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VARSITY

**Covid-19
Watch**

105

positive
symptomatic
cases

38

positive
asymptomatic
cases

4.6k

total number
of students
screened

A Case Study of Failure

Varsity investigates
Homerton's welfare crisis

Petition demands Jesus College fully divests by 2021

Diana Stoyanova
Deputy News Editor

A petition launched by the Jesus College Climate Justice Campaign (JCCJC) on 12 October has now acquired 327 signatures from students, academics and alumni.

The petition has three main demands. Firstly, it demands that the College fully divest from all indirect investments in fossil fuels by 2021. Secondly, it demands the full divestment "from all investments in companies involved in biodiversity destruction, intensive animal farming and other ecocidal industries by the end of 2021." Finally, it calls on the college to commit to achieving Net Zero Emissions by 2030 at the latest.

The petition was launched on the same day that the campaign staged a demonstration which included a die-in and other displays such as protestors wearing fake blood and holding up signs.

The petition claims that, as "a wealthy Cambridge college at the centre of world-leading sustainability research", Jesus' deadline for Net Zero Emissions should be more ambitious than the UN's deadline of 2050.

It also claims that "given that the Jesus College investment portfolio is significantly smaller than the central University's, we believe it is reasonable to expect that the College should divest by the end of 2021" rather than 2030, which is the University's deadline for full divestment. In the context of Christ's College recently announcing that it will also fully divest by 2030, the JCCJC's petition urges Jesus College to "be bolder."

The petition argues that, since studies show that "sustainable, ethical invest-

William Hunter
Deputy News Editor

Content note: detailed discussion of mental health issues, suicide, sexual abuse, PTSD and assault.

All names of students have been changed to preserve anonymity.

On October 12th, Homerton for Consent published an open letter publicly criticising the "mistrust and mishandling of sexual misconduct and disciplinary complaints" at Homerton College.

The open letter, which now has over 100 signatures, stated that "many survivors are currently being ignored by senior staff members when contacting them about sexual misconduct issues

including urgent/immediate safety concerns". The letter also put pressure on the College to make reporting procedures more transparent and widely known.

This is not the first time, however, that students at Homerton have attempted to draw attention to the mishandling of sexual misconduct complaints and the welfare of female students.

In March, Homerton for Consent hosted a joint art event with the students of Trinity College which aimed to raise awareness of the failings of sexual harassment policy across the University and in the College. Posters calling to 'Make College Safe for Women' were anonymously posted around Homerton, all of which were swiftly removed.

As the pressure on the College to reform its welfare policies mounts, Varsity has been speaking to students at Homerton, offering them the chance to share their stories of mishandling and neglect.

Mary reported that in 2019, while attending a College dinner, her supervisor and another male student were engaged in a "graphically sexual conversation" about her and other female students.

Fortunately for Mary, another student had overheard and taken down the contents of the conversation so she was informed and able to make a complaint.

Mary arranged to have a meeting with the Senior Tutor where she asked about pursuing a formal complaint against the

supervisor who had been making the sexually inappropriate comments, but "she promised me he'd been disciplined and dealt with and really discouraged me from making the complaint against him."

In light of these responses, Mary decided against making the complaint. Varsity can confirm, however, that this supervisor subsequently received a considerable promotion within the College and faculty. Furthermore, as Mary told Varsity: "he's now my lecturer for 2 papers this year, one of which is compulsory."

When Mary brought her complaint

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News

EDITORIAL

Pressing on

It's finally the time of year for cold walks through the winding streets of town, nipping to Mainsbury's to scout out the Halloween section, and feeling that autumn has truly arrived at the sight of red and yellow leaves scattered around. But this year feels slightly different. Whether new to Cambridge or not, muddling our way through a Covid-focussed Michaelmas has perhaps meant that the buzzing excitement of being back is starting to fade. The novelty of autumnal activities like walks exploring the city and preparing for Halloween might be slowly overridden by piling deadlines, lack of sleep, and (this year) rising stress about getting a Covid-positive test. Suddenly, the only thing scarier than October 31st is the prospect of spending it in isolation.

We might be feeling tired, and our motivation might be slightly ebbing. However, reading the insightful piece on the life of Roger Penrose, the Nobel-Prize winning British physicist (page 15), was a reminder: "there is work to be done". At the age of 89, Penrose is still working on the application of quantum theory to biology and is a significant reminder to press on, even when we may feel the weariness of term and testing start to set in. The sense of work still needing to be done is also prevalent in Homerton's welfare crisis, detailed in an open letter which criticises their handling of sexual misconduct and complaints (page 1), and the increasingly urgent call to 'Defund the Police' (page 13). Furthermore, Cambridge becoming the first UK university to sign the 'Cool Food' pledge (page 6) is a step-forward, and simultaneously a reminder of how crucial it is to continue pressing on.

This could be pressing on as a Fresher who has just started to call Cambridge a home (page 11), or a second-year remembering what it's like to be so far apart from family and friends (page 10). It could be pressing on by taking time to unwind, eat out (page 20), or read for pleasure (page 27). It could be having that motivation for one extra hour in the library, or giving your friend in isolation a call to cheer them up. These are unprecedented times, but it's week 4, and there's work left to be done.

Lots of love, Georgina Buckle <3

EDITOR Rich Bartlett editor@varsity.co.uk

DEPUTY EDITORS Meike Leonard & Ben Cudworth deputyeditor@varsity.co.uk

MAGAZINE EDITOR Georgina Buckle magazine@varsity.co.uk

DEPUTY MAGAZINE EDITOR Isabel Sebode deputymagazine@varsity.co.uk

DIGITAL EDITOR Tomas Vieira-Short digital@varsity.co.uk

BUSINESS MANAGER Mark Curtis business@varsity.co.uk

NEWS EDITORS Christopher Dorrell & Gaby Vides (Senior); Antonia Harrison, William Hunter, Diana Stoyanova & Cameron White (Deputy) news@varsity.co.uk

HEAD OF PRINT (NEWS) Alex Leggatt

INVESTIGATIONS EDITORS Martha Bevan & Ewan Hawkins investigations@varsity.co.uk

INTERVIEWS EDITORS Juliette Gueron-Gabrielle & Victor Jack (Senior); Bethan Moss (Deputy) interviews@varsity.co.uk

FEATURES EDITORS Elizabeth Haigh, Ashna Ahmad & Hatty Wilmoth (Senior), Nick Bartlett & Akshata Kapoor (Deputy) features@varsity.co.uk

OPINION EDITORS Sawen Ali & Callum Wainstein (Senior); Madeline Anderson & Tu Minh Tri (Deputy) opinion@varsity.co.uk

SCIENCE EDITORS Sambavi Sneha Kumar & Yan-Yi Lee (Senior); Grace Blackshaw (Deputy) science@varsity.co.uk

SPORT EDITORS Bradley Fountain-Green & Thom Harris

sport@varsity.co.uk

VIOLET EDITOR Caterina Bragoli violet@varsity.co.uk

ARTS EDITORS Esme Wright & Adam Dumbleton arts@varsity.co.uk

FILM & TV EDITORS Sarah Brady & Alexandra Jarvis filmandtv@varsity.co.uk

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THEATRE EDITORS Eleanor Burnham & Helen Turner-Smyth theatre@varsity.co.uk

LIFESTYLE EDITOR Miranda Stephenson & Tiffany Tsoi (Senior); David Quan (Deputy) lifestyle@varsity.co.uk

SWITCHBOARD PRODUCERS Isabel Roberts & Maddie Fisher switchboard@varsity.co.uk

DIGITAL TEAM Misthi Ali, Polly Haythornthwaite, Lucas Maddalena digital@varsity.co.uk

HEAD OF ILLUSTRATIONS Olivia Bonsall magazine@varsity.co.uk

CHIEF SUB-EDITOR Chloe Bond subeditor@varsity.co.uk

SUB-EDITORS Alexia Meade, Oakem Kyne, Rosina Griffiths, Claire Laurence, Aisling Hamill, Lucia Neirotti, Anna Stephenson, Emma Hassey, Inaya Mohmood, Satya Amin, Maryam Dorudi, Hania Bar, Pilar Eche Fernandez

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Two Cambridge institutions advertise jobs supporting the Hostile Environment policy

Christopher Dorrell
Senior News Editor

Two Cambridge institutions, Cambridge Centre for Data Driven Discovery (C2D3) and Cambridge Neuroscience, advertised jobs at the Border Vision Advisory Group, which describes itself as an "operational command of the Home Office."

C2D3 brings "together researchers and expertise from across the academic departments and industry to drive research into the analysis, understanding and use of data science."

The adverts were circulated via email on the 5th October before being posted online within each of the departments looking for "academic experts" to help construct "innovative border technology."

The advert read: "Border Force (BF) is an operational command of the Home Office which is responsible for securing the UK border and for controlling migration at ports and airports across the UK and overseas. The work on the development of a Border Code is part of work under the Future Borders and Immigration Systems (FBIS) and Digitising the Borders (DtB) Border Intervention work and is being taken forward by the Border Force Industry Partnerships Team."

It continued: "this is an opportunity for academic experts to work with BF and the wider Home Office to drive theoretical research into propositions for cutting edge border solutions."

The adverts were deleted after pressure was put on both departments by Unis Resist Border Controls, a national campaign of migrant students, activists and lecturers fighting against the hostile

environment.

Unis Resist Border Controls urged their members to send a template email addressed to C2D3 which read: "it is deeply shameful that the Cambridge Centre for Data Driven Discovery would even entertain circulating emails and working with the Home Office."

"Any knowledge that your centre shares with the Home Office would make you complicit in the deaths that have happened as a result of this country's xeno-racist border regime, including the hostile environment policy."

In addition to this Unis Resist Borders demanded "that the Cambridge Centre for Data Driven Discovery refrain from working with the Home Office, UK Visa and Immigration (UKVI) and any other instrument furthering border controls, whether here in the UK, or in other countries". The same letter was sent to Cambridge Neuroscience.

In conversation with *Varsity*, a spokesperson for Unis Resist Border Controls said that "academia does play a role in furthering the Prison and Border Industrial Complex around the world" and accused the University of using decolonisation and the Legacies of Enslavement enquiry to "migrant wash their complicity in supporting policies and participating in partnerships that strengthen the hostile environment policy."

The spokesperson urged students to look "within their own backyard" in their fight against oppression, adding that "your university has been complicit in this for many years".

They highlighted that the hostile environment policy affects academic staff on Tier 2 and 5 visas at Cambridge through the attendance monitoring that is a re-

quirement of the policy.

Under the policy the University is required to collect and collate information on attendance at University events before sending it to the Home Office who trace the information and get in touch with the University if there are any discrepancies.

The Unis Resist Border Controls spokesperson drew attention to the fact that it was C2D3 and Cambridge Neuroscience that were advertising for the Home Office suggesting that these departments were the most useful for establishing the digitisation of border controls and "blanket surveillance" that the Conservatives desire.

Most international students are on a Tier 4 visa which means, according to Unis Resist Border Controls, that they "face housing discrimination, employment discrimination, no recourse to public funds, and have to pay to access the NHS."

The news that these adverts had been posted followed shortly after a protest of around 80 against the Hostile Environment on King's Parade on the 11th October.

The protest marked ten years since Jimmy Mubenga died whilst being held down by G4S security guards as he was deported from the UK.

It also formed part of a wider weekend of action surrounding the launch of the Fair Immigration Reform Movement Charter written in response to the increasing number of deaths at the UK border. The Charter demands "an immediate end to immigration enforcement, raids, detention and deportations."

C2D3, Cambridge Neuroscience and the University were contacted for comment.

