, the relationship probably won't last. At first, I found this puzzling. How do shared values distinguish themselves from personal interests?

Upon reflection, I decided that, in my mind, values are a sort of personal philosophy; they provide the framework according to which we make decisions and actions. Whilst our values might inform our personal interests and hobbies, they are also more foundational, and fundamental, in that they are the sort of invisible stitches that bind together the essence of who we are. In this way, I see our values as a kind of secular religion, a conscious set of beliefs which guide our way through life.

Ironically, whilst most of us are able to list our interests without so much as a hesitation, very few of us could catalogue the five core values according to which we live our lives. Whilst our values might inform our personal interests and hobbies, they are also more foundational, and fundamental, in that they are the sort of invisible stitches that bind together the essence of who we are."

For my parents, it does not mat-

upon layer of personal interest, passions that would sustain a desert island existence; what matters is the alignment of their values: empathy, love, openness, fairness, selflessness, gratitude and work ethic. For as long as they have a similar belief in the way in which they interact in this world with ideas and causes as well as the world's inhabitants - it does not matter that Mum would rather sit on a cactus than hear about Dad's latest research on the Parthenon. So, to return to the question of the attraction of opposites, I think

So, to return to the question of the attraction of opposites, I think there should be a qualifier. Opposites attract, if there is an underlying set of shared values. At least, in the case of my parents, I think it is their shared values that provide the foundation for their love.

ter that they do not share layer

Perhaps, when I asked Mum and Dad the desert hypothetical, I was too fixated on the idealised partner who shares in your interests.

Regardless, Mum and Dad's infinite love for one another served as a poignant reminder of what else is important in relationships, whatever form that relationship may take.

Previously, I had not spent much time thinking about something so esoteric as personal values, but perhaps it's time I began.

Dad once said to me that if your partner does not share your values, the relationship probably won't last

VARSITY FRIDAY 16TH OCTOBER 2020

Features

Decisions, decisions...

Ursula Moncrieff writes on the arbitrariness and imperfection of most decisions, arguing that we should come to terms with indecision

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ecisions can be scary. I am terrible at them; I regularly struggle to decide on what to have for dinner. My friend and I used to have a system whereby if we ever wanted to go out to eat, I would pick two options I liked and then he would choose the one he preferred just to save me from ever having to make the final choice. It's extremely silly, but an actual struggle I face, and one that I know several others do too - albeit to varying degrees.

Anxiety concerning the future can often make our decisions particularly difficult. There's something intensely nerve-wracking about shutting a door forever. I couldn't help but notice the overwhelming number of students I spoke to who were considering switching degrees last year - myself included in this mix. Despite the long, gruelling process it took to be admitted to our initial courses, it was still difficult to quiet that nagging voice in the back of our heads telling us we should have done something else. That there was something better out there.

The English education system is perhaps particularly bad at placing this pressure of having fixed ambitions on students at a young age. At sixteen we have to narrow down our curriculum

We are forced to single out one, perfect door to leave open in order to lead to the happiest and most fulfilling future.

options to just three or four choices, thus shutting doors and ruling out futures. Two years later, we then pick one path alone to pursue. In doing so, we are not only shutting doors, but are forced to single out one perfect door to leave open in order to lead to the happiest and most fulfilling future.

In a world filled with choices, we want the best. But arguably this 'best' does not exist. This summer, I managed to get a substantial part of the way through the process of switching degrees from English to History in pursuit of this ideal before realising it was a dream that had never really existed in the first place.

With such a fine line between disciplines, ability could hardly play a role in my decision, and it was left down to interest, passion, and ultimately my own desire to decide on what to do. What did I want? The answer is that I had no idea. When choosing what to apply for initially, the fact that my brother had done History before me probably played a much bigger role than it should have done in my decision to pursue English. Everyone says that we should ignore what our siblings do and that it's not a competition, but anyone with siblings will know this advice is impossible to actually follow. There are so many random, irrational and ultimately arbitrary

factors that can influence so many of our most consequential decisions. "There are

So a year into my degree, I was enjoying my degree. But could I have been enjoying History more? Perhaps people would take me more seriously if I were reading History, instead of seeing me as yet another girl who didn't quite know what to do and ended up settling on English because I know I like books. Perhaps I would even be better at History after all; I was in school, at least. Though I love English, that lightning bolt of passion for any subject had never quite seemed to strike me.

Well, perhaps a year ago, History may have suited me more. Before I had ever set foot in university, before I had ever written a supervision essay, met all the people here, struggled through all of Le Morte D'Arthur, and lived through my formative first year at Cambridge. maybe History just might have been the better option for me. For the person that I was a year ago, History may perhaps have suited me more. I can never be sure. But I am not that person anymore, and passion is not something that innately burns within us from birth - it is something that is developed and honed through our own endeavours and pursuits.

Now, as I start the second year of my

degree, I feel happy doing English. It may not have been 'meant' for me in the way that I was perhaps looking for, and I still find numerous frustrations with it, but I have chosen to do it and I am content with it. After having let my interests develop organically for a whole year, I now feel that English is what I want to do, and not an ill-defined idea of what I could be happier pursuing.

This is not to say that my case is universal. There may of course be some people who truly have made the wrong decision, about their degree or otherwise. or who do not have the same privilege of choice as I and so many of us have. These people may rightfully want to go back and pursue a different path. I would simply like to offer up some of the thoughts I have had in the last year that have given me some comfort in my own choices; neither ground-breaking nor particularly original, but often in need of some reiteration. In a world in which so many of our big decisions can be construed as largely arbitrary - what to study, what job to pursue, where to live, who to talk to in a room - it can be down to us to embrace indecision and find purpose in it for ourselves. The grass is not necessarily always greener on the other side.

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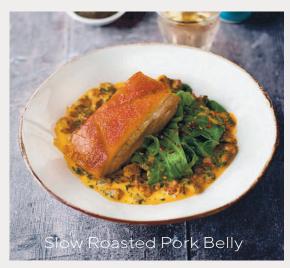


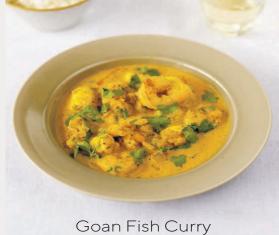


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Friday 16th October 2020 VARSITY

Features

On Being Busy

Eleanor Bruce has always felt like she should be busy, but now she is learning that not every mountain has to be climbed by her

ver since I can remember, I've always been busy. At secondary school, I had lunchtime clubs four days a week, and afterschool clubs three. My holidays were full of organised activities and school projects, my weekends of sports matches and trips to museums. As I grew older, this only accelerated: my weekend reading switched from children's fiction to the history books on my parents' shelves, and holiday activities were now chosen for their 'CV building' potential and not only for how fun they were. By the time I got to university, one friend identified me as having a 'pathological hatred of gaps in my schedule.' We all had a laugh about that. Recently, though, I've begun to wonder if this isn't a quirky trait but rather a programmed response, and one which has the potential to be hugely damaging.

Let me begin by saying that I am very privileged to have had the range of opportunities that I had available to

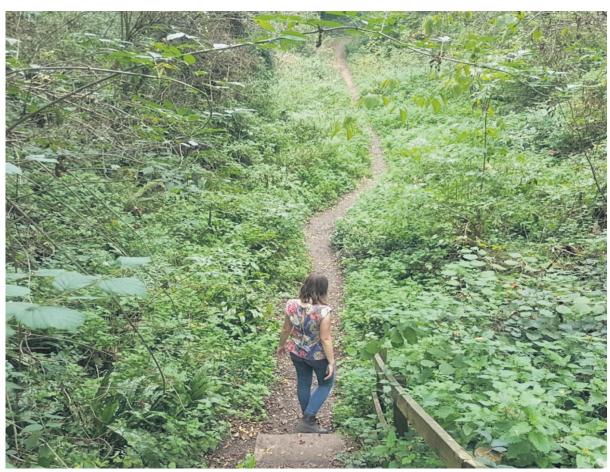
me, and the ability to take advantage of them. My school offered a baffling array of extracurricular and super-curricular activities which we were always encouraged to take up. As our Head of Sixth

Slowly, I'm coming to realise that some of my ambitions are not

"

really mine at all

Form put it, the school's attitude was that 'the good students are the busy ones', and they made this easy for us.



of opportunities that I had available to I joined the Eco Council, and we were TAKEABREAK FROMTHE STUDY AT CAMBRIDGE RETAIL PARK **GREAT RESTAURANTS & RETAIL INCLUDING** Nando's SPORTS DIRECT.com **Dunelm** REQUIRES WITH VOUCHER CODE FROM Currys PC World AMBRIDGE RETAIL PARK cambridgeretailpark.co.uk 🧗 🟏 🧿

"...sometimes I choose the mountain path, not because I want to climb the mountain, but because the valley path feels like cheating" (AHMED ASHOUR)

allowed to organise a fete for the whole school. I was interested in debating, and was entered in school competitions all over the country. I was encouraged to do the Duke of Edinburgh Award, and we were granted days off school to do the treks (provided we caught up on our homework of course). The school signed up to online lecture courses that were advertised to us alongside our A Levels; we were even given the opportunity to go to the UN in New York for a week. One term, in Year 13, I had the lowest attendance in my class, despite not taking a single sick day.

((

I have been working on 'satisficing': accepting the adequate rather than demanding the best

A busy life is undeniably a productive one. My CV by the time I left school was extensive, as was my capacity to deal with stress, and my ability to proactively organise my own time. I've read a lot of interesting books, and met a lot of lovely people, many of whom I'm still in contact with today. If I had the opportunity to go back and change what I did, would I do less? In all honesty, I'm not sure I would.

I have, however, acquired the unfortunate tendency to say 'yes' to everything.

The problem with being busy is that there is always more you can do. There is always another book you could read for your next supervision essay, or a charity

which could benefit from your time. And when you're working from the basis of 'more is always better', how do you know when to stop? No one can work at full capacity forever, and I've learnt from experience that I do have limits, but I struggle to stop before I reach them. When there are so many exciting things I could do, and so many reasons to do them, how do I justify taking a weekend off to curl up on the sofa and watch Netflix? And even if I do manage to take a break, how do I stop being angry at myself for not using the time 'more productively'?

Slowly, I'm coming to realise that some of my ambitions are not really mine at all. My upbringing has taught me to climb every mountain I see, and in the process I've found that I'm quite a good mountain climber. Certainly you get good views from time to time. It's just that not every mountain must be climbed by me, and I've realised that sometimes I choose the mountain path, not because I want to climb the mountain, but because the valley path feels like cheating. I need to remind myself that the view from quiet valleys can be just as worthwhile. There is a difference, I think, between wanting to achieve something for its own sake, and wanting to achieve it because everyone assumes you will.

Lately, I have been working on 'satisficing': accepting the adequate rather than demanding the best. Sure, it might look good on a CV to be the President of the JCR, or the Faculty Rep for my course, but will it make enough of a practical difference to my life to justify the time commitment? If I only read 7 books for the next essay I write, instead of 8, will my supervisor really care? If I can't do everything I want to do, then I have to learn how to decide how much is enough. Then, perhaps, I can learn to say 'no' to myself.

Being busy has been my life for so long, but I am finally beginning to learn how to rest.

VARSITY FRIDAY 16TH OCTOBER 2020

Opinion

The Beirut blast is a lesson in neocolonialism

Maya Gavin, who grew up in Lebanon, reflects on the country's tough history as a colonial project, and calls for greater understanding of how a neoliberal agenda is harming the people on the ground



▲ The explosion in Beirut on 4th August decimated the city. (WIKIMEDIA COMMONS/MEHDI SHOJAEIAN

t's likely that you have seen the footage of the explosion that tore through Beirut on 4th of August. A preliminary explosion in the port of Beirut, the cause of which remains unknown, alighted 2750 tonnes of ammonium nitrate which had been inadequately stored at the port. This resulted in the third most powerful explosion recorded in history. 191 people were killed, 6,500 injured, and over 300,000 made homeless. The shock and collective trauma is difficult to articulate. This ongoing calamity demands attention from us here.

Beirut was in shock. What followed the blast was complete political negligence by those in power. With no coordinated humanitarian effort by the state – apart from its declaration of a two-week state of emergency that gave the military overreaching powers – civilian volunteers and the Lebanese Red Cross were left to deal with the aftermath.

French President Macron was quick to seize the opportunity. His emergency visit to Beirut on 6th August included a walk through the worst affected areas where he would give away 'hugs and reassurances' to the public. This was followed by a meeting with Lebanon's political establishment to whom he gave an 'ultimatum' to form a new cabinet in 15 days. He finalized his trip with a speech at the French Ambassador's palace, where he concluded: "I am here today to remind you to never forget, despite the challenges of the day, that

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Two days after the president's visit, Lebanese security forces fired French-supplied tear gas and rubber bullets on protestors

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there are the people of Europe, the people of France, whose heart still beats a bit at the pulsation of Beirut... because they know that ... there is a people who, in a region where the worst has sometimes come, where everything has ceded to terrorism and obscurantism, we know that there are a people who loves liberty, culture and civilization." Two days after the president's visit, Lebanese security forces fired French-supplied tear gas and rubber bullets on protestors.

Macron's visit was a blatant display of hypocrisy, white supremacism and saviourism, not only in his overtly racist and orientalist comments on the region, but also in the way he appealed to a Lebanese colonial mentality that fetishizes proximity to the 'people of Europe'. This has been ignored by Western media too many times, particularly when dealing with political crises in the 'formerly-colonized world'. This kind of neo-imperialism is not merely theatrical, but structural. Macron capitalised on public trauma for political leverage, which he then used to corner the already loathed Lebanese establishment.

On the 100th anniversary of the creation of Greater Lebanon by French colonial powers, Macron promised financial aid under a condition: that the Lebanese government implement sweeping fiscal, public sector and parliamentary reforms detailed in his 3-month "draft programme for the new government". Macron's promise of 'aid' does not ask us to be apologetic to neo-colonial poli-

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It is clear that the international community took advantage of both the political crisis and the pressure created by aid dependence to push their geopolitical interests in Lebanon

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tics.

Let us remember that France owes Lebanon reparations for the Mandate Era. Rather than an act of 'benevolence', aid should be understood as long overdue reparations, given with an apology as opposed to a whitewashed "shared history".

Macron's interests may also be a bid to try and forestall what may become one of the worst refugee tragedies in modern history. Let us not forget that Lebanon already hosts almost 2 million Syrian and Palestinian refugees. Chloé Kattar, PhD candidate studying the history of the Lebanese Civil War at Cambridge, highlights that "the French zone of influence in the Levant is important but Macron was also visiting in a preemptive attempt. In case the country completely collapses, France will be the first to have to deal with mass immigration of the Lebanese and other refugees, which has already started."

This is not about side-lining blame from the Lebanese government, but moving away from viewing the international community and Lebanese political elite as antagonistic. The international community, as well as Iran and Saudi Arabia, have since the end of the Lebanese Civil War in 1990 sought to carve out their interests within the Lebanese political establishment. Macron himself approved the appointment of PM-designate Mostapha Adib, who resigned on 26th September due to an impasse over Shia parties Amal and Hezbollah's insistence on naming finance ministers.

It is no coincidence that parallel to the international humanitarian response in Lebanon, both France and the US made direct political interventions. The US used this moment to place sanctions on Lebanese ministers Youssef Fenianos and Ali Hassan Khalil – who served as Minister of Finance 2014-2020 – for "providing material support to Hezbollah and engaging in corruption". It is clear that the international community took advantage of both the political crisis and the pressure created by aid dependence to push their geopolitical interests in Lebanon.

Cutting off foreign interference was a core demand of the *Thawra* (the 'October 17 revolution') last year. 'Killon ya3ne killon' ("all of them means all of them") was the main slogan of the revolution, aimed not just at figures of the political establishment but at their foreign sponsors as well. For many, Lebanon's economy, politics, and human capital has been entirely sold to foreign interest.

Since October, the economy has collapsed leaving the Lira devalued by 90%. This outcome has been widely linked to the state-bank agreement that placed state debt in people's personal bank accounts. Aggressive neoliberalisation in

the post-civil war era created a total dependency on foreign investment brought in with incredibly high interest rates, specifically in the banking sector at 12% interest. The Lebanese Lira, pinned to the dollar, would inevitably fail.

Wealth was siphoned off by foreign investors, usually working through Lebanon's elite business class and politicians. In an interview, former director general of the Ministry of Finance Alain Bifani explains that since the 1990s, Lebanon's political system "mostly relied on the distribution of advantages and the misuse of public funds to buy alliances and to create allegiance". These allegiances end up with deals between the political, banking and business sectors, with the people usually reaping none of the benefits. This all happens because the judiciary does not pursue ministers on corruption. As Bifani concluded, "not doing anything is the policy - it is precisely the policy".

Lebanon is stuck. Ma fi Mahrab, 'there is no escape', as Chloé Kattar put it. Lebanon is stuck, as it was made clear during the thawra, because the country was used – economically and politically – for the gains of politicians and investors, foreign and Lebanese. The political elite – who once fought each other during the civil war – retired 30 years ago.

Today, it is not Macron vs. the Lebanese political establishment. For long, Lebanon has been stuck in a colonial project built on a highly extractive and aggressive political system and economy. Until the project collapsed, the 'international community' and Lebanese government were complacent. Now, the only 'escape' from this seemingly inescapable place seems to be through foreign aid, the IMF and 'political conditionalities' set by the West. This would only further the same neoliberal agenda which led to this position in the first place.

Lebanon has collapsed, it is in crisis, but the 'solution' is no quick fix. What is being reinforced now is a long-term, imperial relationship between Lebanon and the 'global order'. People in the West need to wake up to the continued imposition of imperial relations. What we can do here is stop our governments from sponsoring state violence, and lobby our very own university to demilitarise and cut ties with companies which research and create the tools used to enforce said violence. Although aid is not the solution to the situation in Lebanon, donating to smaller organisations such as Beit el Baraka, Lebanese Food Bank, Egna Legna, Offre Joie, can help the most marginalised groups in Lebanon, including refugees and migrant domestic workers. This event in Lebanon is not just a headlining tragedy; it displays the colonial relationship of power that still governs the world today.

Friday 16th October 2020 VARSITY

Opinion

The Uighur crisis and empty gestures



▲ A 'Free the Uighurs' protest outside the White House (FLIKR/WWW.FUTUREATLAS.COM)

ames Williams

istory should have taught us that the evil of genocide will always try and disguise itself as something more palatable. Rather than explicitly proclaim the eradication of an ethnic group as in Rwanda, genocide is often concealed as something more banal, as seen in the way the Jews were first hidden from the public eve in ghettoes before being sent to death camps. The State never claims to be perpetrating evil, rather, they appeal to the majority's fears and rationale. I want us to remember that insidious chameleonic side of genocide when we read of China's 'people's war on terror'. Part of that 'war' has seen at least a million Uighurs 'interned' in Vocational Education and Training Centres; justified out of a concern for public safety it is portrayed as benevolent 're-education.' Despite regional government claims that the program has concluded, new satellite imagery purports to show detention camps being built and others expanded.

reaching a total of 380 discovered facili-

The disturbing oppression that this represents is highlighted by Nathan Ruser, a key researcher, who claims that it is the equivalent of 'New York City building more than 55 prisons only for black Americans in just over three years.' Whilst China tries to maintain a facade that these camps are innocuous, with camera crews allowed into selective areas, the mounting evidence depicts a far more sinister reality. Leaked footage, documents and survivors' testimonies indicate a systematic attempt to erase the Uighur peoples through torture, forced abortions, mass sterilisation. indefinite detention, medical neglect. and even involuntary adoption of Uighur children into Han Chinese families. Proof of these appalling human rights abuses are emerging constantly, the latest suggesting that potentially 500,000 Tibetans are being placed in similar concentration

Yet, in the face of what Nury Turkel, a lawyer on the board for the Uighur Human Rights Project, labels 'cultural genocide', the media and corporate response has been insipid at best, and complicit at worst, demonstrating the emptiness of corporate morality . Nike has tried to emphasise its 'wokeness' in recent years, launching a campaign with Colin Kaepernick captioned 'Believe in something. Even if it means sacrificing everything,' Admittedly, they initially faced ferocious backlash from raging Republicans, however, their market value subsequently increased by \$6 billion. More recently, they launched a campaign with Megan Rapinoe, the US Women Football's star player and a key LBGTQ+ figure in sport. Both campaigns were very important in disrupting the homogenous status quo amongst sports campaigns, however, I would argue that corporations like Nike use those apparently virtuous stances to opportunistically profit. In contrast to their public self-presentation, they not only refuse to comment on the Uighur situation, but they contract suppliers which allegedly use Uighur people as forced labour. They are not alone in this, as Nike, Apple, Gap and many others similarly shout loudly about injustice and discrimination when they are shamelessly profiteering off ethnic slavery

People try to defend their silence on the grounds that you should put your own house in order before criticising another's. The economic complicitly dismantles that defence and exemplifies what Ai Weiwei, the prominent Chinese dissident, articulated in a recent interview, in which he argued that the West's inextricable economic dependence on China means that it is no longer possible to curb Beijing's power. Corporations are too entangled with China that to criticise their treatment of the Uighurs would be economic suicide, as demonstrated by Arsenal F.C.'s distancing from their player Mesut Özil's comments on the

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China uses its economic influence to instituionally whitewash its abuses



Uighurs. Those companies' cold indifference to China's quasi-genocidal program makes a mockery of any previous moral stance, and until their boards are driven by something more than share prices, corporate activism will never address the more insidious plight of the Uighurs.

The idea that commercial companies are driven by profits is hardly revolutionary, but I believe that their hypocritical disregard should serve as a warning to us all and heighten our awareness. You only have to look at the international response to realise how widespread China's influence is. In July, twenty countries (including the USA who are unusually outspoken on the issue, however, you wonder how much that is linked to Trump's trade war) unified in a condemnation of the persecution of Uighur Muslims, only for thirty-seven states, including Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, to sign a letter praising China's "contribution to the international human rights

Whilst China uses its economic influence to institutionally whitewash its abuses, social media means that you can easily access secretly recorded footage, rather, than wait for the media to infrequently provide skeletal coverage. The Internet is therefore a blessing and a curse, allowing direct access to information, it also removes any excuse of apathy. It would be ridiculous to suggest that you should be equally knowledgeable and passionate about every form of injustice in the world, however, it is also important that we do not become too introspective. Although we obviously must tackle the widespread systemic injustice in our society, we should not allow ourselves to turn a blind eye to the horrific abuse which China so desperately wants us to forget. Genocide will always seek to avoid recognition as such and so we must focus on the Uighur plight before it is too late.

Why Cambridge college workers need a union

he past few weeks have seen the start of what risks becoming a tide of redundancies being made across Cambridge colleges. At present, three of the 31 colleges - Queens', Trinity, and Downing - have announced more than 100 redundancies. exclusively from non-academic positions such as housekeeping, catering, maintenance and IT. Laying off low-income staff in the midst of a global pandemic, and at what looks like the beginning of a second wave of infections, is nothing short of barbaric. These are the same "essential". "front-line" workers, who have worked on-site throughout the pandemic to ensure that the colleges are kept running for those staying in them. It is revealing of the emptiness of the collegiate system that while they welcome their students back with platitudes of "communitymindedness", they are at the same time treating essential parts of the community as disposable. Colleges are keen to peddle the nar-

rative that these redundancies are an unfortunate, but unavoidable, result of the current economic downturn, but this is not the full story. Cambridge Defend Jobs, a collective of union members,

The choice to make redundancies is exactly that:

students, workers, and academics from across Cambridge, is challenging this narrative. This broad coalition is driven by the belief that people's jobs – their livelihoods – should be protected now more than ever, and that the recognition of unions such as UNITE in colleges is key to ensuring this.

Job cuts are not inevitable, and redundancies need not be taken as a given outcome of a broader economic downturn, especially in such wealthy institutions as these. Two-thirds of colleges have already confirmed they have no plans for redundancies. This is positive in and of itself, but also shows that redundancies are by no means an economic necessity for colleges: it is a matter of priorities, of who is included in the 'college community', and who they see as disposable. Similarly, the University hasn't announced any lay-offs yet, and Vice Chancellor Stephen Toope has said in an email to staff, "The very last resort in a worst-case scenario is to contemplate potential generalised redundancies." It is frankly outrageous that these redundancies appear to have been a very first resort for several colleges already.

The choice to make redundancies is

exactly that: a choice. It is a choice to ignore the many other viable options available at times of financial hardship. For one thing these colleges are all extremely wealthy, with endowments of many millions of pounds, even billions. Trinity College, for example, is wealthier than all other universities in the UK. aside from Cambridge itself. If a global pandemic is not the time to dig into your savings to protect the livelihoods and lives of your staff, when is? What is it even there for if not this? And all of these colleges have members of staff earning five-figure salaries, with no word of pay cuts here, voluntary or otherwise.

One of the reasons colleges can get away with treating their staff like this is the failure of colleges to formally recognise unions. The colleges are still being run like medieval fiefdoms, relying on a veneer of paternalism and tradition to justify the lack of any kind of union recognition. They are happy to pose as businesses to turn a quick buck from the conference game, but also want to be seen as poor but worthy seats of learning, in need of charity. They can't decide if they are ivory towers or Alton Towers.

In recent weeks, unions across the country have proven themselves invaluable to workers under threat of redundancy. They are crucial to challenging this harmful narrative. In the last week Public and Commercial Services Union members at the Tate ended 42 days of strike action over the announcement of over 300 job cuts, after Tate seceded to their demands to protect jobs and pay. At SOAS, even the spectre of strike action was enough to protect workers there: after Unison members voted 75% in favour of a strike, management quickly backed down on their announcement of up to 88 compulsory redundancies. At The University of Sheffield, UNITE spearheaded a successful campaign to prevent up to 8000 workers being "fired and rehired" in an attempt to cut costs. In a well-unionised workplace, bosses can no longer view redundancies as an easy option.

If the days of paternalistic employment, jobs for life and nothing changing are over, and the colleges want to reap the benefits of the real world; then they need to come to terms with the fact that in the real world successful businesses work with unions, not against them.

VARSITY Friday 16th October 2020

Science

Cloudy with a chance of... earthquakes?

Discussing the science behind the shape of clouds, Eloise Matthews describes a debated theory of whether clouds may help predict earthquakes



lacktriangle A cloud that seems to take the shape of the UK. (ELOISE MATTHEWS)

ransient yet mighty, clouds have both scientific and psychological significance. We commonly hear that we are made of stardust, with elements being reconfigured throughout the universe over incomprehensible timescales. On a much smaller scale, both spatially and temporally, we are physically connected with clouds via the water cycle: our own evaporated beads of sweat could later condensate into a cloud.

Our connection with clouds is also arguably emotional. This could stem from the phenomenon pareidolia, where humans tend to spot shapes and patterns in everyday objects. The most well-known example of this is seeing the Man in the Moon, where darker regions on the surface of the moon, known as lunar seas. appear to form a face. Being so variable in their appearance, spotting recognisable shapes in clouds is very common, but different people may certainly interpret one cloud in a different way. The photo below shows a cloud formation I spotted a few months ago that I thought looked like the UK.

Interestingly, at least in my opinion, the categorisation of clouds is comparable to phylogenetic taxonomy, the classification of organisms. This is based on the taxonomic system developed by Carolus Linnaeus, from kingdom down to species. Clouds are identified by genus most commonly, of which there are ten. These genera are then broken down into species, then with additional varieties and supplementary features leading to innumerable combinations.