▼ The Hostile Environment policy was first announced in 2012 in an attempt to reduce immigration levels (GLOBAL JUSTICE NOW)



► Continued from front page

investments have equal or higher returns to those in ecologically destructive industries”, divestment makes sense from both an ethical and financial standpoint.

The JCCJC will present the petition to members of the College Council who, they hope, will advocate for the demands in their positions on the council.

A spokesperson from JCCJC told *Varsity* that they believe the support the petition has received from its signatories and the JCR and MCR committees “demonstrates the deep strength of feeling which exists throughout our College community.”

According to JCCJC, the College has the financial ability to meet the demands and “we have an even more profound duty to rapidly decarbonise” as a result of Jesus’ wealth.

In response to the petition, a spokesperson for the College told *Varsity*: “we recognise the urgency of climate change and we understand the concerns raised by the petition.

In recent years we have welcomed opportunities to engage with all members of the College and wider Cambridge

community on how best to deal with the climate challenge.”

The spokesperson admitted that COVID-19 had forced the College “to temporarily pause some projects to focus on the immediate needs of our students, Fellows and staff.”

However, they ensured that “we will be continuing with our series of consultations, started late last year and halted by COVID, on our new Responsible Investment Policy.”

They continued: “We have already involved students, Fellows and staff in the process, and we are committed to hosting two more consultation events in mid November.”

“We very much welcomed the University’s report on divestment, authored by Jesus College Post-Doctoral Associate Dr Ellen Quigley, and look forward to working with her and others on delivering a meaningful and impactful policy for Jesus College.”

JCCJC acknowledged that “the pandemic is rightly taking up a huge amount of time and College capacity at the moment, and sincerely thank College management for their work in this area, but feel obligated to remind the College of the need to aggressively respond to the arguably even more calamitous crisis



▲ The open letter was released at the same time as a protest against the College’s divestment policy (JESUS CLIMATE CHANGE CAMPAIGN NETWORK)

that is climate breakdown.”

They also pointed out that the campaign’s support from the fellowship includes “globally renowned physicists, Earth scientists and historians... who have studied the evidence and implications of the climate crisis in extreme depth.”

The fellows who joined the demonstration are “sending a very clear message to College management that this is an

existential threat that must be met with bold, ambitious policy responses which have been lacking up until now.”

JCCJC reiterated that the campaign is “adamantly optimistic” that the College community can come together to “achieve these vital policy objectives.”

The pressure on Jesus follows Christ’s College’s recent announcement that they will fully divest by 2030.

Dr Peter Biar Ajak becomes the first South Sudanese national to be awarded a Cambridge PhD



▲ Dr Peter Biar Ajak was arrested in South Sudan in July 2018 while working towards his PhD at Trinity College (YOUTUBE/INTERNATIONAL GROWTH CENTRE)

said the detention was “in clear violation of his rights under international law.”

Only a year after his initial detention was Ajark, alongside six others, charged with sabotage, insurgency and possession of weapons - all 7 detainees pleaded guilty.

However, these charges, brought forward by the NSS, were related to an alleged prison uprising by other detainees in October 2018 in Blue House rather than a charge related to anything prior to his arrest.

Ajak had been an outspoken critic of the South Sudanese government’s response to the country’s ongoing civil war.

He was a chairperson of the South Sudan Young Leaders Forum, and was arrested while on the way to an event held by the Red Army Foundation.

The organisation was created by former child soldiers to advocate for peace and address social issues in the country.

Shortly before his arrest Ajak had tweeted that: “We must stop thinking that the so-called leaders will bring peace #SouthSudan.”

He continued: “We, the great people of #SouthSudan, must organize ourselves to bring about the peace we deserve!”

Throughout his detention in South Sudan, the Cambridge community advocated for his release.

Cambridge’s Amnesty International Society staged their ‘cage campaign’ to protest against Ajark’s arbitrary arrest. During this, protesters camped in a wooden cage outside King’s College for 48 hours.

Vice-Chancellor Stephen Toope also sent a letter to the South Sudan president, calling Ajark’s detention “unconstitutional”.

Ajak is now living with his family in Washington DC where he is a Fellow at the National Endowment for Democracy as well as working at the Africa Center for Strategic Studies.

Gaby Vides Senior News Editor

Dr Peter Biar Ajak became the first South Sudanese national to be awarded a PhD from the University of Cambridge last Saturday (24/10).

Ajak, the first person from South Sudan to study at Cambridge, received his PhD at the official ceremony last week, nine months after his release from South Sudan’s “Blue House” prison.

In regard to his PhD award, Ajak tweeted that he felt “truly honoured to be the first national of South Sudan to

be awarded a PhD by Cambridge University.”

“Despite spending nearly 2 years in unjustified detention, God gave me the strength to finish it.”

He further tweeted that he is dedicating “this [his PhD] to South Sudan and the resilience of our people.”

Trinity College, where Ajak completed his PhD, last Friday (23/10) tweeted a “Congratulations to Dr Peter Ajak, the first South Sudanese national to receive a Cambridge University PhD”.

Ajak was detained by the South Sudanese government on July 28th 2018 at

Juba airport by South Sudanese National Security Services (NSS) officers, with no clear reason offered for his arrest.

Ajak was only released in January 2020 after a pardon from the country’s President Salva Kiir.

At the time of his arrest, Ajak was a member of the Department of Politics and International Studies as well as a Cambridge Trust scholar.

He was detained without charge for eight months in the NSS detention facility Blue House, South Sudan’s main national security prison.

His lawyer at the time, Jared Genser,

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New online game made by Cambridge aims to ‘pre-bunk’ the Covid-19 infodemic

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We must heed calls to ‘Defund the Police’



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Inside the life and work of Roger Penrose



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The weird and wonderful world of college families

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News

Mishandling and Neglect

“I was crying in her office and she just went back to typing on her laptop.”

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against the student who had been making the inappropriate comments with the member of staff to the Senior Tutor, she also found the response to be unsatisfactory and the Senior Tutor's language to be highly inappropriate.

“She very much from the outset was massively infantilising this guy; saying things like ‘he’s from a very rural upbringing and is very inexperienced’. The one thing she said that I found really really shocking, at the time and to this day is, when I was saying this guy called me a slut, she said: ‘well when I was young the word slut meant a woman who kept an unclean house.’”

“I definitely think the college procedure is ad hoc, and unclear. I never really could find out what the college procedure

was. In terms of staff, I don’t want to lay it all at Penny Barton’s [the Senior Tutor] door... I think most students wouldn’t know the procedure.”

This sentiment contradicts what an anonymous former welfare officer told Varsity. They detailed that “college procedure is slow, things have to be ‘by the books’.” There was a “a lengthy process that had to be carried out yet sometimes never resulted in a satisfying outcome or solution.”

The combination of a slow bureaucratic system and a lack of transparency often results in a dangerous failure to protect the welfare of students at Homerton.

“I went to Penny at the start of last term after the end of my abusive relationship to report my ex for multiple accounts of physical violence against

others and intimidation to myself” Lauren told Varsity.

“She told me to write out a complaint form against him and I did, dating all the different episodes of violent behaviour. When I sent it to her she told me that I needed to address the complaint form to him personally to read and then told me to redact the sexual assault claim I had made against him. She urged me to redact names of other people mentioned as well who were also college students.”

“During the meeting I told her how I didn’t feel safe within my own College as he had previously come to my room and pounded on the door waking everyone who lived on my corridor, he knew where I lived and lived nearby.”

“The best she offered me was for us to have scheduled hall and library times meaning I too had to make sacrifices in my daily routine due to what he had done.”

“She told me that she had a contractual duty to make sure that he didn’t fail his degree and could graduate, completely ignoring the fact that the situation made it difficult for me to attend lectures and walk around college without consistent panic attacks. She offered that I could change college or apply to intermit - it was entirely up to me to make sacrifices as a victim.”

Not only this, but the College completely failed to ensure that Lauren would not have to interact with her abuser. At half-way hall he was allowed to attend and no changes were made to the seating plan. He was also “able to attend pre drinks in a college room where no distancing was enforced between us”

tells Lauren. “I ran out of the room crying, literally passing Penny Barton as I went, who did not stop me or email me or make any acknowledgement of this.”

After receiving no help at the level of the college, Lauren brought her complaint to the University where she was told “that as we were both at the same College (me and my abuser) it was up to the College to punish him/ sort it out.” Ultimately “still nothing has been done for me in terms of this situation.”

Yet the systemic welfare failings at Homerton are not only limited to reporting of sexual misconduct. Students have also described how their physical and mental health has been mishandled by the College. Emma was in her second year at Homerton when she had approached the College to apply for funding for cooking equipment as she had to prepare her own food due to a pre-existing medical condition.

Emma explained her situation and passed on her medical notes to the tutorial office specifying: “please don’t pass these on.” After hearing nothing from the College for a time she was finally told that her notes “had been to the bursar, and that the bursar had declined the request”.

Not only were there sensitive medical notes passed on against her direct wishes but Emma was not informed that her notes had been passed on and was not given the opportunity to consent to this.

In a follow up meeting with the Senior Tutor, Dr Penny Barton, Emma found the Senior Tutor to be dismissive of her

condition. “She [the Senior Tutor] really patronised me” Emma told Varsity. “I was crying in her office and she just went back to typing on her laptop.”

The Senior Tutor then told Emma that “you have to cook to eat; that’s life”, and her case was dismissed. The issue, says Emma, is that all applications for disability funding ultimately have to go through the Senior Tutor rather than through a trained professional.

Unfortunately, this was not the end of Emma’s negative interaction with the College welfare system. At the end of Lent term last academic year, Emma had called the Porters to deal with a noise complaint against her neighbour who then confronted her in the corridor.

“He flew at me, he was poking my chest” says Emma “he was touching me and I said don’t touch me please.” No longer wanting to interact with the Senior Tutor, Emma took her complaint to the Dean and told them that “I’ve been verbally and physically assaulted, I feel scared. My guy friends were marching me around college. They walked with me because I was too scared to go to my room.”

Yet the only response from Dean was to move the male student to a different accommodation and to encouraged Emma, in an email seen by Varsity, “not to engage in any further contact.”

Yet the issue which Emma says most infuriated her was that the Dean began their email by saying “thank you for meeting with me to discuss the noise complaint”, completely disregarding her allegations.

The failings at Homerton also extend

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▲ Services that were handled by the Disability Resource Centre (pictured) are now handled internally (SIR CAM/UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE)

to mental health provisions. Services that were previously handled by the Disability Resource Centre, including applications for alternative means of assessment, are now handled internally and led by the Senior Tutor.

On the 15th January 2019, Sarah emailed her tutor to discuss applying for alternative means of assessment (AMA). Due to traumatic events during her A levels and in her first year at University Sarah experienced trauma induced anxiety triggered by examinations which can cause suicidal thoughts and behaviour.

Both her Tutor and Director of Studies agreed that this was sufficient grounds for applying for AMA and her request was forwarded onto the Senior Tutor.

However, Sarah soon encountered the now familiar pattern of dismissal and lack of understanding that accompanies these meetings. "I came out of

that meeting crying and ended up going home" says Sarah of her first meeting with the Senior Tutor in Lent term.

"I told her my deepest trauma and all my suicidal thoughts and feelings and her response was 'everyone has anxiety during the exam season, even the students at Hills Road Sixth Form College get anxious'. I remember that word for word because it was so harrowing. If I had come to her the year before, when I was extremely suicidal, and she had given me that response, I really don't know where I would be."

Sarah also told *Varsity* that she encountered issues that stemmed from a deep lack of understanding of mental health. The Senior Tutor repeatedly insisted that the letter from Sarah's psychotherapist was not sufficient evidence despite this being from a consultant or specialist as required by the University.

The Senior Tutor instead insisted that Sarah see a psychiatrist despite her insistence that she had no desire too.

It was only when Sarah arranged a meeting with her DoS, tutor, Senior Tutor, and DRC advisor that her evidence was accepted, and even then the Senior Tutor wrote in a follow up email seen by *Varsity*, that "the AMA has to be applied for every year, it is hoped with ongoing therapy, some of [student's] fears may lessen as she goes through the degree".

The Senior Tutor also insisted that Sarah visit her psychotherapist during term time as a condition for the signing of the AMA application, despite Sarah telling her that she did not schedule these during term due to the intense psychological toll they took.

It was returning from one of these sessions when Sarah experienced "the worst panic attack of my life." Sarah told *Varsity* that "the only reason for it was her [Dr Barton]. The way she talked to me, the way she made me feel inadequate, the way she completely dismissed me, my anxiety, my diagnoses, my evidence. She just made me feel so worthless."

When informed that Sarah had been taken to hospital by ambulance after the attack the Senior Tutor said via email that 'it's a relief to hear that it was something transient' and that she hoped 'you are feeling better and able to get on with your studies'.

"It is not something transient, it is a harrowing experience that conjured up more suicidal feelings, depression and anxiety. It doesn't just stop there."

Sarah told *Varsity* "it was never about how I felt, it was always about not getting behind."

After first beginning her application on the 15th of January, it was only on February 21st that the Senior Tutor signed off on Sarah's AMA application. AMA applications are not decided by the Senior Tutor but by a separate University panel. The Senior Tutor's only role is to sign off on the application. This process took over a month to complete.

"The fact that it took me over a month for her to just agree to submit an application to the University is ridiculous. It just shows how messed up the system is that it has to be a senior tutor that submits the application."

"She [the Senior Tutor] has been handling my medical evidence without any sort of guarantees, there have been no lengths to safeguard my wellbeing and my evidence. I have no idea if Penny still has my medical evidence running around on her computer. That's a flaw in the process with the university."

When contacted by *Varsity* Dr Barton said the following: "Incidents of sexual misconduct are always distressing and can be life-changing, and reporting an incident can itself be deeply painful and difficult."

She continued: "Our students are telling us that the process of reporting and resolution that they have experienced at Homerton in recent years has not always been satisfactory, and as Senior Tutor I apologise that our processes, and the way they have been applied, have not always inspired the confidence of those who have needed to use them."

"I am committed to leading extensive action to address these concerns – including action to update my own understanding and language, and to provide victims with the best possible support."

"Homerton students quite rightly expect the College to provide the highest possible standards of care in this regard, and the whole pastoral team and I are committed to reviewing our processes and practices to respond to student concerns, and to reflect best practice."

"If the systems in place to protect students who come forward aren't working properly, then this compounds the trauma for victims. I will work closely with the student body to promote a culture of zero tolerance", she finished telling *Varsity*.

A spokesperson for Homerton College further commented that "Senior staff at Homerton have become aware over the past few months of student concern in relation to the reporting of sexual misconduct, and have initiated a process of reviewing the College's procedures and provision of support, and redoubling its efforts to promote a culture of zero tolerance towards sexual misconduct."

They went on to point out that "the Senior Tutor and Vice-Principal hosted an Open Meeting for Homerton students last week to promote awareness of Homerton's procedures for reporting sexual misconduct, to update students on recent changes the College has made, and to invite the student body to raise questions or share their perspectives on how Homerton's provision can be as supportive and effective as possible".



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News

Go Viral! Cambridge-made online game aims to ‘pre-bunk’ the Covid-19 infodemic

Cameron White
Deputy News Editor

A new game to combat Covid-19 misinformation developed by Cambridge academics, in conjunction with DROG, Gusmanson Design and the UK Cabinet Office press office, was launched earlier this month.

Dr Sander van der Linden, Melisa Basol, Faith Uenal and Jon Roozenbeek, the game’s creators, are all academics at Cambridge’s Social Decision-Making Lab (CSDML).

Covid-19 misinformation has been shown to have great human costs, with reports of associated racial attacks, arsons, assaults, conspiracies and poisoning by alcohol and cleaning products.

Go Viral!’s start page introduces the game’s premise in a nutshell: “Misinformation about COVID-19 is spreading far and wide. Play the role of a media manipulator and uncover their tactics to learn how to resist them in the future.”

The objective is simple: the more misinformation you can spread, the higher the credibility you gain as a manipulator. The decisions you make throughout the game and the posts your avatar publishes on its virtual social media account increase or decrease your score, as you have the ability to go from receiving a few likes at a local level to making it into the national news.

Go Viral! is centred on ‘inoculation theory’. Speaking to *Varsity*, the creators posited that “a small ‘microdose’ of information can serve as a ‘psychological

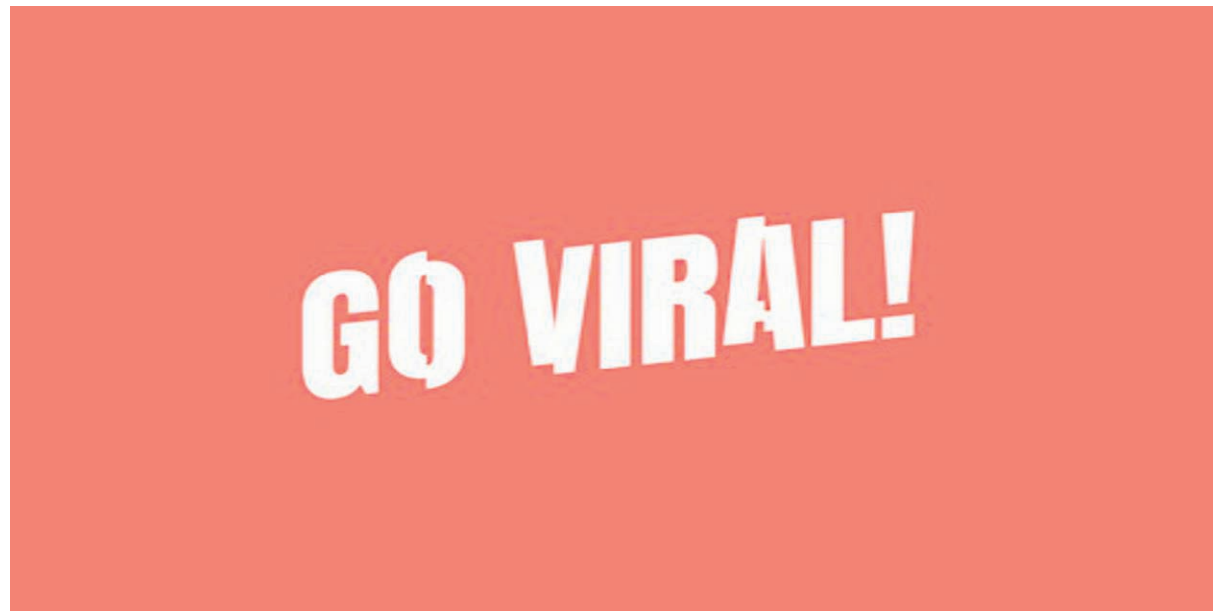
vaccine” when users later encounter misinformation. Stepping into the shoes of a fake news creator in an environment which is “risk-free”, players “are ‘inoculated’ against “misinformation that they may encounter in the future that makes use of one of the manipulation techniques that they learned about while playing.”

On this point, they emphasised the importance of *prebunking* [preventing the publication of misinformation] as well as ‘debunking’ [the denouncing of misinformation which already exists on public forums], arguing that “*prebunking* individuals about these manipulation strategies and building resistance against them is a critical step towards preventing such harmful information from going viral in the first place.”

The game’s creators said that they wanted “to keep the game fun and light-hearted. Rather than telling players what to believe, we wanted to offer an ideologically neutral and non-judgemental environment that includes easy, relatable and enjoyable content.”

One feature to keep the game light-hearted was the use of amusing character descriptions; for instance, when invited to select an avatar, the character of Joel’s motto is that he “[likes] big books and [he] cannot lie.”

The creator’s said “the aim was to ensure that people keep playing the game all the way through to the end and as a result, learn for themselves how to spot manipulation strategies in the future. We wanted to show that you can take



▲ **Go Viral! aims to combat misinformation through ‘inoculation theory’ which hopes to create a ‘psychological vaccine’** (GUSMANSON DESIGN, DROG)

the problem seriously without being alarmist.”

Referencing one key element of the game, the creators explained that “the function of the ‘credibility’ meter is to show how some people become popular by spreading misinformation about COVID-19: they build up credibility by posing as ‘truth-tellers’ and sowing doubt about what they perceive as ‘mainstream’ sources.”

The creators explained that the game uses three prevalent misinformation techniques: “fearmongering (by using excessively emotional language and pro-

voking outrage), using fake experts (such as “this Nobel Prize-winning doctor says coronavirus is a hoax!”)... and spreading conspiracy theories (e.g. “5G radiation causes COVID symptoms”).”

The game had been in development since July of this year, with the initial idea sprouting from their previous experiments with other fake news games, such as *Bad News* - which one Harvard Kennedy School study found to have the ability to “confer psychological resistance against common online misinformation strategies across different cultures.”

They added that the UK Cabinet Office funded the production of the game after the CSDML received seed funding from the University of Cambridge’s rapid response fund for scientific research on Covid-19 in May.

While no studies have yet been published regarding the impact of *Go Viral!*, the CSDML “[ran] a pilot study last week with promising initial results, and will launch a large international study in the UK, France and Germany into the effectiveness of the game as a ‘vaccine’ against COVID-19 misinformation in the coming weeks.”

Cambridge signs “Cool Food” pledge to reduce food-related greenhouse gas emissions

Marie Medenis
News Correspondent

The first UK university to sign the ‘Cool Food’ Pledge, Cambridge’s University Catering Service (UCS) joins a growing movement of dining facilities owned by universities, workplaces, hospitals, cities, hotels and restaurants around the world.

The “Cool Food” Pledge is an initiative of the World Resources Institute which encourages signatories to introduce more plant-based food with a lower carbon footprint. The ultimate aim for

the group is to collectively reduce food-related greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 25% by 2030, in line with the Paris Climate Agreement.

The UCS is the University’s in-house catering service, managing fourteen cafes and canteens across Cambridge, such as the Sidgwick Buttery and the UL tea room, as well as catering for more than 1,500 events every year.

Joining the “Cool Food” Pledge means that UCS will have to share their food purchase data of animal-based foods and plant proteins on an annual basis with the pledge team, with aggregated results

reported back and publicly promoted.

Being part of a global pledge such as this is described by the “Cool Food” team as “a compelling way to engage employees, students, visitors, and other customers in sustainability efforts”.

Speaking to *Varsity*, Professor Andrew Balmford, who has previously advised the UCS on sustainability decisions, said that the benefits of signing the pledge lie largely in “communicating the University’s work to other institutions, learning from what they’ve done, and in due course having an independent assessment of the impacts of UCS’ actions on its emissions”.

Other signatories range from Nestle to the World Bank and the City of Copenhagen to Harvester, with almost a billion meals already impacted by the pledge annually.

If current pledge signatories achieve the 25% reduction target by 2030, more than 1 million tonnes of carbon dioxide emissions will be avoided (equivalent to taking 230,000 cars off the roads).

Food production accounts for a quarter of global GHG emissions, with two-thirds of agricultural GHG emissions and over three-quarters of agricultural

land-use stemming from the production of animal-based products.