For example, cirrus uncinus vertebratus mamma clouds would be high altitude feathery wisps of ice crystals, comma or hook shaped, arranged in a long column with small protrusions on their undersides. Like many words in English, terms for clouds derive from Latin - for example, "stratus" means layer, "cumulus" denotes heaps, "alto" indicates height, and so forth. More vari-

ations in cloud types can be explored online.

Clouds are responsible for much of the uncertainty in future climate projections, since they both absorb and reflect the infrared radiation responsible for warming our planet. Water vapour is an absorptive greenhouse gas; resultant warming enables more cloud formation as more air will be heated and rise to a suitable altitude to form clouds. These can then absorb more radiation, leading to a positive feedback loop. However, increased cloud formation also results in negative feedback as the reflectivity of clouds' upper white surfaces, known as their albedo, reduces incoming solar radiation hence actually having a cooling effect. The balance of these two feedbacks is uncertain, and could therefore affect our long-term climate stability.

The short-term safety of human civilisations could also be linked to clouds, regarding natural disasters, hence the title of this article. An initially far-fetched and dismissed proposal, retired chemist Zhonghao Shou's claim that earthquakes can be predicted from the appearance of specific types of cloud has been gaining more evidence and interest in recent years. Other scientists around the world, such as the Russian Morozova, had previously considered the geological significance of these unusual clouds, but Shou was the first to propose a theory and devote significant time to their study and associated earthquake prediction. We firstly must make sure we take the term "predict" with a large pinch of salt, as it could never be precisely pinpointed when the pressure building along a fault, a crack in the Earth's crust, will be released, which triggers an earthquake. The current most popular method for earthquake forecasting is from seismographs, where the relative motion of the ground is recorded. Earthquake data is also beginning to be considered for monitoring ocean warming, another tie in to climate studies.

Shou's unconventional theory is as follows: intense heat and pressure at faults, due to friction between sections. of crust, enables underground water vapour to collect in cracks around larger faults. These can be released to the surface, where the amount of vapour can indicate the strength, and thus magnitude, of the impending earthquake. Once the vapour is released from the fault, which signals roughly where the epicentre will be, it heats up the surrounding air. This enables it to rise, and, once at a suitable altitude (as is the standard procedure for cloud formation), cool and condense forming clouds roughly along the fault line, fuelled from the point of vapour release. This release is accompanied by a drop in strength of the surrounding rock, hence making an earthquake likely.

Interest began to spark after Shou's seemingly incredibly accurate prediction of an earthquake that occurred in Bam,

Iran, on Boxing Day in 2003. Just the day before, Shou identified a "classic" earthquake cloud, from satellite images, running above a fault in Iran and predicted that an earthquake with magnitude greater than 5.5 would occur there within 60 days from its formation on 20th December - and sure enough, after some foreshocks on Christmas day. an earthquake measuring 6.6 on the Richter scale tore through Bam on the 26th, claiming 26,000 lives. The surface temperature at the nearby Kerman Airport increased from 12 to 24 degrees Celsius on the first day of cloud formation, one of the signals of earthquake vapour release.

Shou has even written a book about his ideas, Earthquake Vapor Model and Precise Prediction, first published in 2016. Other seismologists have begun to probe the validity of this forecasting method, but much skepticism still surrounds the topic.

For example, while studies such as one by Thomas, Masci, & Love find no statistically significant relationship between cloud formation and earthquakes, Morozova's work appears supportive of the method when used in conjunction with other forecasting techniques.

It brings into question the worth of such investigations into the role of clouds; for example, would money not be better spent on improving the earthquake resistance of buildings in high risk areas? I would argue ves, in the long run. The earthquakes will happen regardless of whether we forecast them or not, so protecting the livelihoods of the people at risk should surely be the priority. However, predictions would enable evacuations, perhaps saving more lives in the first place. Shou's method is claimed to have 60% accuracy in all three windows of prediction, and an average lead time of 30 days, proving great potential.

Even Pliny the Elder, well known Roman polymath, appears to have alluded to the existence of earthquake clouds in his works Historia Naturalis: "There is also a sign [of earthquakes] in the heavens; for, when a shock is near at hand, either in the daytime or a little after sunset, a cloud is stretched out in the clear sky, like a long thin line." This aligns with Shou's idea of narrow streaks of cloud above a fault signifying an impending earthquake. With at least almost two millennia's worth of note, perhaps now that we have the enabling technology, we should pursue this phenomenon of "earthquake clouds". Earthquake prediction has always been hazy, so short-term pinpointing techniques may arguably be the most useful for saving lives, and coupled with mitigating damage, will strengthen the resilience of vulnerable societies.



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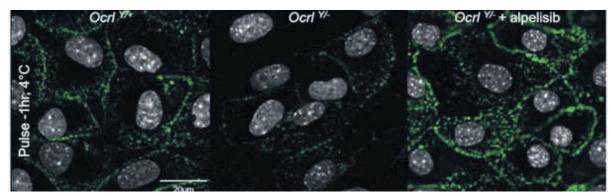
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Friday 16th October 2020 VARSITY

Science

Cambridge Spotlight: a new strategy to treat kidney dysfunction

Elena Everatt shares insight into the latest developments from the globally renowned Gurdon Institute in the treatment of kidney problems associated with Lowe syndrome



▲ These micrographs show the process of endocytosis, key to the new developments made

he group of Dr. Jennifer Gallop at the Gurdon Institute, a research facility at the University of Cambridge, has recently made great progress in treatment strategies for patients with Lowe syndrome. Lowe syndrome is a debilitating genetic condition, characterised by a range of symptoms, such as cataracts in newborns, intellectual disability, and kidney problems. Currently, patients have only supportive treatments available. In a collaboration with nephrologist professor Olivier Devuyst at the University of Zurich, the team of Dr. Gallop has identified a drug (currently used for cancer therapy) that may help in the treatment of kidney disease associated with the syndrome. So how did their basic research – the study of vesicle movement inside cells – lead to the spotting of a new treatment?

The key to the work was an understanding of internalisation of proteins into cells. Dr. Gallop's team had shown that, in healthy individuals, there are two phospholipid signals in cell membranes that trigger an assembly of actin (a protein) filaments on the membrane. This assembly can then push vesicles (that contain proteins) into the cell.

Knowing how this mechanism goes wrong in the disease was also crucial. Lowe syndrome is known to arise due to deficiencies in an enzyme called OCRL, which normally degrades the phospholipid signals for actin assembly. In the absence of OCRL, the levels of the phos-

pholipid signals on the cell membrane increase. This, in turn, leads to abnormal actin filament assembly on membranes with a downstream effect of impairing protein-filled vesicle movement within cells. In the kidney, defective intracellular trafficking of these vesicles leads to protein loss via the urine, as they are not reabsorbed as they would normally be.

Thus, knowing the molecular detail of the process, the group identified an enzyme which could be targeted to treat kidney malfunction. Dr. Gallop and her team spotted that inhibitors of the enzyme phosphoinositide 3-kinase (PI3K), could counteract the abnormal processes in cells of patients with Lowe syndrome.

Fortunately, to find a drug that would

target the enzyme PI3K, they did not have to go far - such inhibitors have already been developed and are used for treating some types of cancer. The teams focused on one called alpelisib, a drug with relatively few side effects, already approved for the use in breast cancer. They then went on to test the effects of the drug alpelisib on kidney cells and mouse models. Professor Devuvst's team showed that the drug improves endocytosis in OCRL-deficient kidney cells by using fluorescence microscopy to show that a fluorescently-labelled protein was internalised more efficiently upon treatment with the drug.

The results of the experiments in mice were very promising as well: the drug restored the reabsorption of proteins from urine and alleviated the physiological symptoms of kidney malfunction. Thus, the data from both cell culture and mouse models converged to show that the cancer drug alpelisib worked in the desired way, opening possibilities for repurposing it to treat kidney malfunction.

Now the teams are excited to take these discoveries further. Having done experiments in cell lines and mice, it is not yet clear whether the drug will work in patients and whether it will alleviate the multiple other symptoms of Lowe syndrome. Therefore, the groups are investigating the possibility of beginning clinical trials. Of note, the strategy of

drug repurposing is a cost-effective way of developing a treatment for the disease – as Lowe syndrome is very rare, the development of an entirely new drug is a difficult commercial proposition.

Importantly, it was collaborations between experts in their field that enabled the findings. As well as sharing of knowledge internationally, they involved a network of scientists within the Gurdon institute itself: expert microscopy image analysis was made possible with the help of Dr. Richard Butler in the core facility, while Professor Stephen Jackson down the hall shared his knowledge of translation, having developed another cancer drug. Not surprisingly, the Gurdon institute has already given rise to around a dozen start-up companies and several drugs from here have been successfully translated into the clinic.

As well as offering a potential strategy to help patients with Lowe syndrome, the work is an example of how curiosity-driven basic science can give new possibilities for treatment. "I was not initially studying the disease, our fundamental research unexpectedly led to an idea for drug repurposing", noted Dr. Gallop. Within any scientific field, initial questions asked can lead to discoveries that solve other problems. Hopefully, in the field of healthcare, basic research will continue to spark ideas that benefit patients.

Caffeine - from protecting plants to fuelling our days

Science editor Sambhavi Kumar delves into the possible evolutionary history of caffeine, and considers why caffeine consumption is so prevalent

s we enter the start of a new academic year, plunged back into a frenzy of deadlines and to-do lists, students often find themselves fuelling their late nights and early mornings with caffeine. Its most popular vehicle, coffee, is believed to be the most widely consumed drink worldwide - an estimated two billion cups are consumed every day. The physiological effects of caffeine are extensive. As well as cognitive stimulation (such as relieving drowsiness and improving reaction times) caffeine can enhance physical performance in both aerobic and anaerobic exercise in some individuals. However, whilst it does have possible benefits, humans are not evolutionarily primed to consume caffeine - so why do we?

Classified structurally as a methylxanthine (a modified product formed when purine bases are degraded), caffeine is derived from the seeds, nuts, or leaves of around 30 plant species native to Africa, East Asia, and South America. Caffeine may act as a natural pesticide for these plants. The highest caffeine levels tend to be found in coffee seedlings when they are still developing foliage, and so lack mechanical protection. This suggests that evolutionarily, plants with a caffeine content were selected for because it maximised plant survival by helping

Humans are not evolutionarily primed to consume caffeine - so why do we?

them to evade pests. Of course, larger organisms are able to consume caffeine up to certain concentrations without lethal effects - though, its bitter taste means that we should be evolutionarily primed to avoid its consumption regardless. In line with this, some research has shown that an individual's innate tolerance for bitter tastes, perhaps inherited, correlates with their coffee and/or tea drinking habits. Whilst there may be a plethora of flavoured blends and drinks on the market, the still-present loyal black coffee drinkers and demand for caffeine tablets show that the drive for caffeine consumption likely surpasses what should theoretically be a repul-

The actions of caffeine can be explained by considering a by-product of cellular metabolism called adenosine. When a person is awake and alert (but without any caffeine in their system), the amount of adenosine present in the neurones of their central nervous system (CNS) is negligible. However, as a person continues to stay awake, adenosine begins to accumulate in the synapses of the CNS, and binds to specific adenosine receptors. This activates a downstream signalling cascade that ultimately produces sensations of drowsiness. Caffeine acts as an antagonist at the adenosine re-

ceptors and hence is able to produce feelings of wakefulness. Its action at these receptors leads to many other effects, including increased release of catecholamine hormones such as adrenaline, and increased breathing rates.

Caffeine is considered to be safe in low to moderate doses. The FDA recommends a maximum dose of 400 milligrams a day, or about four cups of coffee, though in certain population groups consumption is not advised. This includes young children, perhaps simply because the same amount of caffeine will produce more pronounced effects in a body of lower mass. Some studies have shown that high levels of caffeine consumption in children and young adults gives an increased risk of elevated blood pressure and abnormal cardiac rhythms. This is somewhat worrying, particularly as it is difficult to determine a safe maximum caffeine dosage for a young, growing

For all ages, caffeine is evidently highly addictive. In those who have a high, regular caffeine intake, the prolonged inhibition of the adenosine system results in its upregulation, and if such an individual then abstains from caffeine, this upregulation produces the classic symptoms of withdrawal, including headaches, fatigue, and anxiety. Similar

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to other notoriously addictive drugs (including cocaine), caffeine can stimulate dopaminergic activity in a region of the brain called the nucleus accumbens, as part of our neurological reward system. Evolutionarily, these pathways are used for motivation to perform tasks necessary for survival and reproduction, and for associative learning – but often also form the mechanisms underlying addiction

Caffeine might be legal, but that does not mean that the severity of its addictiveness should be underestimated. 'Caffeine Use Disorder' (disruptive, problematic patterns of caffeine use) is becoming a persistent problem and is being recognised as a clinical condition by some healthcare professionals and organisations. However, more research is necessary to confirm the scale and seriousness of this issue.

Whatever form it may take, for some, caffeine is essential to ensure that they can get through their day. In theory, the taste may be unpleasant, but this evidently is something that can easily be overcome. It might have begun as a way to repel unwanted pest organisms, but it appears that caffeine has established itself as a consistent convenience of modern life.



FRIDAY 16TH OCTOBER 2020 VARSITY

Interviews

I am an Uighur who faced China's concentration camps. This is my story.

Victor Jack sits with Ömir Bekali, a Uighur Muslim who recounts his imprisonment, torture and indoctrination at the hands of the Chinese state.



psychological torment and suicide.

n early 2017, life looked bright for 41-year old Ömir Bekali. A proud father of three, he had a Tourism degree, a small business and several managerial positions under his belt. He was set to lead the Kazakh delegation to the upcoming international Astana Trade Exposition, an event which typically draws in millions.

But in March, a seemingly innocuous trip to promote the event in Xinjiang, northwest China, would ensure he would never attend.