Consuming more plant-based foods can make a significant contribution to reducing pressure on the climate as plant-based foods generally have a lower environmental impact. The “Cool Food” website, for example, describes how “producing beef uses 20 times the land and emits 20 times the greenhouse gases as producing beans, per gram of protein”.

This pledge builds upon previous sustainability changes made by the UCS. It launched its “Sustainable Food Policy” in October 2016, which was further updated last year.

This policy change in 2016 led to the UCS removing ruminant meat from its menus, switching away from beef and lamb. At the same time the UCS also committed itself to promoting plant-based food, removing unsustainably harvested fish from its menus and reducing food waste.

Last year, a UCS report announced the impacts of these policies: a 10.5% reduction in the overall carbon footprint of food (despite an increase in total food purchases). Overall, the carbon dioxide

emissions per kilogram of food purchases from the UCS decreased by 33%.

Other sustainability initiatives championed by the UCS in previous years include switching to compostable Vegware packaging in 2015, and the introduction of a discount for drinks purchased in Keep-Cups in 2013, which saved 121,000 disposable cups from being used (now changed to a 25p charge for disposable cups).

Signing the “Cool Food” pledge is unlikely to be the end of changes for the UCS, as they continue to review their policies “in light of the latest science and new best practice”. The UCS will now be able to take on board advice provided by the “Cool Foods” team as well drawing from the expertise of the University of Cambridge academics it has consulted in the past, such as when constructing the original Sustainable Food Policy.

The UCS’s signing of the “Cool Food” pledge follows the University committing to divest from fossil fuels by 2030. The Vice-Chancellor further announced in his annual address on October 1st that the University’s £3.5 billion Endowment Fund will be redirected towards investments in renewable energy by 2025.

► **Sidgwick Buttery is one of fourteen canteens and cafes managed by UCS** (LOUIS ASHWORTH)





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News

Extinction Rebellion challenge oil, gas and arms companies at careers event hosted by the University

Gaby Vides & Christopher Dorrell
Senior News Editors
Extinction Rebellion Cambridge Universities (XRCU) disrupted an online

University careers event on Wednesday (28/10) afternoon which included companies from the oil, gas and arms industry.

The event hosted four oil and gas com-

panies - Schlumberger, GE Digital, CGG, Serafim - and BAE Systems, the world's third largest arms manufacturer.

All of these companies are either fossil fuel companies or heavenly involved

in the automation of fossil fuel extraction.

XRCU detailed in a press release to *Varsity* that they were not only challenging these companies but the "University

itself for hosting and endorsing these companies as they pitched their employment opportunities to students."

Because the event was held online, traditional dramatic XR tactics were impossible. Instead, activists asked uncomfortable questions to the companies.

For example, to the oil and gas companies students asked: "the University has just announced they're going to fully divest from fossil fuels - how do you think this would affect my career with you?" and "the price of oil has dropped massively because of coronavirus and the climate crisis - what does the future of the company look like because of this?"

To Schlumberger, the arms company, students asked: "I'm really interested in working at Schlumberger but all the Extinction Rebellion protests at your Cambridge research centre have put me off and I think I'd feel unsafe - are there going to continue to be protests there?" and "I read 'Schlumberger set a corporate record it would probably prefer not to be noticed: receiving the largest corporate criminal fine for sanctions violations in US history' - what is that about?"

Meanwhile for BAE, XRCU activists probed the companies "involvement in human rights abuses and selling of arms to countries known to be killing their own citizens." One question posed to BAE representatives was "what is the average number of murders perpetrated per employee across BAE?"

According to the XRCU press release, the companies "routinely circumvented" the questions. The press release said "None provided an answer to questions pertaining to the moral issues involved in ongoing fossil fuel extraction with the science and evidence being very clear that oil must remain in the ground for society to have any chance of avoiding runaway global heating."

XRCU's disruption of Wednesday's careers event follows the University's commitment early this month to fully divest by 2030.

The University has also pledged to scrutinise research funding and other donations to ensure that the donor 'can demonstrate compatibility with the University's objectives on cutting greenhouse gas emissions before any funding is accepted'.

Speaking to *Varsity*, a representative from the careers service said: "The Careers Service offers an impartial service. Students are free to make their own choices about who they do/don't wish to engage with and our position is that it is not for the Careers Service to act as censor nor to make value judgements on behalf of students about specific employers and/or labour market areas."

"The Careers Service respects that there are members of the University community who feel strongly about the presence of certain organisations at University organised events, whether these are Careers Fairs or other activities. The Careers Service is respectful of students' right to protest as long as the protest is peaceful. It is extremely disappointing that 'action' at this year's Engineering, Science and Technology fair degenerated into abuse directed at both speakers and fellow students."

Olivia Bennett, one of the students who took part, said "I took action today because I am ashamed that my University is giving a platform for companies that are causing the destruction of our planet as a viable job alternative."



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Homerton students wake up to bedbug infestations

Tom Ward
News Correspondent

Freshers at Homerton have this week told *Varsity* of their distress at having to deal with bedbug infestations in the first weeks of term.

Those living in West House accommodation, where 223 students are currently self-isolating due to 18 positive cases, were affected by the infestations.

The initial infestation was found during freshers' week. Students discovered the bugs living in their bedding as they arrived or in the morning, after they found themselves to have been bitten during the night.

One student, who wishes to remain anonymous, spoke to *Varsity* about the experiences of several of their friends.

They reported that one friend only discovered their bed was infested upon waking up, "when she was bitten everywhere". The friend reported the bugs to the College, however the problem continued; "it was never really solved [...] she then moved to private accommodation because [the college] never really got rid of them."

Days after this infestation was reported, another student found bedbugs in

her room. However, since this infestation was discovered at the weekend, "[the College] told her they would fumigate on the Monday, and as there were no guest rooms available, to sleep in the bug infested room, possibly on the floor or on a mattress topper." The incident was later resolved that Monday.

Two further instances of bedbug infestations were also identified. One student "found bed bugs as soon as they moved into their room on move-in day", and another uncovered the pests after having woken up to bites.

Although bedbugs do not generally cause health problems, their bites can be itchy and cause an allergic reaction. The NHS recommends to 'clean and vacuum regularly' to prevent infestations, though 'bedbugs are found in both clean and dirty places'. The issue runs deeper than the physical threat of bug bites, however, as one student told *Varsity*: "a lot of us on our corridor felt very paranoid and uneasy that the same thing could have happened to us. I certainly had trouble getting to sleep at times and would spend so much time checking my bed".

In a statement to *Varsity*, a spokesperson for Homerton College said: "I have spoken to housekeeping, who have confirmed that they have been told about



bedbugs in three student rooms. In each case the College contacted the fumigators immediately. One student turned them away and they were rebooked for the following day."

"Bedbugs can be brought in on clothes and luggage, or picked up on

public transport. They can occur in all residential and hospitality settings and are not a reflection of cleanliness. There is nothing that can be done to predict or prevent them, but Homerton will always react swiftly to any case we are made aware of."

▲ A number of students at Homerton's West House accommodation have complained of bedbug infestations (FRANMAN247)



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Features

How I got into Cambridge with two GCSEs



▲ “Had I fallen irretrievably into the traditional school system, I believe that my singular talent, creativity, would have been the first to fall” (JESUS ROSARIO)

Sienna James

At the age of sixteen I saw the University of Cambridge the way I saw Hogwarts: a childish fantasy. So many potential Cambridge students sit, as I did, on the other side of the smokescreen unable to access higher education. These institutions are putting off promising applicants on the basis of intimidating reputations because they believe they do not fit a certain stereotype. However, as I found out, you don't have to be academically flawless in order to get accepted into Oxbridge.

For years I daydreamed through maths, fidgeted and lost focus every 10 minutes and only ever accessed history through Jane Austen movie adaptations. I was a home-educated student with middling grades and dyslexia, and my struggles with reading, maths and science made conventional studying loathsome.

Had I fallen irretrievably into the traditional school system, I believe that my singular talent, creativity, would

“Let's get real; a student with a learning difficulty and two GCSEs gets into Cambridge?”

have been the first to fall. Next? Any meagre passion for learning. Yet, rather than drowning in GCSE exams in the double-digits, I remained home-educated up to sixth form and sat exams for just two. If I had gone to a “normal” school, I certainly would not be typing this now in a bougie café, a few blocks down from my home college, living what can only be described as that Cambridge experience.

I spent my years aged fifteen and sixteen volunteering at charities and museums, alongside pursuing non-exam-based art qualifications. As I practised my art, my confidence and desire to learn grew; I consumed maths, science, and literature, as well as creative subjects. I did not conquer the confines of a dyslexic brain but learnt to adapt my education to suit my needs.

What I experienced was a revolution in learning. The drudgery of worksheets and textbooks ended in a blinding flash of Crash Course and Khan Academy. As post-16 education drew

near, I was toeing the line between safety and an ambition that steadily grew over the summer I turned sixteen.

Cut to September 2017: I found myself at the local college where I'd enrolled for a BTEC that I assumed would be more suited to my learning style. I walked into the college, on my first day attending formal education ever, and was disappointed. The subjects I'd just started discovering now seemed out of my reach, as if formal education had pushed them away. That same day, I unenrolled from the diploma, made some phone calls, and arrived at a sixth form college the next morning, ready to tackle A-levels in History, Politics, and Media Studies.

Consistent low Bs defined my schooling experience in Year 12, but, by the summer term, the hours I had poured into my subjects began to pay off. Mark by mark, I crawled up to a low A and then, eventually, a consistent A-grade.

Oxbridge fantasies still haunted me. I longed for candlelit dinners, billowing black gowns and champagne escapades atop college roofs. Initially, though, I did not seriously consider Cambridge because of my previous academic record. Two GCSEs, an unimpressive Year 12 and a host of creative qualifications surely would not endear me to any academic institution.

Yet, slowly, quietly, in the back of my mind, my “learning revolution” had been morphing into a priceless fuel: ambition. I studied tirelessly to improve my grades from an A to an A*, worked three part-time jobs and volunteered at charities where I could.

The next few months consisted of a slew of unexpected emails, trepidatious interview preparation, and tongue-biting smiles, as my plan began to work. On results day 2019 I secured my offer from the University of Cambridge.

Let's get real; a student with a learning difficulty and two GCSEs gets into Cambridge? Something doesn't add up, and it's not just because I never sat Maths SAT.

What I have discovered is that the reputation of the Oxbridge application process prevents scores of students with non-traditional backgrounds from applying, when they could actually get in. I didn't need a multitude of 7s, 8s, 9s and A*s at GCSE to get a place to study at Cambridge. By bypassing the drudgery of GCSEs and concentrating on what I loved, I ended up with creative qualifications and enough work experience to rival an entrepreneurial 20-something. Most importantly, I was a contrast to the system.

We've all heard how employers value experience over high grades in education; what if the same applied to top-tier UK universities? Schools across the country enter into years of preparation for Oxbridge applications: essay writing, debating, interview skills. Such processes are not confined to the likes of Eton and Harrow, or even just the private sector, but sometimes high-performing state schools. Lifelong applicant preparation attempts to mould Russell-Group-wannabes into successful Oxbridge applicants, but in reality, the truth need not be so gruelling.

I'm here to dispel the myth that Oxbridge students were always destined to end up as such. In many cases, it's the result of previously ‘average’ students whose ambition and individuality led them somewhere entirely unexpected. My Cambridge application experience encouraged me more than ever to embrace my originality. This is my message to you: don't be afraid to accentuate your quirks because they are what makes you unique. Whether in your artwork, your social interactions or even your academic applications, embrace what makes you “you”.

Keeping up with relationships

Elizabeth Haigh

Life in the Cambridge bubble is notoriously hectic. Family, friends, flatmates, even pets: it is nigh on impossible to keep up with them all when I've got two essays due, supervisions to attend and all the other highs and lows of Cambridge life to contend with. Yet it is these relationships that keep me grounded and remind me that there is a life outside of the relentless eight-week term. Is it worth putting off that work so that I can snatch a half hour phone call with my best friend from home?

Absolutely. Whether it's while I'm cooking, during a walk for a much needed dose of fresh air, or over lunch, I have learned to treasure the precious minutes I spend catching up with my loved ones. It is these instances, however brief, that allow me to take a breath, stop taking everything so seriously and remember that there are more important things than working myself to the bone. Sleep, for example. Or the crunch of the autumn leaves underneath my feet when I go running. Or the ten

o'clock cup of tea that has quickly become a tradition in my household.

Unlike any other year at Cambridge, final year has swept me off my feet with the number of deadlines and the amount of reading I have to do. What with balancing extracurricular commitments and trying to keep on top of everything life throws in general, I can honestly say I have never spent as much time in the library.

If there's anything positive that has come out of the pandemic, at least there's no danger of me completing an assignment while morbidly hungover.

But this also comes with its own trials: the lack of much else to do makes the prospect of not working seem impossible. I have always buried myself in work during difficult times in my life. And the pandemic is no different. The amount of stress and anxiety is, to use a word I have heard possibly a thousand times in the past few months, unprecedented. This has resulted in a huge increase of internalised pressure to work hard, get ahead, keep going. Some days,

it feels as if I am barely staying above water.

But for each bad day, there is a better one around the corner. I have no perfect formula for the right amount of time spent on work compared to socialising or relaxing, but I do know that keeping up with others is my lifeline. Whether it's mum sending me photos of Leo, who is the best cat in the world (that's not an opinion, but solid fact), a shared joke with a friend from home, a rare phone call with my brother, or just a hug in our shared kitchen, these are the moments that are not just important, but essential.

The digital age makes staying in touch so much easier, and yet so much more complicated at the same time. Is the friend that you only message once a month actually as well as they say they are? With Cambridge as non-stop as it is, am I taking enough time to talk to my parents? Is sending that meme really enough to feel as though I'm making an effort? I don't know. But any time spent on personal relationships is

“There was, and will still be, a life outside of Cambridge”

better than nothing.

The normality of chatting to someone outside of your room, your course, the entire city, is often the best solution to the mental strain that many of us are feeling this term. If nothing else, to remind you that there was, and will still be, a life outside of Cambridge. People who love you no matter whether you complete that essay today or leave it till tomorrow, because you actually only had 5 hours sleep last night and really need to go to bed.

I'm working on cutting myself some slack for the rest of this term and spending more quality time with people, even if it's just over the phone. Of course, this may all go out the window as term goes on; as the week 5 blues hit and dissertation deadlines loom. But regardless of what happens, I will always find time for chats over coffee in the kitchen, to listen to a friend in need, to get out of college and discover a new cafe to work in. Keeping up relationships might be tricky, regardless, it is never impossible.

Finding home in Cambridge



▲ "I wonder sometimes if Newton or Keynes, Lee Kuan Yew or David Attenborough passed by the same buildings I enter" (MUHAMMAD SYED)

Muhammad Syed

The Cambridge I arrived at was similar to the one I constructed in my head. Cobble pathways lined the streets, lavish dining halls brimmed with paintings across different centuries and the pile of law textbooks sitting in my room gradually grew to conquer my entire bookshelf. Though the 'unprecedented circumstances we are in' marred my freshers week - with the fancy welcome dinner, night outs at Cindy's and Life all postponed - the promise of the city still prevailed.

After mulling over the prospect of studying here for months on end, I was afraid that the reality of life in Cambridge would fall short of the idealised version I had imagined. During lockdown, I lived vicariously through the edited shots of Paige Y and Alexandra Sive's

videos, anticipating the days where I could frequent the same cafes and stroll along the same streets. On my bedside table lay my DoS' guide to law school so that I could thoroughly read his advice in hopes of impressing him. Articles I found online described the intensity of the course, recounting horror stories of essay crises and mental health episodes. The Cambridge I heard of was home to some of the finest minds, consisted of intense academic rigour and was steeped in tradition - would I ever be able to call this place home?

Now, it has been three weeks since I have left Malaysia and I have already managed to pick up the strange (and totally unnecessary) jargon. We have a plodge, not a porter's lodge. We buy our groceries from Mainsbury's, not Sains-

bury's. We collect food from trough, not the dining hall. Besides the Cambridge-specific lingo, I am now accustomed to hearing 'what's the (covid-secure) motive tonight?' or 'that's so peak' on a regular basis. I have also put it upon myself to routinely drink tea and snack on biscuits as a rite of passage into British culture. My verdict: Jaffa cakes? Rank. Jammy dodgers? Peng.

As expected, the work poured in before I even arrived. Pre-recorded lectures were released in advance and my essay on Civil law was due on the first Monday of term. Five days in, I spent the better part of the night crouched over my laptop reading about Gaius and Justinian - historical figures who, I admit, I did not know existed a week ago. Latin terms were poorly laced in my essay as I struggled to grasp the Roman legal system within a matter of days. In the throes of a pandemic, the pace of work neither slowed nor braked: it simply resumed. This system of extensive reading lists, writing essays and preparing for supervisions was a glimpse of what the next three years had in store for me.

Amidst a very tiresome day of work, I found myself returning to a reminder from my Sixth Form teacher that she had some of her highest highs and lowest lows in Cambridge. For every essay that is dissected and criticised by my supervisor, there is one that will receive a seal of approval. For every night I spend studying, there will be another dedicated to having fun. Perhaps, I was blinded by my fantasy of Cambridge to see that my time here will be about punting in the River Cam as much as it will be shaped by daily runs to Wasabi after a poor su-

“For every night I spend studying, there will be another dedicated to having fun”

pervision or a stressful evening.

I wonder sometimes if Newton or Keynes, Lee Kuan Yew or David Attenborough passed by the same bridges I cross and buildings I enter. It is equally exciting to envisage where my fellow classmates will end up. Would I have lived next to the future head of the World Bank? Or gone to Spoons with a leading architect? Coming to Cambridge is like entering a treasure trove of future leaders, barristers, civil servants, doctors, engineers and so forth.

I have met people from some of the most elite schools in the country and others who are the first in their family to enter university. These are students of Land Economy, HSPS, Literature, History and Politics, Natural Sciences who also somehow make time for rowing, choir, orchestra, rugby, theatre, youth parliament and skiing.

Day by day, through collective complaints of our workloads, impromptu spa nights and homemade meals prepared together, our shared experiences bring us closer. I may even dare to say that Cambridge is beginning to feel like home.

And as for my favourite moment so far, it would have to be matriculation. While the Master of the College recited verses in Latin, decked out in a Hogwarts-esque gown, the boy sitting next to me whispered that our flatmate's grand-uncle had just received the Nobel prize for Physics. He worked closely with the late Stephen Hawking and together, established a singularity theorem. In any other context, this occasion would have been widely absurd, perhaps even impossible. But in a university like Cambridge, it was just another day.

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Features

Stuck in a Comfy Cell

“Time has no punctuation - unless I put it there” writes Varsity’s Senior Features Editor

Hatty Willmoth

How would you survive in a zombie apocalypse? What would you bring to a desert island? How would you cope if you were stuck in a prison cell by yourself?

My childhood friends and I used to discuss hypotheticals like these. They were a great way to start an interesting conversation if no one had anything better to say, and we came up with a few answers.

In a zombie apocalypse, for example, B&Q is the place to be. There are lots of places to hide, and it’s full of potential weapons perfect for smashing undead brains. Not to mention, if you were bored and the zombies were somewhere else, you could brush up on your DIY skills, build a massive MDF fort, and have a bit of fun.

As for a desert island, that one’s obvious: you’d bring a boat. Whoever even considers staying on that island with just a book or their favourite CD is missing a trick. Long-term, the island is not where you want to be (for one thing, its economy is terrible – don’t even get me started on the job market) so the quicker you leave the better.

Now we get to the prison cell. This I

imagined like a medieval dungeon, with damp, black walls and a tiny barred window at the top. In total isolation, how would you manage to keep yourself sane?

I always thought that music would be a good solution; I’d sing every single song I knew, the happier the better. You’ve got to admit, a prison cell would have some pretty great acoustics, so you might as well make use of them! It would be nice to hear a voice, I thought, even if it were my own.

Reading and writing were also common suggestions. If you couldn’t physically get out of a situation, at least you could enjoy some escapism. Though stuck by yourself, your imagination would render your company endless; you could travel around the world, feel the sun on your face and hear leaves crunch underfoot. You could even write a novel yourself, and then once you got out, you could become the next J. K. Rowling (except without the transphobia).

Some of my friends suggested exercise or self-care: you could do yoga or fitness circuits, learn how to do cartwheels or the splits, use the bars from your cell window to do pull-ups, meditate, pray,



▲ *“I think we often define our days by where we were and what we were doing, whereas I have no real option but to constantly sit on my bed”* (@NATE_NESSMAN)

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or find spiritual enlightenment. Whether a monk or an athlete, you could use this alone time for your own benefit. You might leave your cell feeling full of newfound wisdom – either that, or you’d be really hench. Honestly, it’s not a bad shout.

I never thought I would actually find myself stuck, isolating, in what my mum calls a ‘comfy cell’. I share a set, so while our shared sitting room is glorious, my actual bedroom is like a cupboard. My living quarters currently consist of a bed that touches three out of four of my walls, a half-wardrobe that’s so little that I only use it for my underwear and pyjamas, and a small black window. I think it’s safe to say that I probably won’t be learning to cartwheel in here.

It is, however, much nicer than my imagined prison cell. I have blankets and pillows, and my walls are pleasantly devoid of slime. My roommate generously delivers three meals a day to my door; with her sitting on the far side of the living room, we can have a chat over dinner and cups of tea. I can talk to my friends and family with messages and video-calls. I’ve even been informed that there’s a care-package in the post for me: chocolates, facemasks, Twiglets, and a ‘new teddy friend’. I may be physically isolated, but I’m not alone.

Also, the options for escapism here are amazing: I have Spotify, Netflix, YouTube, and a plethora of social media at my fingertips! Not to mention, I have work to be getting on with, so I can read

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I pay attention to the outside. I notice golden hour, when the court glows with warm sunlight, and when the sun sets
”

and read to my heart’s content, bopping along to Simon and Garfunkel, and get useful things done. My dissertation is really interesting, and my favourite book is sitting on a shelf in case I need some comfort-Austen.

Staying in the same place can make time feel endless, though. I think we often define our days by where we were and what we were doing, whereas I have no real option but to constantly sit on my bed. I’m warm, I’m comfortable, but I’m always doing the same thing. Time has no punctuation – unless I put it there.

So, I make an effort to break up my day. I plan my work, to make sure that every day is different. I change position on my bed a lot, leaning against all three available walls and stretching out my legs to touch the fourth whenever I feel like it. At the end of each day, I write down what I did, thought, and dreamt.

I pay attention to the outside. I notice golden hour, when the court glows with warm sunlight, and when the sun sets. When it rains, I open the window, breathe in the fresh air, smell the wet grass, stick out my hand and feel the droplets. Being able to taste the freshness abates my corona paranoia, and more generally this provides a welcome break to sitting inside my box.