During a short post-work visit to his family in nearby Turpan, on the morning of the 26th March, policemen showed up at the door to arrest him - beginning a near eight month journey of unending physical and psychological torment.

'They shackled my hands and put black fabric [over] my eyes," Omir says. "I feel my body tremble whenever I remember that moment".

Ömir was born to Uighur and Kazakh parents in Xinjiang, or formerly East Turkestan before the Chinese invasion of 1949. It is now a semi-autonomous region, but for centuries has been home to Uighur Muslims, who make up just under half the population and hold a distinctive culture, religion and language to the country's majority ethnic Han Chinese.

Economic, cultural and religious discrimination against Uighurs had been brewing for decades. But in 2014, Chinese President Xi Jinping announced a new "People's War on Terror" aimed at fighting regional 'terrorists' and 'separatists', heralding a new era of mass surveillance, gargantuan police presence and skyrocketing arbitrary imprisonments of Uighurs in Xiniiang.

My feet and my hands were tied up with iron shackles and they beat my hands, they beat my feet ... they beat my back and my stomach

Following his arrest, Ömir was thrown into a small police station cell, where he was kept for a week, still with no explanation. He says the room seemed to be built for 12 people, but contained more than 36 others, who, like him, had their arms and legs constantly shackled.

Soon he was transferred to another police station, where he says the authorities subjected him to four "complete" days of torture.

"My feet and my hands were tied up with iron shackles and they beat my hands, they beat my feet ... they beat my back and my stomach", says Ömir.

"They put needles in between my nails and my fingers," he adds, "then they put iron sticks into my sexual organs".

Ömir says he was put into a 'Tiger Chair' for long periods, a metal seat-like contraption which restricts movement. Police also hung him from the roof of the cell by his wrists so his feet could not touch the floor, and later smashed his knuckles with hammer-like instru-

"[Those] scars are still there ... whenever I remember those experiences my body shakes".

Ömir thinks his job, which lent itself to significant regional travel, had both aroused the suspicion of the authorities and provided them with the perfect excuse to accuse him of terrorist activities

"I did not confess anything because I hadn't done anything," he says. "Maybe they thought after torture I would just confess something I [had] never done

Soon Ömir was moved to a nearby, highly-fortified prison camp, spending seven months locked up, still with no access to lawyers, phones to contact his family with, nor any real explanations for his arrest.

In November 2017, he was transported to his final destination, arriving at one of what China has termed 're-education

Four metre walls and electrical fences surround the complex, Ömir recounts, and armed guards patrol the camp at all times of the day and night.

Inside, there are 40 people to a 16 square-metre room. Prisoners as young as 15 and as old as 80 are placed into these cramped cells, he says. Occasionally they are moved to larger rooms, but no-one is allowed outside.

Twenty-four hours a day, prisoners are shackled. Iron chains are tied around their necks, fixed to loose iron blocks that Ömir says weigh around eight to ten kilograms, forcing prisoners to always be hunched down. He believes this is just one of the wavs in which the camps are designed to instill a submissive posture in prisoners vis-a-vis their captors.

"I stayed in that room with lots of different people, some of them are businesspeople, historians, school professors, writers, singers," recounts Ömir, "they speak much better Chinese than Chinese [people] themselves, and they have more money than Chinese themselves: they don't need to be re-educated".

On a typical day at the camp, he says, inmates are woken up at 5am and given a meagre serving of bread and soup. They are then forced to repeatedly sing songs which praise the Chinese Communist party, stress China's greatness, and show gratitude towards President Xi Jinping personally.

"We sing from when we wake up in the morning 'til lunch and after lunch ... we do nothing else, just eat and praise the Chinese communist party," says

Prisoners are constantly warned about 48 characteristics considered hostile to the Chinese state, which include growing beards, praying and religious charity-giving, according to Ömir. The aim of these drills is clear, he says: "become Han Chinese ... forget your religion, forget your culture".

"[If] you don't listen to them, or cannot recite Mandarin songs, or roll your eyes, or show just a little bit of discontent with this process," he argues, then the guards respond with torture.

As Ömir often expressed his discontent with his arrest, he found himself tortured once again. He says he was beaten "half to death" and made to stand facing a wall for twenty-four hours without food or drink on some occasions, put in a Tiger Chair for a day in others, or simply placed into solitary confinement in rooms lined with plastic, intended to avoid suicide risks.

"The Chinese government calls [them] re-education camps. Actually there are no re-education camps - all are concentration camps," he says.

After 20 days, Ömir was finally released. His wife had sent endless letters to the UN and Foreign Ministry of Kazakhstan, where he was previously naturalised. She had also sat for an interview with Free Asia Radio, all of which pressured two Kazakh Ambassadors to finally visit him and soon after the Chinese authorities to free him.

The Chinese government calls [them] re-education camps. Actually there are no re-education camps - all are concentration camps



This is a strikingly different picture to the one China has painted, claiming that the camps provide 'vocational training', that prisoners can leave at any time and operations are scaling down. But a report released last month found China has built almost 400 new camps since 2017. while new testimonies have emerged alleging slave labour, forced sterilisations and organ harvesting taking place inside the camps too.

Their goal is just to exterminate all Uighurs in one way or another ... we are not violent and we are not radical



"Their goal is just to exterminate all Uighurs in one way or another", says Ömir. China's labelling of his community as terrorists is a "political game", he stresses, "we are not violent and we are not radical".

In 2019, the European Parliament and US Congress passed laws and resolutions condemning these imprisonments, while in the UK, a cross-party parliamentary group is said to be planning new legislation aimed at addressing the humanitar-

But when 23 countries issued statements to the UN last year denouncing China's actions, they were met with counter-statements from over 50 - mainly Muslim-majority - nations defending China's human rights policies.

Ömir says he is "grateful to Britain" for considering this new legislation. But he laments the international response.

"I want to make it clear that this Uighur genocide is not just [about] religion ... it's a test for humanity, for the whole world," he says. "I hope the international community takes more drastic

When asked what Cambridge students can do to help, Ömir offers simple and straightforward advice.

"Talk to other people or friends and raise awareness so more people realise the severity of the situation," he says.

He stresses that he also "hope[s] students can organise more protests, write more news about Uighurs, and raise the awareness of the general public".

Ultimately, he argues, students represent "the future" of the world's response to China's policies.

Soon after Ömir decided to speak out, he lost all contact with his extended family back in Xinjiang and says has no idea if they are even alive. After an 18-month legal struggle, he was granted political asylum in the Netherlands, but his wife and children were unable to get political asylum, so they remain in Turkey.

"I am not sure in the future if I can get back to a normal life," he says. But for now, he insists he will continue to "always endeavour to expose China's brutality and what is happening in the concentration camps".

Many thanks to Andy, Ömir's interpreter, without whom the interview would not have been possible.



Lifestyle

The importance of ageing female role models

Reflecting on the ultimate legacy and passing of Supreme Court judge Ruth Bader Ginsburg, **Georgia Goble** shares how ageing female role models remind us that you are never too old to do what you love

n the 18th September 2020, the Supreme Court judge Ruth Bader Ginsburg died aged 87 from cancer, having overcome the disease four times previously.

Ginsburg's legacy is immense. A champion for women's rights, Ginsburg set legal precedents that eventually led discrimination on the basis of sex to be declared unconstitutional in several areas of US law. From tax law to estate benefits, Ginsburg continually fought to challenge the discriminatorally codified system. In 1993, she was nominated by president Clinton onto the Supreme Court, where she served until her death.

In recent years, Ginsburg became somewhat of a pop-culture icon and cult liberal heroine as the 'notorious RBG', with her face plastered on T-shirts and mugs. "It was beyond my wildest imagination. [...] I am now 86 years old", she said last year, "and yet people of all ages want to take their picture with me."

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In such a youth-centric culture, ageing female role models exist as a constant reminder that female achievement and worth is not capped by

age

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It seems obvious that a woman with so many years of success behind her should be celebrated to such an extent - that we would worship the immense knowledge and wisdom of the older subdivision of society. And yet, predominantly, the limelight is dominated by very young women. From pop-stars to actresses to broadcasters, in our culture as it stands, youth is the

currency of female value, and female youth is fetishized to such an extent that older women and their experiences are rendered almost entirely invisible. "We don't talk about third acts" says feminist writer Caitlin Moran. "All of the movies are about finding love, sorting out who you are in your younger years, and then the stories just stop [...] you kind of disappear from popular culture."

Indeed, in rom-coms and sitcoms alike, the happily ever after always seems to come around the age thirty, give or take a few years. As Moran notes, we never get to see what happens next. And this is not an ineffectual narrative. The media is a powerful agent of socialisation, meticulously carving out the curves and contours of our collective consciousness. So much so, that I would argue that this particular narrative has created a collective 'arrival fallacy'. As psychologist Tal Ben-Shahar defines the concept, 'arrival fallacy' is the "illusion that once we attain our goal or reach our destination, we will reach lasting happiness"

While this concept is predominantly applied to career goals, I would argue that it very much applies to the conventional happy ending we see in films, of marriage and pregnancy. In fact, of the young women I spoke to, the vast majority said that they never think to dream of all the things they can achieve in later life, forgetting they have their whole lives, that being decades upon decades of time, to cultivate successful and fulfilling careers, due to their preoccupations with marriage and fertility. "I feel like I'm in such a rush", one woman told me, "to be successful and financially stable before thirty, so I can have children. I never really think about what comes next."

And why would we? In a society in which we are constantly fed the narrative that marriage and babies will 'complete' us, why would we have cause to think that anything that comes next has any worth at all? In such a youth-centric culture, ageing female role models exist as a constant reminder that female achievement and worth is not capped by age. One need only think



▲ "Ginsburg's legacy is immense." (INSTAGRAM/RACHELREYNOLDS.ART)

of Bernadine Evaristo, who found global success aged 60 upon winning the 2019 Booker Prize, after a 38 year long career in the arts. Or Gloria Steinham, still publishing critical feminist works well into her eighties. Or, of course, Dames Judi Dench and Maggie Smith who, aged 85, after decades upon decades as phenomenal leading ladies in film, TV and theatre alike, are no less exquisite than they ever were, with Dench even appearing on the cover of British Vogue back in May.

Because while we've made leaps and bounds in the progression of women in the workplace in

the last fifty years, female success looks like far more than a 20-something #girlboss in a power suit, contrary to what Instagram would have us think.

"I was age 60 when I was nominated [to the supreme court] and some people thought I was too old for the job" Ruth Bader Ginsburg said last year. "Well now I'm into my 27th year on the court. I'm one of the longest tenured justices. So if you worried about my age, it was unnecessary." If this unforgettable legal icon taught us anything, it's that you are never too old to do what you love.

1) Little Petra

Little Petra is a café on the closer side of Mill Road. Walking in, you are greeted by an inviting array of coffees, teas, desserts, and dishes for takeaway options. That's just the beginning. Little Petra has the warmth of a café, but the full menu boasts the variation of a restaurant. Vegans will be pleased to hear that plant-based options form the basis of the menu and are celebrated as dishes in their own right, although there's always the option of adding lamb or chicken as well. Matched with the casual ambiance, the ample possibilities for sharing make Little Petra the perfect post-supervision outing, mid-week celebration or catch-up spot.

For those of you willing to go the extra mile from central Cambridge, Little Petra is well worth the walk — and for those of you that aren't, don't worry, they Deliveroo, too.

Lottie Reeder

2) Dot's Hot Chicken

Dot's Hot Chicken serves the increasingly popular style of Nashville Hot Chicken. It's worth saying right away: if you don't like spicy foods, you may as well stop reading now. However, to consider Dot's as only 'hot' chicken is to ignore all that is going on. The heat comes from a generous serving of Cayenne which, when paired with paprika in the seasoning, produces a real smokiness. The almost BBQ-esque taste is certainly unique for fried chicken. On its own, the chicken would probably be overwhelming. Luckily, it is offset with some milk bread. Milk bread is a Japanese bread which is in effect the Platonic ideal of white bread.

Its bread is sourced from the independent Grain Culture, and they rely upon the independent Foodstuff Cambridge for delivery. Food providers being local is not in itself a reason to eat somewhere, but when you combine this with its excellent chicken, I can't recommend Dot's highly enough.

Callum Wai

3) vegan vice

Following the easing of lockdown, Vegan Vice opened its doors in The Snug Bar at the Grafton. With relaxed indoor and outdoor seating, as well as the ability to order a cocktail to accompany your meal, it is the perfect place to wind down.

Vegan Vice offer the best plant-based eating experience I have ever had, and I have done extensive research and taste testing. The impressive flavours of every element of the meal, from the patties to the sauces, are outstanding. They contribute to an evergrowing scene of vegan restaurants that satisfy anyone, regardless of dietary requirements. There is a lot more to the menu that I am yet to try – milkshakes, bacon and cheese burgers, and a selection of wraps – but this just makes me even more excited to return. Vegan Vice will undoubtedly grow, so visit soon to say that you were among its first customers.

Lifestyle's Restaurant Picks

Lifestyle writers recommend the best independent Cambridge restaurants you have to try this Michaelmas

Lottie Reeder

FRIDAY 16TH OCTOBER 2020

Let's make: buttery chocolate shortbread

Put your baking skills to the test with Amelia Shaw's homemade shortbread recipe

ow that The Great British Bake Off has finally returned to our screens, the UK has once again gone baking mad. Let's be honest, we really needed to move on from the banana bread craze. This craze has also coincided with the start of term, so if you're looking for a way to impress your new housemates, baking is a great place to start. Whether you're a seasoned baker, or a beginner just starting out, you really can't go wrong with this recipe (yes, really). Whilst I wouldn't bet my life on it, I'm pretty sure that these would get you a Paul Hollywood handshake.

When it's dark, cold, and rainy outside, shortbread is the ultimate comfort food. Crumbly and buttery with a hint of chocolate, they are also perfect when dipped in a cup of tea (Yorkshire, of course). If you're not from the UK, then trust me when I say that shortbread is a must-try, along with fish and chips, Marmite, and a Sunday

When it's dark, cold, and rainy outside, shortbread is the ultimate comfort food

roast. Getting creative in a student kitchen can be tricky, but this recipe has few ingredients, and you really don't need a lot of equipment. These biscuits can also be made in under an hour, so go on, grab your new flatmates, and get baking! : Amelia's homemade shortbread (AMELIA SHAW)

Ingredients:

250g plain flour (plus a little extra for dust-

75g caster sugar (plus a little extra to sprinkle on top)

175g butter, cubed (hard butter that comes in a block, not spread) 75g milk chocolate chips



Method:

- Preheat the oven to 180C/180 fan/Gas
- Line two baking trays with greaseproof paper.
- In a bowl, or a big pan if you don't have one, mix together the flour and sugar.
- Add in the butter, and then use your fingers (wash your hands first!) to work the mixture until it becomes breadcrumb-

Addthechocolatechipsandmixthemin. Use your hands to combine the mixture and make it doughlike (this works best if your hands are a bit warm). The mixture will stay quite crumbly, but it should come together if you squeeze it a little. Dust the

(clean!) workt o p with flour, r o l l out your dough to around 1.5cm thickness, and cut it into whatever shapes you choose - I find rectangles work best. If you don't have a cutter, use a knife to create the shapes.

- Add the cut outs to the lined trays leaving space between them, as they will expand a bit in the oven.
- Bake for 15-20 minutes, until they are golden brown.
- Take the biscuits from the oven and leave them on the tray for a couple of
- Sprinkle the warm biscuits with some

caster sugar before transferring them to a wire rack to cool. The biscuits will be quite soft straight from the oven, so be careful in this step.

Pop the kettle on, and enjoy one of these while

they're slightly warm.

Ask Vulture. Ask Vulture columinist, Zadie Loft, talks beauty, confidence, and self-esteem

terested in me. It's

can safely say that I do not know a single soul who hasn't ever felt like this at some time or other. You are not alone. In a world where we're constantly sold the latest beauty products and fashion items and diet plans, it's no surprise that we all worry about how we look. And while this is true, there are of course things you can do to detach yourself from this worrying.

> Attraction is a confidence thing

Sometimes it's easy to fall into the trap of the short-term fix for low self-esteem, by seeking out attention on dating apps, for example. While this can make you feel pretty and attractive in the moment, it's important to remember this: if you're looking for someone who's only interested in you because of how you look, you're looking for the wrong person.

I don't want to bore you with the whole inner beauty thing, but I'm going to bore you with the whole inner beauty thing. Prettiness is so much : more than skin-deep (I know it's hard to imagine given all the Timothee Chalamets and Zendavas of the world). It may sound a little cliché (and maybe it is), but humour and intelligence and kindness and all those other wonderful qualities are the things that fire up attraction. Starting to look past the surface and focusing on your *inner beauty* (sorry, there it is again), will make life much, much better.

One trick that has massively helped me with my self-esteem and body image is asking myself if I would ever speak to my friends or family the way I might speak about my body. Would you tell your friends that you hated the way they looked, or thought they were really unattractive? I'm going to hope the answer is no. Telling yourself you are beautiful may seem far away from actually believing it, but it can make all

Attraction is a confidence thing. Fixing that self-esteem and realising you are everything your friends and family see you as is the first step. Finding ways of expressing yourself can really help, so try out some new looks, go find some cool, sustainable garms and funky styleinspiration until you find the look that feels the most you. Cambridge has a tonne of lovely charity shops (check out Regent Street or Mill Road) which can be a great place to find some unique items of clothing. It's tempting to just copy the cool kids and wear what's on the mannequins. but they're made of plastic and you're made of so much more!

Tell yourself you're beautiful (and mean it!!),



If you're looking for someone who's only interested in you because of how you look, you're looking for the wrong person



find different ways of expressing that beauty and talk to your friends about how you feel: chances are they feel the same way, and a problem shared is a problem halved.

Music













We hope you're getting into the rhythm and groove of uni life. Grab a cup of tea and listen to these tunes to drive you through the day!

for the morning wake-up...

Expectation: Morning Mood

Grieg

for the late night essay...

Transit of Venus

Transit of Venus Jess Gillam

for the afternoon study break.

Doing Me RAY BLK

Tame Impala

Santigold

for the long walk home... **Borderline**

for the Saturday night party of 6... **Run the Road**

for the motivational burst...

My Queen Is Albertina Sisula Sons of Kemet



A Tribute to Toots Hibbert

Toby Stinson pays tribute to Frederick Nathanial "Toots" Hibbert, trailblazer in Jamaican music and reggae pioneer

n 11 September 2020, the music world lost one of its greats to Covid-19, yet many people have never heard his name. Frederick Nathaniel "Toots" Hibbert was a trailblazer in Jamaican music. He pioneered reggae, and was one of the most influential Jamaican songwriters of all time, which is quite a claim in a field encompassing Bob Marley. But, throughout his career, Toots had more number ones in Jamaica than even Marley did.

Born in May Pen, rural Jamaica, Hibbert moved to Trenchtown in Kingston and there teamed up with Henry "Raleigh" Gordon and Nathaniel "Jerry" Mathias McCarthy to form *The Maytals*. The group combined the up-tempo beat of ska with the smooth harmonies of the "Four Tops" to form a sound that was distinctly Jamaican, yet distinctive in Jamaica.

On top of the classic 'changa' guitar rhythm and syncopated beat of the 50s and 60s, they added melodious basslines, distinctive horn punches and layered guitar, while Hibbert -

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Toots had more number ones in Jamaica than even Marley did

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dubbed the Jamaican soul singer - fronted the group with his powerful and emotive vocals. This distinctive sound brought *The Maytals* much success under sound system mogul, Clement "Coxsone" Dodd, and they scored many ska and rocksteady hits. Hibbert did not just solidify these genres though, he helped create one, credited with coining the term 'reggae' in his 1968 song 'Do the Reggay'.

Throughout his 60-year career, Toots refused to be confined by genre. This shines through in *The Maytals*' renowned 1972 album, *Funky Kingston*. The titular track was a response to the funk/soul classic, 'Funky Nassau', written to show American audiences that Jamaica had soul too.

Alongside self-penned classics like 'Pressure Drop' and 'Time Tough', Hibbert transforms the rhythm and blues song, 'Louie Louie', into a driving reggae number, replete with punchy horns, rippling organ and an energy that makes it more than a cover; it becomes Toots' own. The same treatment is even given to John Denver's, 'Country Roads', rejuvenating the hollow crowd-pleaser into a song of joyous reminiscence.

The impact Toots had globally on the music industry is evident in his 2004 Grammy-winning album 'True Love'. This album features a selection of Hibbert's greatest hits, performed with musical legends such as Eric Clapton,

Keith Richards, Bonnie Raitt and Bunny Wailer. Toots inspired these artists, so much so that Eric Clapton even admitted being too daunted to ad-lib vocals with him.

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Despite the clash of cultures, this album is a triumph

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'True Love' showcases the ability Toots' music has to cross divides and speak to audiences around the globe, taking his thoroughly Jamaican back catalogue and adding rock guitar lines, blues vocals, slide guitar and American accents. Despite the clash of cultures, this album is a triumph. The various styles blend seamlessly to create new hits out of old classics, while still retaining the soulful reggae groove.

However, in 2013, at a concert in Virginia, Hibbert was struck on the head by a bottle thrown from the crowd. The born performer became afraid to go on stage and even lost his ability to write songs or remember lyrics. For years, Toots secluded himself in his home, unable to perform or record new material. In spite of this, he still pleaded with the judge to show leniency to the crowd member responsible, true to his mantra of forgiveness and acceptance.

2020 should have been a triumphant year for Toots: he had finally managed to face the recording studio again and was ready to begin a new chapter of his musical career. After over a decade, Toots and the *Maytals* had a new album. This would be their last album, 'Got to be Tough', which was released to critical acclaim on 28 August, just two weeks before Toots' death.

Though we will never get to see it now, 'Got to be Tough' gives us a taste of what we could have expected from Toots. It is full of powerful songs with fierce messages that bring to mind the force of Bob Marley's political reggae. Hibbert even gives a nod to his old friend with a cover of 'Three Little Birds', featuring Marley's son, Ziggy. This version takes the easy-going hit and moulds it into a song with anthemic power, where the idea that "every little thing's gonna be alright" is a political cry for freedom. Hibbert returns to the music scene with a statement of intent, asserting his position right alongside Bob Marley.

I was meant to see Toots and the *Maytals* at Brixton Academy on 16 May this year, but obviously this never happened. The pandemic arrived, lockdown was imposed, and the gig was postponed until 2021. When I listened to their music, it would fill me with eager anticipation; the wait would only make the realisation of the dream that much better. But then, at the end of August, Toots was admitted to hospital in Kingston and two weeks later, despite showing signs of recovery, died from Covid-19. Now I will always regret that I never got to see the legend himself, whose music inspired my long love of ska, rocksteady, and of course reggae.

The appeal of Toots' music is as strong now as ever, with its upbeat melodies, soulful vocals and thumping basslines. Through his music, Toots' legacy deserves to live on and rise to greater heights, remembered as a reggae pioneer, soul singer, Jamaican icon and musical legend.

▼@TOOTSMAYTALSOFFICIAL/@ROYAL.VISION



Film & TV

Mrs. America review: Paulson and Blanchett stun as anti-feminists floundering under the second-wave

FX's latest drama mini-series serves as an uncomfortable reminder of the work still to be done in the fight for women's liberation, writes Emily Symington

about the campaign to ratify the Equal Rights Amendment in 1970s America. The series centres on Phyllis Schlafly (Cate Blanchett), antifeminist, homemaker, and nuclear policy expert from Illinois who founded the altright 'Eagle Forum' and 'STOPERA campaign' in 1972. With the pastel suits and pearls of Schlafly set against the Woodstock glamour of Gloria Steinem (Rose Byrne) and her fellow feminists, this historical drama has all the vintage nostalgia of its predecessor, Mad Men (also written by Dahvi Waller). Moreover, the sensitive script and thoughtfully drawn characters uphold the second-wave feminist dictum that 'the personal is political.'

Schlafly is a despicable protagonist. Her lilting southern drawl spouts the stock antifeminist rhetoric of the pro-ERA feminists as 'man-hatingunhappy-lesbians.' Blanchett's performance as this 'First Lady of the Conservative movement' is compelling, with her ready titter and Hollywood smile sugar-coating her hateful politics. Schlafly's STOPERA and Eagle Forum movement also exhibit all the tactics associated with an alt-right posttruth campaign: the pithy sloganism used in the anti-feminist rhetoric is evocative of Trump's own 'Make America Great Again.' Likewise, the use of skewed statistics is translated brilliantly into the 70s with Schlafly crassly chopping up tapes of speeches from ERA lobbyists to distribute to her supporters.

The writers, however, still manage to garner sympathy for Schlafly. She longs to go to law school and, without professional training, is publicly humiliated in a debate on national television. Indeed, this is both ironic and a testament to Schlafly's carefully crafted character. Frustrated, intelligent, and ambitious, she would benefit from everything the ERA promises. As the exasperated activist Bella Abzug (Margo Martindale) says, Schlafly is probably 'one of the most liberated women in America' and a 'goddamn feminist.'

Critics have questioned the accuracy of Schlafly's portrayal, with Maria Donegan (Guard-



These imagined personal histories deliver visceral and complex stories of women which are long overdue in the film industry



ian US) claiming that, in reality, she was a vicious misogynist who believed victims of sexual harassment brought men's violence upon themselves. While Mrs. America perhaps does not condemn Schlafly enough, her faults are still shown to be more than internalised misogyny.

STOPERA campaigner Alice Macray (superbly played by Sarah Paulson) confronts Schlafly's disregard of domestic abuse and exposes her emotional manipulation in the final episode when she screams: "Do you even care about me at all?" Mac-

X's Mrs. America is a nine-part mini-series : ray's internal conflict between her idolisation of Schlafly and misgivings about the STOPERA campaign is another clever and thoughtful plot line. In one of the most memorable and funny moments of the series, we join Alice on a Xanax-and-cocktailinfused sojourn towards 'feminist enlightenment' around the National Women's Conference of 1977. Though perhaps rightly criticised for inaccuracy, these imagined personal histories deliver visceral and complex stories of women which are long overdue in the film industry.



We grieve equally for both Schlafly and Abzug when they fail to be appointed into positions of power



Never seen without her mauve tinted aviators and a cigarette, Gloria Steinem is portrayed as the 'pin up girl' for the Womens' Lib movement. Tension simmers throughout the series between Steinem and her forerunners: the waning radical Betty Friedan (Tracey Ullman) and the spunky Bella Abzug, Within the Women's movement we see flaws too, such as the shunting of black feminist issues. This is particularly visible in the opposition to Shirley Chisholm's (Uzo Aduba) second run for

Homophobia is also flagrant in Friedan's rallies and in Bella Abzug's ready dismissal of the gay rights resolution on the agenda of the Women's Conference. However, it is misogyny, in all its glorious unadulterated splendour, that is the constant throughout this show. Whether in the frequent waist squeezes from sleazy Senators, to the 'pin the cock on the feminist' Playboy page featuring a nude illustration of Gloria Steinem, Mrs. America aims to showcase the struggle of women to be taken seriously by the men in power. Indeed, we grieve equally for both Schlafly and Abzug when they fail to be appointed into positions of power. The final shot of the show leaves us with a perfect paradox of Phyllis Schlafly: after receiving a phone call from Reagan to let her know he wouldn't be appointing her into his cabinet, she puts on her floral apron and peels apples for an apple pie.