I still maintain that music, escapism, and self-care are great ways to deal with isolation, but I’m also finding that (distanced) human contact and a creative use of time transform days spent in a tiny little room. I’m optimistic about the next few days. I may be stuck in a cell of sorts, but at least it’s a comfy one.

Opinion

We must heed calls to ‘Defund the Police’

After a summer of anti-racist protests, [Kate Granland](#) makes the case for the gradual removal of the police from society, coupled with a change in the way we perceive criminality



▲ A protestor holds a sign at a George Floyd protest, 5th June 2020 (WIKIMEDIA COMMONS / TAY MAX)

Content Note: This article contains discussion of police brutality and racism.

As the Black Lives Matter movement gained traction in the UK, calls to “defund the police” could be heard at protests across the country, alongside chants of “No justice / No peace / No racist police”. But why was the idea of defunding the police so important at these protests? Whilst individual police officers may not consider themselves racist, they are automatically complicit in a structure which upholds the racist structures of capitalism, through protecting property owners and criminalising the disadvantaged. This system of oppression is enforced through simultaneous defunding of the social sector whilst funding policing and prison expansion.

‘Defund the police’ does not mean instantly firing all police officers and shutting down prisons, but rather gradually redistributing resources from the police force to the social sector, in order to actually help our communities. In 2018-19, the bill for the UK criminal justice system was £28.8bn, which is more than we spend on social housing, primary education or the environment. The police thrive under austerity, draining public funding away from social programs

which actually help our communities. In times such as these, the government finds ways to criminalise, rather than help, the vulnerable: instead of putting funding into providing affordable housing, the homeless are vilified and the police are sent onto the street to fine or arrest them; instead of putting more money into schools, exclusions and zero tolerance policies become increasingly frequent and more young people end up in prison. These policies also disproportionately affect people of colour. The data for school exclusions in 2018 show that “Mixed White and Black Caribbean, and Black Caribbean pupils were both nearly 3 times as likely to be permanently excluded as White British pupils.” This points to obvious racism within the school system, which fails young Black students, effectively handing them over to the police to deal with, which creates a direct pipeline from the classroom to juvenile prison.

However, any time the Defund the Police movement gains any traction, a rally of voices try to counter the movement by arguing that ‘the police protect us’. Well, who exactly do they protect? Very rarely the most vulnerable members of society. Studies show that while four out of five victims of domestic violence never call the police, many will visit their GP as a

result of the abuse they have suffered. And those who do call the police frequently feel that their experiences are invalidated and they do not feel safe. In an interview with *gal-dem* magazine, Ngozi Fulani describes the difficulties Black women face when calling the police on domestic violence: “In the Rastafarian community, for example, you can’t report abuse to the police because your whole community shames you. You’re in the wrong whilst the perpetrator won’t get a mention.” This is of course informed by an awareness of the potential life-endangering nature of handing a Black man into police custody. The police don’t protect ‘society’ until they are protecting every person within that society. However, since the nature of the institution will never allow for this, the only option for improvement is defunding the police and reducing the power that they hold over society.

For these reasons, the cries of liberals wanting to ‘reform’ the police are extremely tone-deaf to the current political situation. When Keir Starmer declared that the call from Black Lives Matter to “defund the police” was “nonsense”, the extent of his sheltered and privileged life had never felt more clear. Reforming an institution which necessarily upholds racist and patriarchal structures is to-

kenistic and ineffective. In Audre Lorde’s essay, *The Master’s Tools*, she argues the importance of intersectional feminism, using an analogy that can be well applied to highlight the issues with the idea of reforming the police. She asks: “What does it mean when the tools of a racist patriarchy are used to examine the fruits of that same patriarchy? It means that only the most narrow parameters of change are possible and allowable.”

Ever since the Black Lives Matter movement gained more traction and national recognition, cases of the UK police racially profiling and abusing people of colour have finally started to appear in the news. Only now is an inquest being held into the death of Kevin Clarke, a man who suffered from paranoid schizophrenia, in 2018 in the hands of the Metropolitan Police. The inquest jury found that the police officers’ “inappropriate use of restraints” contributed to his death. The tragic words “I can’t breathe” can be heard on the police body-cam footage of the incident.

Defunding the police will not be effective unless we also fight to abolish prisons. The two institutions fuel one another, and neither improve the people who get caught up in them. In 2018, in the UK, juvenile offenders had a proven reoffending rate of 39.2% and adult of-

fenders had a proven reoffending rate of 28.0%. In Angela Davis’ essay, *Are Prisons Obsolete?*, she argues, “The prison is considered so ‘natural’ that it is extremely hard to imagine life without it.” This is one of the biggest obstacles to abolition – we cannot comprehend a system that focuses on rehabilitation rather than retribution; it does not fit so easily into the binaries of ‘good’ and ‘bad’ that we have been taught. Changing our ideas of criminality relies on subtle shifts in language. Rather than calling people in prisons ‘criminals’, we must define them as ‘people who have committed crimes’. This shifts the focus away from the nature of the individual and towards the role of the individual within their society. This complements rehabilitative theory, as it is easier to change the way a person interacts within their community, than it is to change an inherent ‘badness’ within a person.

However, we are currently moving further and further from prison abolition. There is a page on the government website, announcing plans for four new prisons, in efforts to “cut crime and kick-start the economy.” This benefit to local economies is dwarfed by the truly evil nature of prisons. As Davis asks, “are we willing to relegate ever larger numbers of people from racially oppressed communities to an isolated existence marked by authoritarian regimes, violence, disease, and technologies of seclusion that produce severe mental instability?”

There are practical ways in which we can start working towards defunding the police. Firstly, we can identify the different jobs that one police officer may be called upon to do, and redistribute this labour to trained specialists who will be able to more efficiently and effectively carry out the same task. For example, if a member of the community is feeling threatened, there should be a worker trained in de-escalation who they can call, who isn’t linked to the justice system, and won’t issue any punishments, but rather is trained in helping communities resolve problems amongst themselves. Many of the jobs that the police currently do should be redistributed to mental health workers who can help distressed individuals who are often seen as ‘dangerous’ through the eyes of the police force. This swapping out of police in favour of people trained in mental health would help avert tragic situations such as the death of Kevin Clarke.

Whilst police abolition plays into a powerful utopia, the process of removing the police must be gradual and balanced, and occur through systematic defunding of different police departments. For this to happen there must be a cultural shift in how we perceive the police, and their role in society, starting with the fact that there can never be a non-racist police force.

Opinion

The Government's handling of the Greater Manchester lockdown showcases its contempt for the North

Alice Perkins

Greater Manchester is a unique place. It's a proud place - proud of its role within the development of this country at the heart of the Industrial Revolution; proud of its contribution to our culture, and proud of its people, who have been among the greatest champions of social change. When Andy Burnham walked out last week, looking like a long-lost member of Oasis, in front of national media to give a speech about how the Government had stepped away from negotiations, I was proud that our leaders were taking a stand. However, this enthusiasm swiftly changed to anger.

But first, a bit of background. Greater Manchester is composed of ten metropolitan boroughs, one of which is mine, Bolton. It is a metropolitan county, composed mainly of former areas of Lancashire and was created under the Local Government Act 1972, which took effect in April 1974. Whilst each borough has its own council, responsible for local decision making, there is also the overarching Greater Manchester Combined Authority, consisting of the leaders of the councils. In 2014, it was announced the region would get a metro-mayor, which came to pass in 2017 when Andy Burnham, the former Leigh MP, was elected, signifying the major beginning of devolution in the region.

At the start of the pandemic, I believe

that the sense of national unity carried us through. Thursdays would see weekly claps, and in our house, every Monday would see the delivery of a national food parcel for those shielding. Though nutritionally questionable, the government certainly helped my family receive supplies we were unable to receive elsewhere. Similarly, the support given to local councils to support vulnerable residents does not bring any complaints from me. At home, in my little bubble, all was well.

But then we left the lockdown. Well, most places left the lockdown. Those of us who were lucky enough to be living in Greater Manchester and the surrounding areas were kept in. At 21:17 on 30th July, we were informed through Matt Hancock's Twitter account that as of midnight, we would not be allowed to meet each other indoors. Not only was this incredibly distressing to hear, it also broke public policy 101: communicate, and communicate clearly and concisely. Breaking the news in this way made me feel like my region was an afterthought.

The level of contempt shown towards the North as the pandemic progressed has been beyond belief. We have been expected to sit back and take every additional measure in the name of the public good with little regard for the economic and social welfare of our people. It was

only when London entered Tier 2 that vast economic support was announced for those under local restrictions, when much of Greater Manchester has been under similar, or stricter, rules for the past several months. This support has been backdated, but it nonetheless sends a clear message: London comes first.

Is it any wonder then that away from Westminster's oversight, a storm slowly started to brew? The local authority became the group that was being turned to. In the absence of functional national track-and-trace, ad-hoc systems were being set up by councils. They began public health advertisements, with Bolton Council taking inspiration from popular culture. They became the go-to for information, the advocates at a national level regarding lockdowns. Far from just managing local services, the council became an integral part of our lives.

Burnham, a well-established figure within Greater Manchester politics, had long had favour locally. Despite his flaws, Burnham has done a fairly good job within Greater Manchester at tackling some of the major issues - especially homelessness. Most importantly, he understands how Westminster and Whitehall work, making him a powerful force. He's been prolific throughout the pandemic, providing information where national government has been lacking.

The past couple of weeks have truly

“
Breaking the news in this way made me feel like my region was an afterthought”

been the straw that broke the camel's back. The willingness of the government to create their own narrative about GM MPs being split about Tier 3 restrictions. The refusal to negotiate with local leaders about financial support. As I watched Burnham receive the news, once again from a tweet, about the region's entry into Tier 3 without additional business support, I felt the contempt I experienced all summer from afar.

My home is not a political pawn for games of financial chess. My home is full of real people, with real lives who need a strong program of economic support to ensure at the other end of this pandemic, there are employment opportunities waiting for them. My home is proud enough to ask for help when it needs it and is looking to the community to provide it, for it has not been forthcoming from elsewhere.

We are standing on the precipice of a new Northern renaissance. As a political power, the region had never been as strong or had as much influence. Ironically, this is a result of George Osborne, the former Conservative Chancellor's 'Northern Powerhouse' and devolution agenda coming back to haunt the government. In his victory speech, PM Johnson said "you may have lent us your vote... I will never take your support for granted". I am afraid, Mr Johnson, several of those votes have been recalled.

Why moving teaching online is making the best out of a bad situation

Howard Chae

In the run-up to the start of term, the Vice-Chancellor wrote in a statement that "countless colleagues have been busy ensuring that staff are able to return to their places of work, and that students and academic staff are able to engage in teaching, learning and research, all in as safe an environment as possible." Students were assured that they did not have anything to worry about: plans and preparations had been developed to keep the community safe and provide students with the 'Cambridge experience'; in other words, students were told to come to Cambridge on the basis that life would, for the most part, return to some semblance of normality.

We are now in Week Three, and it's safe to say that the reality has fallen far short of expectations. On Monday 19th October, the University announced that it had detected 154 cases of COVID-19 through its testing programme during the preceding week - close to five times more than during the week prior to that. Of those 154, 18 were from a single accommodation building in Homerton College. In response, the college placed the entire building, which houses 223 students, under lockdown. As case numbers continue to rise, it is reasonable to expect that more colleges will have to follow suit (indeed, Downing College notified students on the 21st that it had met with public health officers to discuss possible measures to contain its growing caseload). The testing programme itself has also been beset with difficulties, with reports of "wide discrepancies between colleges' approaches and handling of the programme" leading to frustration

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Colleges need to facilitate safe socialising and build trust with students in order to effectively balance students' mental health with public health”

among students.