Several states short of the 75% state ratification required to become federal law, the battle for the ERA is still ongoing today. The legalisation of abortion, one of the main propositions of the ERA, remains one of the partisan issues in American politics. Indeed, it was one of the main tenets of Trump's Presidential campaign in 2017 to overturn Roe v. Wade (the Supreme Court's decision in 1973 that essentially guaranteed the federal legalisation of abortion) and has resurfaced now following the death of pro-choice Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg. The popularity of the core 'American' family values that Schlafly monopolised are reflected in the contemporary grassroots Michigan Conservative Coalition: 'Women for Trump.' Schlafly's final book, published the year she died, was titled 'The Conservative Case for Trump.'



▲ 'Blanchett's performance as this 'First Lady of the Conservative movement' is compelling', Cate Blanchett as Phyllis Schlafly



Fashion

Depop Drama: What does it take to 'make it' on everyone's favourite app?

Fashion Editors Lara Zand and Martha French talk to some of the biggest sellers on Depop



orry bro they're gonna be posted on Monday, caught my ear in a blender so been a little inactive x - is just one of the many gems immortalised on the Instagram account @ depopdrama, which shares unimaginably ludicrous Depop buyer-seller interactions with its 558,000 followers. A sort of gourmet eBay for students and YoPros alike, Depop has served as a - somewhat tragic - microcosm of the way that young people communicate and consume ever since it was first victimised in tweets and tabloids.

Now, after months of lockdown, the app has become the place to go for unnecessary lockdown purchases, and - in the absence of proper fashion weeks and red carpets - has undoubtedly matured from trend-spreader to trend-setter. It is more or less to blame for the fact that we all dress the same, and only seems to be expanding, going on a colossal hiring spree after demand doubled over the past months.

And who can be surprised? We all know it, we all know someone who's on it. Depop boasts over 20 million users, with 90% of them under 26. Since its inception in 2011, the online marketplace has turned Gen Z - said to be increasingly eco-conscious and money-minded - into a generation of budding internet entrepreneurs. Accessible and user-friendly even for the most technologically illiterate among us, it takes mere seconds to upload an item for sale: add a photo, size, price and short description. It's as simple as uploading a mirror selfie on Instagram. In the same way that YouTube and Instagram gave rise to their own viral stars, Depop's cult-like popularity has birthed a new tribe of influencers: successful sellers auctioning off their own garments or items they've thrifted, sourced in bulk or even forged themselves. For many, it's their self-confessed

'side hustle' - they're grappling with full university timetables or working days.

Depop not only allows its users to thrift their way through the season's trends, but it's often been credited as the very source of the vogue; bucket hats



Whilst I was at uni,
I'd focus on Depop on
Saturdays and Sundays; I'd take my photos on weekends and
be stocked up for the
whole week. I would
drop stuff off at the
post office on my way
to my 9am lecture



and Burberry flannel shirts are Depop 101. It has facilitated a renaissance of '90s and '00s fashion, or the nostalgic 'y2k' wave, meaning there are far more low-rise jeans and slip dresses spotted on the

aesthetic that prides itself on having bypassed the environmental toxicity of the fast fashion industry. That's not to say the app is without a dark side; reports of harassment, scams, extortionately high prices ('unique' and 'rare' are never words I'd seen used to describe Brandy Melville before) and downright bizarre interactions are rife. With so many simi-

larities to other social media platforms, that's nothing special. But what is new is a sustainable, economical and highly personal approach to the shopping experience and individual style overall. We heard from some of Depop's top-rated sellers about their journey on the platform, a day in the life and what it takes to successfully run an online shop.

Lara Fair (@lara-fair1), who describes her high-profile shop as "All things trousers!" started out on Depop during secondary school,

but it was only once she got to university that she realised it could act as a viable replacement for her part-time job. "To me, doing something creative and less labour intensive was enough incentive for me to

stop replenishing supermarket shelves", she explains. Full-time seller Asal Tehrani's account (@susamusa, which boasts 92,000 followers) offers "timeless classic nineties pieces mixed with out-there noughties pieces" and also took off whilst she was at university, studying for a degree in Chemistry with 26 weekly contact hours: "Whilst I was at uni, I'd focus on Depop on Saturdays and Sundays; I'd take my photos on week-



▲ (INSTAGRAM / SUSIELOLA)

ends and be stocked up for the whole week I would drop stuff off at the post office on mv wav to mv 9am lecture. During exams, I had to pay someone to reply to messages". Student Susie Garvie (@susielola) takes entire days out of her routine to "take pictures, write my thank

and list products. It takes ages and really needs a whole day set aside so everything's not rushed", she explains. One of many students treating the app as a part-time job, this lifestyle speaks to the changing

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▲ (INSTAGRAM / SUSAMUSACLOTHING)

nature of young professionalism, particularly in the context of the coronavirus pandemic.

For Axelle Dufresne (@axelledufresne), who focuses on selling her own upcycled pieces, the process involves careful planning. "You need to have a plan every week as to how many items you want to put up you need to be able to identify with your audience and engage with them," she notes. "I think having other social media accounts for your Depop such as Instagram can really help as this gives you



The increasing popularity of sites such as Depop is promising; slow fashion is here to stay

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the chance to be able to talk to your customers and help them understand you're only human too. It's important for customers to know who they are buying from so being able to get to know them is essential."

Similarly, Celia Marment (@celiapops), a self-proclaimed fan of the noughties and 90s, adds that sourcing new stock is a constant consideration, and not as straightforward as it seems. "You're always on



(INSTAGRAM / SUSIELOLA)

the hunt for new sources: it's a huge part of the job and is definitely why people are secretive about it. I think a lot of people are under the impression that most sellers have one supplier that they get all their stock from, but actually most people will source from a number of places", she explains. "Recently I handpicked a big load of deadstock from a samples factory that made clothes for brands like Topshop, Etam and Pilot back in the day. We also get a lot of vintage designer stock from Italy."

Being an Internet phenomenon, the app has experienced its fair share of controversies. A lack of price regulation and its dependence on a relationship of trust has meant stories of elaborate scams and cases of fraud are not uncommon. The platform has undeniably changed thrifting culture, but many complain of a gentrification effect that excludes a whole section of the market; when the prices of resold garments creep up, they are rendered inaccessible to lower-income buyers who may then be forced to turn to fast fashion brands catering to lower budgets. When a Jane Norman top from the '90s is priced at £200, you couldn't blame anybody for seeing the appeal of Asos.

Garvie raises another common gripe: dropshipping. "Some sellers bulk-buy from AliExpress and sell for an extortionate amount higher. A few of these accounts are verified and supported by Depop, even though it's against their new rules! It's terrible business to not only support poorly-made fast fashion where the workers aren't paid a living wage, but also to rip off buyers on the app who are none the wiser." Fair agrees, adding: "It just takes away from Depop being based around second-hand buying and sustainability. And undermines all the hard work other sellers put into sourcing stock." Similarly, several sellers recently came under fire for using the tag 'chav' to promote their items, exacerbating the deeply problematic aestheticization of 'working class style

From the sellers' side, life isn't always a glossy feed of enviably put-together outfits. Behind the scenes, the work can be draining and all-consuming. "I think every Depoper will have days where it seems like nothing is selling and it can be really demotivating," explains Dufresne. "It's also hard to treat it like a real job. It can be so easy to slack, but when you do you really notice it and it affects your sales. So, staying on top of your game is very important." Tehrani, who cites photos and packaging as her least favourite part, explains that work-life boundaries are essential when so much of the work is done online: 'It's a 24-hour job. You see a message come in at 10pm at night - maybe an American customer - and you need a lot of discipline not to reply to it." Celia feels the same, "Technically the work never stops as people are always on their phones. The listing



@kezmadeit for tulle pieces

@d_railed for designer streetwear

@annawetton for y2k style

@shannoony for handmade milkmaid tops

@nellskitch for everything quirky

and bookkeeping process is pretty soul sucking," she adds.

But a platform of this scale will always have its problems, and Depop's ethos undoubtedly outweighs them, for the app in itself does not only encourage second hand selling, but has now actively made it desirable. The increasing popularity of sites such as Depop is promising; slow fashion is here to stay. Whilst this means, as Garvie notes, "The app is so competitive now that it's hard to stand out, as there are so many creative people doing similar things", this is only a testament to its power over industry. And its sellers are certainly conscious of this. "Clothing production is one of the biggest global contributors to climate change. Fast fashion plays a massive role in this and if we can normalise buying second hand, we can collectively reduce the number of consumers shopping at places like Pretty Little Thing, Missguided and Boohoo, If you're buying a top for £4, how much do you think the workers are being paid?", asks Fair, who actually did her dissertation on this very problem.

Sellers encourage sustainability through their account bios, which often market their shops around the very aim of recycling and rewearing, to the extent that - as Dufresne puts it - "people are proud to say if something they have bought is second hand or vintage". Celia is passionate about alerting her buyers to the relationship between fashion and the

environment, as "80 billion new garments are currently purchased every year. If fast fashion continues at this rate, the industry will account for 26% of the global carbon budget by 2050. An unbelievable amount of second hand garments exist, most of which currently end up in landfills or are incinerated. To have a platform where sellers can make even a portion of the second hand out there more accessible to consumers is such a brilliant thing". For the same reason, Tehrani tells us: "People ask



If we can normalise buying second hand, we can collectively reduce the number of consumers shopping at places like Pretty Little Thing, Missguided and Boohoo



why don't you do your own brand? But using new material would go against everything I stand for."

And so, as the market becomes increasingly profitable and consumers become increasingly interested, it is inevitable that apps like Depop can only get bigger and - if the attitude of its sellers is anything to go by - better. As Garvie so aptly puts it: "Sustainable fashion is the future!"





Arts

Orlando's insanity kept me sane

Louis Fisher continues our series on 'escapism reads', with his discovery of Virginia Woolf's Orlando and how it taught him to accept change in the most baffling of circumstances



▲ From "The Great Frost" to the global pandemic (ILLUSTRATION BY HELEN GRANT FOR VARSITY)

his year, national lockdown and the summer holiday provided me with a rare opportunity to re-engage with literature after three years of science, and so I compiled a reading list. Among the authors I particularly wanted to explore was Virginia Woolf. Through furthering my queer and feminist engagement it had become clear to me that Woolf was a cultural icon I could no longer ignore.

Her gay romances and antipatriarchal writings evidenced her radical lifestyle, and the plethora of analyses of her works her impact. I grew up, and still live, in the South East of England, where Woolf lived during her most prolific period, and during my childhood visited many of her properties, along with those of her lover Vita Sackville-West, to whom Orlando is devoted. Clearly, the life of Virginia Woolf had already impacted my own, but I still hadn't investigated what she delivered through her writings. Thus, I felt obligated to return to literature with this book.

Orlando is a perfect book for a lockdown, and for introduction to Virginia Woolf. Described as one of her lightest reads, yet still deeply nuanced and considered, in many ways it delivers the story that

you search for within it. I first read the book without knowledge of Woolf's other literature or personal life, so I laid back and allowed the deeply descriptive and absurd chapters to roll over each other. This delivered a biography which blurred the line between reality and fiction: historical references were seen through our fictional subject Orlando,

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It's clear that Woolf plays fact and fiction not as antagonists, but complements, with the injection of one heightening the impact of the other.



themselves a depiction of the non-fiction Vita Sackville-West. It's clear that Woolf plays fact and fiction not as antagonists, but complements, with the injection of one heightening the impact of the other. world-bending certainly provides one route of escapism, but one could also focus on the biographical passage of time throughout Orlando's life, or his to her changing gender expression, or the unconventional romances in which he, and later she, partakes. Furthermore, each of these themes can be considered in a great range of literary context. If you approach the book as a love letter to Vita Sackville-West the feminist themes may be particularly striking, or perhaps the winking and nudging between the two dominates. Both of these, however, may go unnoticed by someone who has contextualised the novel in its time of writing and amongst Woolf's other works, who may be taken by the relative directness of Woolf's delivery for such an expansive story. These multifaceted properties of Orlando are not unique, but certainly improve its re-read potential and audience appeal, and aid entry to some of Woolf's heavier works.

After some research into Woolf's personal life at the time of her writing Orlando, a reread of the opening pages allows the feminist audacity in her writing to shine through. Her passage which leads to the line "the Queen had come" manages

to not only disguise the sensuality of her writing, but also amplify it. Line after line of vaginal metaphor also reads as effortless character introduction, with rather explicit double entendres which snuck past the male-dominated publishing houses and me with them. The suggestion of such candid sexuality within the monarchy, with heavy emphasis on clitoral stimulation (represented by Orlando's house within the valley), perfectly demonstrates the characteristic gall of Virginia Woolf. I imagine that the innuendo is not as subtle to a woman reading, and especially not her lover Vita, and so the awareness of Woolf to dupe patriarchal censorship of the time through female metaphor displays



Orlando offers not only escapism, but also inspiration; to thwart mundanity in isolation it is necessary to travel to worlds of unbounded imagination



not only her insight, but also her defiance. Also key amongst Orlando's themes is change. Orlando lives through three centuries, overseeing the 'comings' and goings of several English Monarchs, love interests, and even a change in her own sex, all received with effortless nonchalance. Beyond the triumphant trumpeting passage in which the Orlando moves from male to female, heralded by 'peals of truth', Orlando's change of sex is completely unquestioned by our narrator. Any encroachment on this truth by the reader is entirely dismissed by Woolf, who asks that we "let biologists and psychologists determine. It is enough for us to state the simple fact; Orlando was a man till the age of thirty; when he became a woman and has remained so ever since."

Woolf's insouciance, her insistence that we let things fall as they choose, is a luxury we may not enjoy in a health crisis, but one we certainly can in our literary escapes from it. As a unique academic year rolls out, uncertainty dominates our lives, leaving questions on how to adapt to a 'new normal' of reduced liberty and interaction. For this, Orlando offers not only escapism, but also inspiration; to thwart mundanity in isolation it is necessary to travel to worlds of unbounded imagination, to mix reality with reverie, and to maintain our sanity through voyages of fiction.

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Cantaloupes, pubic hair and the rising threat of surveillance

Inspired by the scandal over Jeff Mermelstein's latest project, #NYC, **Sofia Johanson** debates what privacy means in the modern art world

ew York-based photographer Jeff Mermelstein recently released the contents of his latest project, #nyc, in book-form. Each sky-blue page shows a picture of a text conversation taken over the shoulder of an unsuspecting subject. Some have taken a romantic view of the collection; the book captures candid moments of love, lust, loss, humour, darkness, death, and every other literary theme and human emotion imaginable. But for others, the book represents the growing presence of surveillance and the way voyeurism is becoming acceptable, not just in art, but in the wider public sphere.

Some messages are hardly incriminating: nonsensical musings on butternut squash, cantaloupes and tomatoes, as well as a screengrab about how long one can keep sausages out of the fridge. There is also much correspondence about current affairs, laments about coronavirus, rants about the direction the USA is headed and general grumbling about universal issues. Surely exhibiting these kinds of conversations to the public isn't particularly offensive?

Nonetheless, there are more intimate conversations that puncture the cheerful tone: a mention of chemotherapy, an announcement of pregnancy and the pain felt by two people who simply miss each other. These conversa-

tions remind the viewer that they have gained privileged access to a very private part of someone else's life, and the fact that the subject has no knowledge that their innermost torments or joys are being aired to the public makes the sense of voyeurism far more obvious.

Mermelstein argues that his subjects have retained their anonymity because their names have been cropped from the images. The only clues the viewer has of their identity are their hands (immaculately painted nails, cigarettes dangling between fingers) and their devices, some shiny and hi-tech, others whose messages are barely visible between cracks in the screen

You can argue that the content or theme of the messages and the supposed anonymity of their authors is irrelevant, as the artist has invaded his subject's privacy. But it is worth bearing in mind that the most powerful street photography is composed of totally spontaneous moments, normally always captured without the subject's consent. Think of the iconic image of the sailor kissing a woman in a white dress in Times Square on V-J Day, immortalised by Alfred Eisenstaedt, who just happened to be passing by.

The candid nature of street photography would perish if the artist was required to ask for permission before taking a picture, yet it's clear why people are uncomfortable with the

idea of their intimate conversations being seen as well as saved for posterity for the sake of art.

This opens the debate surrounding ownership in the public sphere, and whether you can truly own what other people have visual access to. Emily Ratajkowski's recent essay in New York magazine explored this, as she revealed that she was sued by a paparazzo after she posted a photo he took of her on instagram. Who has the right to that image? The subject, the photographer, or everyone who sees it?

It is obvious that Mermelstein is not the first to make his viewer uncomfortable with the privilege of seeing something they are not supposed to; voyeurism has always been a prevalent theme within art, it has just taken on a new significance in the age of surveillance.

Michelangelo's Last Judgement caused uproar within the Church because the depiction of naked bodies in the Sistine Chapel was thought to be abhorrent; Francisco Goya's Naked Maya was perceived as profane at the time because it was the first image to depict female pubic hair, and the naked, spread-eagled body in Courbert's Origin of the World understandably caused shock and disgust when it was completed in 1866. Although these three images all depict physical nudity, arguably, Mermelstein's project makes his subject just as vul-

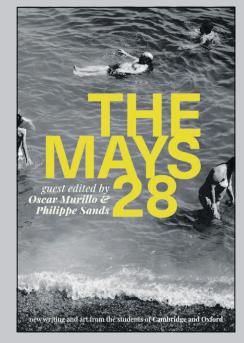
nerable by exposing them emotionally.

His project also reflects the increased level of surveillance that has become part and parcel of modern living. His work is published at a time when the Moscow government are installing complex camera systems in Russia's capital to keep track of its residents, (ostensibly to control the spread of coronavirus) and people fear that their Alexas are listening in to their dinner-time conversations where they discuss how dry their hair is and are suddenly bombarded with adverts for organic conditioner on Facebook.

We now expect to be watched by governments and large tech firms, but that does not make us any more comfortable with the idea of an artist exploiting our vulnerability so that he can capture and collect our most intimate moments. In fact, the project may even raise the level of paranoia felt by some as it highlights the fact that the spaces that are truly private and 'our own' are becoming fewer and farther between.

Whether you view #nyc as a blatant invasion of privacy or as a light-hearted, innovative commentary on the way we communicate, Mermelstein's newest work certainly opens new avenues of debate surrounding the question of whether it is possible for an artist to go 'too far' in order to create something striking.

The Mays 28



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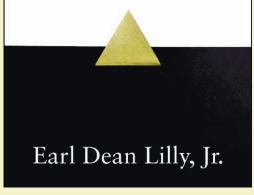
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A Conversation With Corporal Nym

From Shakespeare With Love



A Modern Corporal Nym, explains: why Uncle Sam's Capitol has mostly NW Avenues; why a German-American was appointed C-in-C of Allied Forces in Europe in WW2; what are the origins of Uncle Sam's White Five Pointed Star and the Red Star of Communism; the Code of the Craft - the Pole Lease Ship of State; the works of R. Wagner and others having forecasted the course of the Animal Ark of the Western World for the 20th Century; why the Allies were deliberately negligent in enforcing the Treaty of Versailles to ensure a WW2! Shakespeare today?

Theatre

The magic of primary school theatre

Isabel Sebode reflects on an early experience of Shakespeare, and makes the case for adapted versions of the classics

itesize Shakespeare, musical adaptations of tragedies, archaic lan-g u a g e condensed into the vocabulary of schoolchild: for many, primary school theatre is their first introduction into the world of the poetic. These low-budget produc-tions are undervalued for their academic and social worth. Children begin by learning how to recite verse from memory and end with a true apprecia-tion of the power, precision and musicality ofwords.

I, like many other Englings, have al-w a y s loved theatre. Besides staging The Owland the Pussycat as no more than a toddler and a cting

in a psychedelic Alice in Wonderland production with The Beatles as the background music, my fondest memories of theatre are from my fifth-grade performance in a musical adaptation of The Tempest.

Set in a rundown artists' house (Tacheles in Berlin), this production juxtaposed otherworldly design and a grunge aesthetic with the feeble voices and frail figures of its child actors. Beyond being a

▲ Whidbey Children's Theatre (PETER WEST) simply beautiful experience, in hindsight I have become increasingly aware of the impact that my experience in this play had on my devel- opment, and what this may reveal about the signifi- cance of children's plays in general.

Recently reading the original play by Shakespeare brought me closer to the origin of these lines, the magic of which I had already rec-ognised in the fifth grade:

"Full fathom five thy father lies; Of his bones are coral made; Those are pearls that were his eyes" (I.2)

Rather than forcing primary schoolchildren to articulate words of which they had little understanding, we were handed an adapted version in which poetry became what I can now appreciate it to be: music. Thus, we sang "deep in the sea your father lies/corals for bones and pearls for eyes", enunciating each syllable with care, cher-ishing the words as they deserved. Nine years later, I still recall my childish sense of wonder at this first step into a land of dreams.

In this memory I see the beauty of school theatre, if done right. Children are intro-duced to classics like Shakespeare in a creative and s o c i a l setting, with the poetry rendered fathom-able but, due to its musical accompaniment, no less be a utiful. The text morphs into a playground, enriched through set design and the vibrancy of achild's imagination. Dramatic literature is made accessible and thereby brought back to where it belongs: the hearts of the young and old.

Yet the value of acquainting children w i t hthe world of theatre lies not solely in itsartistic merit; school performances can encourage a direct engagement with gender relationships, class distinctions and an understanding of how it feels to be someone else. In no way is this phenomenon universal, and it naturally varies between environments, yet even the most minor aspects of school theatre can have a profound influence on the developing minds of their young actors.

For instance, I recall acting a male role, or a boy in my group taking on a female character, when the gender division of the characters in the play did not match that of the pupil cohort. It is plausible that such a blurring of gender roles may engender a certain open-mindedness in the children to whom it is exposed - a liberal approach towards often-debated concepts and consequently a natural acceptance of what adult society still perceives as issues.

Beyond encouraging a progressive view of gender, primary school theatre often modifies the canon towards a more inclusive dramatic norm out of necessity. When I acted in The Tempest as a child,

the main character Prospero was rewritten into Prospera. with Antonio becoming Antonia: a subtle, empowering shift that creates female representation in the play beyond the shielded, simple-minded daughter of the powerful magician. In my production, the magician was not only played by a female actor, but rewritten as a female character.

These subtle shifts unsurprisingly come with little backlash, considering the small scale of the productions and the fact that the

audience primarily consists of parents. Regardless, this may provide an example for the productions we see at the RSC or Globe (which themselves are increasingly inclusive): we can adapt classic theatrical works, whether Shakespeare's or another playwright's, without causing them to turn in their graves. In fact, considering the often progressive and socially aware content of Shakespeare's work, I believe that a smile would cross our Will's face in seeing a primary school girl take on the role of his grand magician. Why not?



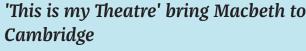
Self-esteem is developed as the child steps on the stage

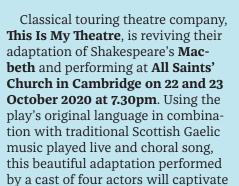


Between encouraging social awareness and introducing children to the beauty of poetry, primary school theatre is valuable for its positive impact on the development of children's psychology. It fosters their confidence and helps them to understand the validity of emotional expression - in particular, that a child should not mock his peers for expressing themselves in an unconventional or unusually passionate manner. Self-esteem is developed as the child steps on the stage, which will stand him in good stead in the world of academia, and later,

Primary school theatre allows children to experience art in a way that is digestible. The adapted verse is spoken and understood, not only uttered but pronounced and felt. The visual design of the set and the accompanying music are pleasing to the eye and ear respectively, giving children a coherent and integrated education in artistic beauty. Primary school theatre is evidently far more than a slot in the timetable. It is our introduction to the arts and social sciences via experience, rather than a textbook.

Socially-distanced Shakespeare





This performance is also part of a

audiences of all ages.

nation-wide tribute to touring theatre and venues impacted by the current crisis: "Signal Fires" inspired by one of the original forms of theatre, storytelling around a fire is part of the inspiration for this performance.

The theatre company has worked hard to implement measures that adhere to government guidelines and offer a safe environment for audiences to attend including reduced capacities, socially distanced seating, paperless tickets and hand sanitisation stations.

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Violet DIY SOS, Cambridge edition: decorating your college room

Violet's columinist **Scarlet Rowe** gives us her tips on how to make the best of the space you have

still don't quite believe that in under two weeks we'll be back at university. By this point, Cambridge feels like a hazy memory packed with significant amounts of nostalgia. As I write, my first year room eagerly awaits the arrival of a brand new shiny fresher to fill it with life once more. What's more, my new room lies (probably) empty this second waiting for its new resident with bated breath.

Naturally, one of the key considerations in moving back to uni is the room design. It is absolutely essential to make your room as nice as is humanly possible (at all times). This is especially the case this term seeing as we will be spending most of our time in our rooms, whether we like it or not.

I spent a lot of time in my room last year, especially in winter. A lot of this was down to me being idle and not fancying a walk through the glacial airs of Cambridge. Even though the libraries were tempting, my room had a knitted blanket and close access to a kettle. This narrowed the competition somewhat.

Upon arriving in Michaelmas last year, I really had no clue of what to bring. I was an innocent and unknowing first year, you see. So I bought a blanket or two, lots of unnecessary things, and very few necessary things. I forgot items like pyjamas which wasn't exactly fantastic. Even though lists are very boring and tedious, they are probably a good idea for occasions like this.

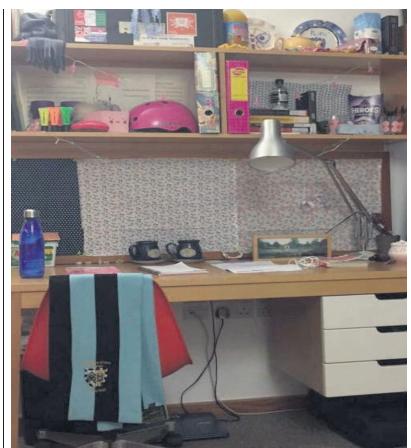
It goes without saying that personal touches are necessary for your room. Photos of family/ friends are a good idea BUT may also lead to lots of questions about who is who and where you were at that moment. That's great for me because I never tire of chatting. Alternatively, if you don't like humans that much, then a landscape or something will do instead. However, lots of colleges do not like blue tack. It is, alas, public enemy number one and may result in a fine. If you don't want to pay a fine, then you'll just have to bear this injustice stoically. So make the most of any noticeboard you have, and maybe bring a few frames too if you want to be extra safe.

In addition, if you have an armchair in your room, bring a cushion and a blanket. I promise they will look great and generally make your room a nicer place to be in. A rug also is a clever idea, as they can't help but make rooms more homely. Try to keep your clothes as neat as possible too. Tidier rooms make for happier people, I'm sure of it (despite the fact that anyone who knows me will be staring agog at the sheer hypocrisy of me suggesting that). However, I think that if you can keep your room clean then that is a very impressive feat. My rooms tend not to like being tidy through no fault of my own, okay?

You'll probably agree that the difficult thing with Cambridge rooms is that most of us have to move out of them every term. This is really rather inconvenient. It makes me not want to bring a lot of belongings out of sheer indolence, because I don't want to spend ages packing up at the end of every term.

I definitely packed way too many clothes last Michaelmas, especially considering that I only ended up wearing about two jumpers and trousers all term. Safe to say, lessons were not learnt. I did the exact same thing for Lent term, which is less forgivable seeing as this is the exact thing I said I would not do. So bear in mind that you'll have to move in and out a lot, and try to find a happy medium in terms of packing - if possible

Whatever happens this year, don't forget that Cambridge is filled with shops which can help you out if you forget anything or think of any new ideas. You can always watch Phil and Kirsty on TV talking about 'compromise' if it all gets a bit much. What's more, Pinterest is still here and it is undeniably fantastic for room inspo. So if you have a spare minute or two and/or feel as though my advice is immensely unhelpful, then have a little scroll. See you in two weeks, Cambridge! I promise I won't bring too much blue tack, for all it's worth..