The reaction to the deteriorating situation - both nationwide and here in Cambridge - has been to blame 'selfish' and 'self-centred' students for jeopardising the safety of the community. The *Telegraph*, for example, linked the recent events at Homerton to a "series of illegal student 'raves'." The media's broader coverage of the ongoing surge in COVID-19 cases among young adults in the 18-29 age group has fixated on parties, raves, and other examples of students' reckless behaviour rather than on the government's disastrous management of the Higher Education sector, which went against the advice of the UCU, NUS, and (as it turns out) SAGE. Throughout term, students have been bombarded with emails from their colleges scolding them for flouting restrictions and guidelines - some have even gone as far as to threaten calling the police to make an example out of rule breakers.

Obviously, during these difficult times, we all need to come together as a community to keep both ourselves and each other safe. But what this manufactured moral panic over student conduct often misses out is that personal responsibility is not a substitute for institutional responsibility. As I have stated elsewhere, "students aren't automatons." The 'Cambridge experience' which the University is so determined to deliver is about much more than physically being able to look your supervisor in the eye from two metres away - fundamentally, it's about living: the day-to-day interactions and social relationships you can form with others going through similar experiences in close physical proximity. The Student

Loneliness Survey carried out by (what was then called) CUSU last year showed that student loneliness had reached a crisis point - 75% of respondents stated that they felt lonely on a routine basis.

Among students, the main reaction has been a mix of frustration, anger, and confusion, all of which is totally justified. Many feel that they have been cheated. What 'value for money' is there supposed to be in the 'Cambridge experience' if all it consists of is students being confined in their rooms and only allowed to venture out to attend supervisions and group teaching? Colleges need to recognise that tightening restrictions, patrolling accommodation buildings, and fostering an atmosphere of mistrust to the point where students can no longer socialise openly and safely is futile and damaging - not only to students' mental health, but also to efforts to minimise the risk of transmission.

It's in this context that we need to consider SAGE's recommendation that teaching be delivered online so as to minimise face-to-face contact between people from different households. With dedication of adequate resources to upgrading the quality of provision and expanding access (such as appropriate software and better WiFi capacities), teaching can be delivered online. At the same time, colleges need to facilitate safe socialising and build trust with students in order to effectively balance students' mental health with public health.

Another point to consider is that despite the University's promises of 'blended teaching' with in-person teaching positioned as the default and online teaching as the 'lower-quality'

last option, for a significant proportion of students, online teaching has already become the norm as faculties and departments realise that online teaching is the only viable option for the foreseeable future. Moreover, as case numbers continue to rise, more students will need to self-isolate and thus miss out on face-to-face contact hours, disrupting their education. A managed transition to online teaching and learning is a necessity and inevitability - our priority now should be to make the best of a situation we should never have been put in in the first place and mitigate and minimise the disruption of COVID-19 on students' wellbeing, and safeguard those who are most vulnerable.

It's become evident that this crisis was preventable. Despite whatever good intentions decision-makers might have had when they assured students that the University was prepared for their return, it simply did not have to be this way. Students have every reason to be angry with the promises they were sold when they were told to return - promises that have been broken. COVID-19 has made the failings of a marketised Higher Education sector clearer than ever - reliant on fees and rents as their primary sources of revenue, universities nationwide have been forced by the conditions of marketisation to treat students as consumers, and the 'Cambridge experience' as a commodity to be sold using the language of 'value for money.'

The only way forward is for the University to prioritise students' wellbeing and meaningfully engage with their frustrations through the extension of care and compassion at all times.

Science

Inside the life and work of Roger Penrose: winner of the 2020 Nobel Prize in Physics

Joel Penrose writes about the extraordinary contributions made by this Cambridge alumnus in a huge range of fields



▲ Roger Penrose is sharing the Nobel Prize in Physics with two other scientists for his contributions to our understanding of black holes (SKY NEWS)

Roger Penrose is a leading British physicist and Cambridge alumnus with a diverse career spanning over 60 years. His influence pervades the scientific world, from the workings of artificial intelligence to the application of quantum theory; some of his work has even found its way into popular culture, with his impossible triangle adopted as the logo of the clothing brand *Palace* in 2009. He is also known for his collaborations with M.C. Escher and Stephen Hawking, the latter of which earned him a brief appearance in the 2014 film *The Theory of Everything* where he is played by Christian McKay. However, he is most famous for his contribution to the understanding of black holes, and it is for this that he has been awarded the 2020 Nobel prize for physics.

Penrose was born in Colchester in August 1931 into an intensely academic Quaker family. His father, Lionel Penrose, was a pioneering human geneticist. Of his three siblings, two would go on to become prominent academics: his sister, Shirley Hodgeson, is a prominent geneticist at University College London; his brother, Oliver Penrose, a theoretical physicist and fellow of the Royal Society. His other brother, Jonathan Penrose, is a chess grandmaster, famously winning the British Chess Championship ten times between 1958 and 1969.

The Penrose family also have a very strong artistic tradition, perhaps accounting for much of Penrose's interest in geometry and form. Penrose's paternal grandfather, James Doyle Penrose, was an Irish painter, well-known for his portraits, landscapes, and religious paintings; his uncle, Roland Penrose, was an important part of the British surrealist

movement, co-founding the Institute of Contemporary Arts in London. Roland is also notable for his friendship with other artists, including Picasso, Man Ray, and Max Ernst, as well as his marriage to the celebrated photographer Lee Miller. Much of Roland's work can be found on display in his former home at Farley Farm in Sussex, now an art gallery run by his son, the photographer Anthony Penrose.

Roger Penrose was educated in Canada during the Second World War, and after the armistice pursued a degree in mathematics at University College London. After graduating with a first-class degree, Penrose went on to do a PhD in algebraic geometry at St John's College Cambridge. Here he attended lectures by Hermann Bondi, Paul Dirac, and S. W. P. Steen, all three of which had substantial influence on Penrose's later work.

It was while attending a conference in Amsterdam in 1954 that Penrose (then a student at Cambridge) first encountered the Dutch graphic artist M.C. Escher. He became fascinated by the unconventional use of shape and form, and, working with his father Lionel, soon produced similar works of his own: the Penrose Triangle and the Impossible Stair. These clever illusions provided the inspiration for two of Escher's most famous masterpieces, *Waterfalls* and *Ascending and Descending*, and are still very present in popular culture today. This kind of experimental geometry became a life-long fascination: in the 1970s, Penrose would once again gain acclaim for his invention of Penrose tiling, a non-repetitive pattern with five-fold rotational symmetry. As of 2013, this unique tiling can be found outside the Mathematical Institute in Oxford.

In 1952 when Penrose returned to St John's Cambridge as a research fellow, his work brought him into close contact with the young Cambridge graduate, Stephen Hawking; the two soon joined forces, working together to devise the Penrose-Hawking singularity theorems in 1969. These proved that when space-time reaches a certain level of distortion (such as in a black hole) it inevitably collapses, tending infinitely steeply towards a singularity where Einstein's equations break down and a new, quantum theory of gravity is needed. Penrose and Hawking received the 1988 Wolf prize for physics in recognition of their work.

Penrose was certainly already accomplished, but it was the 1965 publication of his ground-breaking paper "Gravitational Collapse and Space-Time Singularities" which elevated him to international fame. Penrose became the first person to mathematically prove that Black Holes existed as an inevitable consequence of relativity theory. Though Einstein's theories had predicted the existence of black holes back in the 1910s, many people (including Einstein himself) remained sceptical. All this was changed by the publication of Penrose's work in the 1960s, after which they became a widely accepted scientific truth rather than an unlikely prediction. It is to him that we owe much of our modern-day fascination with black holes, which are so eminent in our contemporary culture.

Penrose went on to conduct research in a range of mathematical fields, most notably including artificial intelligence. In his book *The Emperor's New Mind*, Penrose argues that the rational thinking of the human mind cannot be replicated by an artificial intelligence – a polemical view that has yet to gain widespread acceptance in academic circles. In one of his more recent publications,

Cycles of Time: An Extraordinary New View of the Universe, Penrose proposes that the universe is "cycling repeatedly from one big bang to another" – a controversial theory which brought him into conflict with his friend and long-time collaborator Stephen Hawking.

The invention of twistor theory in 1967 should also be listed among Penrose's greatest achievements – as a branch of theoretical physics, it has helped shape current thinking about space-time, as well as leading to the development of mathematical tools. Penrose can also be credited with the invention of spin networks, a diagram commonly used to depict interactions between fields and particles in quantum mechanics; he has also attached his name to the Penrose diagram, a useful way to visualise the effect of gravity on an object entering a black hole.

Penrose has received numerous

awards for his work, being knighted in 1994 and appointed to the Order of Merit in 2000. Recently he was jointly awarded the 2020 Nobel Prize in Physics "for the discovery that black hole formation is a robust prediction of the general theory of relativity." The other winners were Reinhard Genzel and Andrea Ghez for their "discovery of a supermassive compact object at the centre of our galaxy." The prize has therefore been divided in two, with Penrose receiving half of the £800,000 prize money.

Penrose is an exceptional physicist, even amongst Nobel Prize winners, for the fact that he has contributed to such a broad range of scientific fields – and we must bear in mind that even at the age of 89, Penrose is still working on the application of quantum theory to biology. His career is far from over: there is work to be done, and he might be the man to do it.

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Interviews

“She is going to be okay”: Razia Iqbal on interviewing Ruth Bader Ginsburg

Journalist Razia Iqbal speaks to *Amy Walpole* about leading one of RBG’s last interviews – and the peculiar presence of the legendary figure

To many, the death of Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg came as a blow. As a journalist and presenter of News-hour on the BBC World Service, Razia Iqbal’s first thoughts were not directed towards her programme’s coverage of RBG’s death, however. Her first thoughts went to Clara Spera, RBG’s granddaughter. She had met Spera a year earlier at the New York Public Library, where her grandmother was awarded the Berggruen Prize for Philosophy and Culture.

I met up with Razia by BBC’s Broadcasting House to talk to her about her experience interviewing RBG for the prize in front of a live audience, in what ended up being one of RBG’s last interviews.

Iqbal is no stranger to interviewing notable figures, from the likes of Carrie Fisher, to Salman Rushdie, to the Prime Minister of Armenia, but as anyone would be before such a high-profile interview, she was nervous.

“I won’t interview anyone unless I’ve read reams and reams and reams about them”, she says. But with RBG, who had lived such a full life, there was a huge amount of material to get through: “I’d

“I knew this was probably going to be one of her last big interviews, and this would be used when she died”

read all her dissenting opinions...I read two books, endless articles, I’d watched the documentary and the film as well, and even that didn’t feel enough.”

In the run up to the event in December 2019, it was unclear if the interview would even take place. “Obviously I was very very excited, but, it was also very worrying because she was very frail and by this stage she had had three bouts of cancer, and right up until the last minute they kept saying we don’t know if it’s going to happen”, she recalls, “and I knew in the back of my mind that this was probably going to be one of her last big interviews and this would be what would be used when she died, which turned out to be the case.”

Another cause for concern came from the back and forth between Razia, RBG’s and the Berggruen Prize’s teams, who wanted a list of prepared questions from her, and assurance that she would only focus on the law. Razia refused, but they kept asking. And on top of this there was the pressure of getting RBG to say something new in the interview, knowing that she “had to get some news lines out of it.”