Scarlet's college room (SCARLET ROWE)



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30 Friday 16th October 2020 VARSITY

Violet On arriving in Cambridge, in the middle of a pandemic...

Violet's latest columinist, **Ethan Cyrus Hemmati**, recounts his recent arrival at college, and being greeted by a strange, mid-pandemic atmosphere



▲ The Cambridge Union (LUCAS MADDALENA)

m dragging my suitcase into college, fumbling with a thin black disposable mask, the safe and sexy new addition to the college look. Around me, most people seem to be doing the same thing: assessing every one else's use of face coverings and adjusting their own behaviour to match. Outside I pass three masked students, and I feel comfortable that I'm wearing my own as well; there's that brief moment when we panic about not being able to communicate with smiles or facial expressions, so instead we all courteously nod at each other, which just makes us look a bit stern and geriatric. Later, I pass a non-masked girl in a college puffer, and then a group of nonmasked boys. I wonder if I've maybe unknowingly entered into a covid-free zone. I pass two more boys, a masked porter, a parent, and the same girl in the college puffer. I recognise no one.

Student accommodations across the country are dominating the major news bulletins. I mindlessly scare myself and watch a couple of videos of students vlogging from their halls, talking about wearing PPE to the bathroom. There's a strange video where the screen is split into fourths, with Philip Schofield on the far left hand side, a student zooming from her laptop next to him, the student's parents crammed into the third frame from their living room, and Holly Willoughby at the end, frowning. No one looks like they're having much fun. This procrastination inevitably ends up with YouTube recommending a tal-DIO soundbite, and I watch a man with glasses vitriolically cut up a face mask with a pair of scissors and grin into the camera. I think to myself, at least it's not Julia Hartley-Brewer, or the nodding man from New Zealand. Elsewhere the world talks of Trump, and every piece of news about him is breaking. I diligently scroll through my emails and look for

new information about course reading and teaching; instead, I am told that the University of Cambridge aims to divest from fossil fuels by 2030. I look outside and it's already dark. The next evening, I'm playing music in

The next evening, I'm playing music in my room when I see thin beams of light flash outside my window. I look outside and figure out that they're coming from the tall trees, and it appears that there are figures running through them and across the pitch in the dark, presumably waving the torches from their phones. It's creepy, almost ritualistic, because I can't seem to hear any voices – I just see the long bright streaks zigzagging across the trees. After a while the whole thing looks quite aesthetically pleasing, like a strange art installation, so I sit and watch for a bit. A few milituation

march into the trees, and the lights go off one by one. I imagine a silent struggle breaks out, and the porters and policeman sinisterly emerge from the trees empty handed.

One of them says, "Thanks for your help anyway," and heads off.

The remaining two talk about Scholars Walk, then there's a silence, and they're gone.

In the morning I ask a few people if they know anything about the people in the trees, but no one seems to know much at all.

I'm having a coffee with a friend from Queen's, and we're talking about the recent outbreak and restrictions over there. There's some discussion of student complacency, but also paranoia, and we reach the general public consensus that everyone is stupid. On a walk

through Jesus Green, we pass the closed ADC theatre.

My friend, who is a Tom Hiddleston fan, tells me about how Tom was a member of the Pitt Club, and we pass its head-quarters in Pizza Express. I think about how Pizza Express has oddly found itself at the centre of a number of British tabloid dramas, not recently the branch in Woking that was hailed as Prince Andrew's alibi on Newsnight.

That evening, I'm waiting for a takeaway pizza and I watch a group of lads walk into Sainsbury's unmasked; the woman on duty at the door squirms, and I feel bad for her. Back at college, groups whisper conspiratorially amongst themselves in the dark. I head over to the trees, but the people with torches seem long gone. On the ground there's a crushed can of Strongbow.

▼ King's College and the Senate House (LUCAS MADDALENA)





VARSITY FRIDAY 16TH OCTOBER 2020

Sport

Rogue sport of the week: Gliding

Harvey Logan and **Charlie Brooker** re-live their first experiences of the oddly sensational sport of gliding at one of Cambridge University's lesser known sporting institutions - the Gliding Club.



▲(GYORGY RETVARI)

eil Armstrong once said, "Gliders, sailplanes, they are wonderful flying machines. It's the closest you can come to being a bird." Only when you're high in the atmosphere with no engine, where the only sound audible is wind rushing past the cockpit, can you understand exactly what Neil meant.

Cambridge University Gliding Club (CUGC) was founded in 1935 and boasts famous alumni including NASA astronaut Michael Foale. The club owns a

glider and has around 50 members ranging in experience from those who have never flown before to those who started flying at 14. From zero experience, it is possible to reach solo standard - where you are trusted to fly on your own - in under a year.

Having never set foot in a glider before, last Michaelmas I headed out excitedly for a trial flight with CUGC. It was a bitterly cold morning, with low cloud and fog hanging in the air. Still, it would have taken more than dreary weather to dampen my enthusiasm, and as I arrived at the airfield and prepared for the flight the clouds were clearing up.

I walked out and strapped myself into the front seat of the glider, soon after we began our launch and shot off into the air, quickly reaching the top of the launch and releasing from the winch to begin our flight. Taking control of the aircraft for the first time – navigating steep soaring turns and feeling the power of the atmosphere, all while taking in phenomenal views of Cambridgeshire, felt incredible. I was hooked before I touched down, and headed back to college already dreaming of my next flight.

Despite being engineless, gliders can do more than just 'fall with style'. Using the same naturally occurring rising air currents as birds, gliders can climb thousands of feet up into the skies and travel vast distances. A good pilot can stay aloft for multiple hours at a time, travelling hundreds of kilometres. The versatility of a glider was proven on a flight where the instructor spotted the opportunity to try out some aerobatics. Before I knew it, we were at the top of a loop where I found the ground above me and the sky below. If you still class

this as falling with style, the emphasis should *certainly* be on style.

Unlike flying powered aircraft, gliding is not as expensive as you might assume. Without an engine to fuel or maintain, it is relatively cheap to operate a glider. Members flying the club glider can expect to pay around £10 per launch, and then £9 more per hour in the air, compared to rates of £150+ per hour on powered aircraft The lack of an engine also means that gliders emit no greenhouse gasses, so you won't feel any 'flight shame' when taking to the sky.

Another common misconception is that gliders need wind to fly. In fact, unless there's thick fog or a storm, most days will be flyable; our members can and do train all through the year. In both February and at Easter a long-held CUGC tradition is to organise an expedition and this year the club visited the Yorkshire Gliding Club at Sutton Bank. A week of spectacular weather presented phenomenal flying opportunities, but the best parts of expeditions are the evenings, where club members come together for a drink to compare flying stories and notes.

To fly cross country in a glider, a

pilot must have a deep understanding of weather systems to carefully utilise the sun's energy and the air currents it generates. This could mean using wind on ridge faces to fly low and fast, using convection currents called thermals to explore the countryside, or using atmospheric waves to climb to the height of jumbo jets.

Gliding isn't only about whiling away time with your head in the clouds though, it is a true sport, and competitive gliding is commonplace. The pinnacle of competitive gliding at Cambridge is of course the varsity match, where standard rules see competitors attempting to achieve as much height gain as possible on a 50-minute flight. As of 2020, gliding varsity has half blue status in Cambridge. With commitment and dedication, you could reach these prestigious heights.

CUGC welcomes members of any ability. We run our trial flight sessions in Michaelmas and Easter term. CUGC flying sessions take place every other Tuesday, and members are also welcome at the airfield any time it is open. Check our Facebook or website (cugc.org.uk) if you are interested. We look forward to seeing you in the East Anglian skies!

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60 STATION ROAD CAMBRIDGE

32 FRIDAY 16TH OCTOBER 2020 VARSITY

Sport Why play sports at Cambridge?

In this investigative piece, Jack Wadding reports on the benefits of playing sports at the University of Cambridge



▲ "The multitude of benefits sport and exercise can bring to a student's life... seems endless"(UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE)

e've all heard the question"why don't you pick up a sport?". Many may be tired of such banal advice since, 'sport isn't your thing'. Yet, it might be a very valuable piece of advice even if 'sport isn't your thing'. The multitude of benefits sport and exercise can bring to a student seems endless - stretching beyond one's university days.

Evidence for this can be readily found on the university website, where three separate reports spanning the last seven years and three more 'case studies' of now-graduated Blues sportspeople are displayed. The conclusions from these reports ultimately state the same thing: sport is good for you in both short term and long term.

Varsity has interviewed sportspeople from different parts of the university: Dr Dunecan Massey, DoS of Medical Science and Undergraduate Tutor at Caius; Bella Biddle, an English undergraduate at Churchill about to start her third year; and a Maths undergraduate who wished to remain anonymous - to talk about how sport has benefitted them.

We know that Cambridge can be a stressful place to study - "70 hours a week", said our Mathmo, and Dr Massey agreeed from his undergraduate experience here. He put it very well in saying that "most of that stress comes from within, not from without", explaining that it is almost never "a situation of a DoS' coming down hard on students with impossible deadlines; it's students setting their own expectations." Despite this. "when handled in the correct way."

Dr Massey says, the Cambridge lifestyle, "can be stimulating and exciting and can lead to extraordinary productivity."

Our interviewees and the reports repeatedly mentioned that playing sport regularly allows you to refresh your mind, shifting focus entirely away from academics, allowing you to return with a new perspective. Our mathmo explained that, when playing a game of football, "you're getting away from work for a solid two hours. It's so immersive. You're just playing sport and not thinking about example sheet number 3." Bella described how, "a sport like sailing gets you outside, out of Cambridge even, and gives you real space from the bubble feeling that the city can give you." Dr Massey also hit upon precisely the same point when describing what he might say to a student if suggesting they return home for a weekend: "You need to take two days out of this goldfish bowl. Go home or to see friends elsewhere. Don't do any work and when you come back you will see the University from a different perspective." That's precisely what sport provides, usually to a less severe extent. It is a regular, scheduled break from work that allows you to return with renewed motivation

Another lifestyle benefit, stress relief, plays strongly into this too. When in a sporting environment, it is permitted, and often expected, to shout, to challenge other people physically and express yourself freely. "You need that time to shout, scream and run around to avoid taking it out on someone else or yourself" said our mathematician. This is particularly helpful for students who

may find themselves frustrated by their week's work, to blow off steam and return with a clear head through sport.

Furthermore, having one or several sporting activities scheduled into your week forces you to improve time management skills. Bella seems to have perfected such skill, saying "I definitely spend less time studying than I otherwise would, but I think I approach my studies with more focus for having other things to think about and clear limits on the time I can spend on it." She went on to explain that anywhere other than Cambridge, "taking two days off work is a fairly usual amount (see the concept of a weekend) and it says really scary things about the work life balance in Cambridge if people feel like they can't find time for things that matter to them". Far beyond a CV embellishment, at Cambridge, where time is particularly valuable in our lightning-fast, jam-packed, 8-week terms, sporting commitments allows (or requires) you to practice finding a healthy balance in how you spend your time.

Regardless of how talented or physically fit you are, joining a sports team is an immediate opportunity to meet new people too. Our interviewees all agreed that, while they may not all be exceptionally close, they had all made a good number of friends through playing sport. Due to the nature of sailing, Bella described how her, "friends from sport are probably the most invaluable thing." She ended up, "living with [her] helm (sailing partner) for some time during lockdown." She adds that because the sailing team competes so

often with other universities, she has also made friends with students from other universities. Our mathematician explained that the joy comes from "meeting people in an environment outside of work, where you're all going for your own enjoyments". In a place where study and academics dictate a majority of your time, it is crucial to be able to connect with others over other common interests.

As many will know, exercise is one of the "three pillars of wellbeing" as described by Dr Massey. When discussing student welfare, his key message was that of the "overall trinity of regular, healthy eating, good sleep and good exercise. As long as a student is doing all three, that's the cornerstone of a really healthy life". Arguably, it's a virtuous circle. If sleep and nutrition give you the energy to exercise, exercise equally increases your appetite, as well as wearing you out sufficiently to sleep. Our mathematician put forward the view that, "generally when people are healthier, they tend to be happier within themselves." Dr Massey explained the sense of instant gratification or achievement you often feel having played sport or exercised. "You got up. You got to the river. You've just done an hour on the river. Physiologically, there's a dopamine surge that gives a sense of wellbeing," he said, describing his own student experience of rowing. He contrasted this to the very long-term (or lack of) gratification inherent in a Cambridge Tripos, where "you don't really get any feedback until vou get vour grade".

From this basis of elevated general

wellbeing, it is easier to understand how sportspeople, whether representing university or college, might have a healthier approach to work. And this is precisely what the University's own 2019 survey suggests. While many might imagine that those with sporting commitments might have less time for studies, and therefore do worse, this is by no means the case. The survey, focussed only on those who represent the university (who are at the upper limit of sporting dedication) and found that "undergraduate students who participated in University-level sport performed just as well academically, if not better, than the undergraduate population as a whole". The percentage of students who received either a first or a 2:1 in their degree throughout the university as a whole was 75.5%, whereas the figure for 'undergraduate sportspeople' was much higher, at 91.4%. It is important to remember that these students, like Bella, likely dedicated up to two days to their sporting endeavours and still succeeded academically. Clearly then, it is not a case of either sports or studies. The most successful students make time for both

It would seem that sport covers all bases. Ultimately, it doesn't matter how good you are. Going for a walk, run or cycle makes a great difference to your working week at university and if you can join a team or society, even better. Particularly going forward into a year of Covid-19 restrictions, where there are far fewer academic reasons to leave the house, sport should provide an outlet for us all.