▲ Razia Iqbal interviewing Ruth Bader Ginsburg for the BBC (RAZIA IQBAL)

NOTHING BEATS TRADING

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Although she only got to meet RBG an hour before the live interview, Iqbal recalls meeting RBG’s bodyguard the night before. Taking the opportunity to calm some of the uncertainty, with emails still coming in overnight asking for a list of prepared questions, she remembers asking him, “She’s going to be okay, right?” The bodyguard took her to one side and told her “don’t worry, it’s going to be fine.” Razia remembers not quite being reassured. “Even though he said that... I just kept thinking, this is going to be disaster”, she told me.

When it came to the live interview, in those first moments stepping out onto the New York Public Library stage, Iqbal remembers how the first thing that stood out to her was RBG’s physicality: “she was tiny, tiny, tiny”, she says. “I really wanted to shake her hand, but I think it was quite hard for her to even put her neck up to see that I was there. I immediately looked at her and I just thought, wow, you’re so frail”, she adds.

In those first moments, Razia told me, “I felt really nervous about all the things that I was supposed to be doing [like] being strong, and pushing her.” But RBG was up to the task, unfazed by not having the questions beforehand, and as Iqbal says, “when she actually started to speak...I knew she was going to answer anything that I would ask her.”

And Razia got her news lines. When she asked for RBG’s thoughts on Donald Trump’s call for the Supreme Court to stop the impeachment process, RBG simply said: “The President is not a lawyer, he’s not law trained.” “That was great”, Iqbal says, “her humour was

“Her humor was present throughout the whole interview; she was smart enough not to be rude about Trump - she just came up with a fact”

present throughout that whole [interview]; she was smart, smart enough to not be rude about him - she just came out with an observable fact.”

One of the things that struck Iqbal most was how unlike a lot of other successful women RBG was, and that she “was not as radical as everyone says she was.” In comparison to other historically significant feminist figures like Gloria Steinem, RBG came across much less forcefully. “People like [Steinem] demanded things, they were angry, and I don’t think Ruth Bader Ginsburg has ever been angry. There was nothing about her that wasn’t measured, that wasn’t quiet, that wasn’t calm” she says, “and I walked away from that as somebody who is quite angry about lots of things, feeling really intrigued by the idea of being quiet.”

That’s not to say that RBG didn’t support new and radical voices, in the interview citing young people as one of her reasons to be optimistic about the future. “It felt so encouraging that somebody who was approaching 90 was so heartened by people like Greta Thunberg and Malala Yousafzai”, Iqbal says.

There seems to have been something extraordinary not only about RBG’s life story and successes but even her very presence. I quote to Razia the words of one attendee of the event, who said: “The only reason I am here tonight is to just share the same oxygen as the Notorious RBG.” Razia laughs, and agrees, saying, “in the end you walk away from an event like that and think, what an absolute privilege to have been in her ambit, even for a short amount of time.”



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Interviews

The boatmen of the river Cam: an interview with Andrew James

Clare boatman Andrew James speaks to *Ryan Cummings* about what life is like on a canal boat on the Cam, his passion for sailing - and the lack of central heating

“A lot of people that move in are shocked to be woken up by rowers, but what else to expect when you choose to live on the river?”, Andrew James tells me.

Andrew James has seen the river both from the perspective of a rower, and that of a boatman. Affectionately referred to as ‘Gripper’ - a nickname the meaning of which has long been lost amidst the wash of many fruitful years as the Clare boatman - James straddles two disparate groups that seldom interact.

Numbering at just 120 narrow boats along the city’s stretch of river, the Cambridge boatmen are composed of some 254 men and women. They bear a (sometimes fraught) relationship with college rowers.

Anyone that’s rowed for long enough could regale you with stories of being screamed at from a barge, variously being called ‘elitist snobs’, ‘bird murderers’ and any number of expletives that, true to form, could only come from sailors.

James is optimistic about rowers’ relationship with boatmen. “Things have definitely improved”, he states. “Back in the old days there was more of an us versus them mentality, but there’s such

a large crossover now between the river and the rowing community that relations are much more friendly.”

James, the much beloved boatman of Clare College, first started rowing at a young age as a member of the club for university’s workers families. Now, living on a canal boat, he’s seen the river from both the rowing boat and the narrow boat. His canal boat, alleged to be sinking, is called ‘Das Boot’.

Following some change in his personal life, James decided that the humdrum life of being tied to mortgages and council tax was much less appealing than being tied to mooring posts and canalways. Despite his brother, the boatman of Downing boat club, jokingly referring to his boat as a “rat infested tin barge”, Andrew was undeterred.

“For most people it’s just a dream”, James says. “With waiting lists of anywhere between 5-10 years, many people sign up and then forget about it”. And for some, the idyllic dream of lazily floating along without a care in the world crashes into hard reality. “Everything is just a bit more effort. You have to check that your batteries are charged, your water tanks are topped up, remember to pump out the sewage regularly. There’s no central

heating, you can’t just come back home and put your feet up.”

For James, however, the “massive sense of freedom that comes with living in a boat, and being able to sail down to Ely whenever you want”, makes it all worth it. He relishes “not being beholden to constant mortgage and tax payments”.

For some boatmen and women, living on the river is the only affordable way to live comfortably in Cambridge. Compare paying, on average, £500,000 for a house in the city centre with £100 a month rent for a houseboat costing £30-60,000 and suddenly the buoyant life may seem a no brainer. Such economic reasons for taking to the river highlight the real problems faced by Cambridge and other UK cities. With stagnant wages and mounting house prices, many people are being forced out onto the river and other low cost alternatives.

To any river user: it seems that Cantabs do not, in fact, rule the waves. It should be remembered that ultimately we share this wonderful (read: disgustingly murky and potentially disease-infested) river with a much wider community, of whom the vast majority are incredibly nice and considerate people.



▲ More than 250 others like Andrew live on boats on the Cam (ANDREW JAMES)

Sparks fly as CULA and CUCA face off in mock PMQs

Zoe Swanwick reports on the Cambridge Union’s mock Prime Minister’s Questions and hears how student political societies at the University have adapted to life in a pandemic



▲ The political society Presidents managed to find some common ground during the Union event (CAMBRIDGE UNION / PHOEBE PICKERING)

“The government got the balance wrong,” admits Phoebe Pickering, Chair of the Cambridge’s Conservative Association (CUCA), denouncing Boris Johnson’s handling of the pandemic. But this more subtle criticism was nowhere to be found in Freddie Poser’s speech.

“[Boris Johnson has a] huge amount to be personally ashamed of in his government” said the Cambridge Liberal Association (CULA) President, adding “he is not fit to hold the role despite clearly wanting it since he was a small child”.

“The most effective opposition is actually coming from the Tory Party itself”

This is the first mock PMQs held at the Union in two years. Phoebe Pickering took on the role of leader of the government, answering questions from the opposition and, later on, the floor.

In what seemingly would echo a real government, Pickering replicated atypical tropes one would expect to hear from a Prime Minister, with refrains such as “advisors advise and ministers decide” and “let’s turn generation rent into generation buy”.

As commented on by ‘Madame Speaker’ - Emaan Ullah, this term’s Union President - it was a shame that CULC

were not representing the opposition. It may have resulted in an even more lively evening.

Speaking about the difficulties with the association between University politics and the political parties, Pickering highlighted the misconception that they would be “totally in accord with the government’s line”, and in fact preferred to associate herself and the society with Tory backbenchers pushing for greater scrutiny of the government’s measures.

Pickering was of the view that the government was “far too dismissive of what many Conservative MPs have been advocating for: a more Sweden-style approach to the virus”. Poser maintained his stance from the PMQs reasserting his view on the “shambolic job of the government” in dealing with the pandemic especially in education.

Both students criticized the opposition. Pickering asserted that “the most effective opposition is actually coming from the Tory Party itself”, claiming Labour should be taking a more critical stance regarding the measures implemented by the government. Poser added that Keir Starmer’s lack of commitment in criticising the government’s measures was “clearly a political strategy [which was] designed to play well in the polls”.

They also expressed concern for the treatment of students during the pandemic. Speaking of the exam results fiasco this summer, Pickering said she didn’t “understand how the govern-

“Universities are desperate to get students back and paying rent, but I do think students were sold the false promise of in-person teaching”

ment thought doing it via an algorithm would be accepted because obviously the students don’t have any level of ownership of the grades if it’s randomly generated”.

Both agreed it was the right decision for younger pupils to return to school, but Poser and Pickering were less forgiving towards the government’s treatment of University students. Poser emphasised how students facing adherence to strict regulations at University “should be able to go home if they wish and they should be treated like citizens.”

“Universities are desperate to get students back and paying rent, but I do think students were sold the false promise of in-person education and relative freedom after six months of lockdown and being at home, only to find that a lot of the time they are being treated like prisoners, but ones who have to pay for the pleasure.”

As for how the student political societies have fared amid the pandemic, Poser admits “Freshers’ Fair was difficult. But the move online has not been all bad, according to Pickering: “we’ve managed to get David Cameron and Micheal Gove, people like that wouldn’t otherwise make the journey, so there are pros and cons”.

For Poser, there has been a silver lining too. “The transition online earlier in the year has meant the community was kept alive over the summer”, he says, arguing CULA was able to host international speakers, online events, socials - and even a book club.

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Illustration by
Juliet Babinsky

Vulture

Lifestyle

Restaurant Review: Carlos BBQ Restaurant

Max Simmonds pays a visit to Mill Road's Carlos BBQ and reports on the joys of hummus, chilli sauce and a good kebab

I have quite a strange relationship with menus. Sometimes when I'm on the toilet I'll choose a random city, do some research to find its best restaurants, and then spend a long time pouring over their menus. It's tough to pinpoint exactly what my little ritual gives me (other than hemorrhoids); but I think it's telling that when I was feeling really homesick on my gap year (sorry), I would soothe myself by looking at the restaurants I could visit when I started at Cambridge.

One of those restaurants was Carlos BBQ. Apparently it did peng kebabs, and that's all I really needed to hear. I was in Mill Road last week, completing my descent into softboi-hood by way of double ear piercing, when, as if it were someone I'd stalked on Instagram before meeting in person, I found myself outside of a restaurant I'd stalked on TripAdvisor before meeting in person. I nipped in, took a takeaway menu home, and, enamoured by the photos of kebabs on the front, stuck it on my empty pinboard.

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Apparently it did peng kebabs, and that's all I really needed to hear

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Meanwhile, my girlfriend had come into contact with someone who had Coronavirus and was isolating until she got her test back. This meant I had a lot more time to do that four letter word that begins with 'w' and ends with 'k'. Yeah, that's right, work.

I was also wanking myself into oblivion at this point and had depleted the oh-so-rich 'natural resources' of online porn so completely, I was sure that Extinction Rebellion were going to insist that Robinson College divest from me and then also dig up my parents' back garden. A combination of boredom, lack of imagination and eyes which relentlessly darted towards the sexy stock photos of thicc doner meat and curving cubes of kofta on my pinboard, led to a 'yeah, go on then' moment for the ages. As I said, strange relationship with menus...

I also have a strange relationship with Mill Road. If you know me, you know how much I hate the taste of dairy. What you may not know, however, is that I love milk... ing the fact I got stabbed. When I went to Carlos BBQ yesterday, it was the first time I'd been to Mill Road at night since 'the incident' and I was feeling quite nervous. At least Carlos BBQ could rest assured that however badly their food could go down, it definitely wouldn't go down as badly as a 1AM call to your parents telling them you're in hospital with a slashed liver because you got mouthy in a smoking area.

Enough talky-talky, more eaty-eaty. I'm joined by my friend Sameer, who's half-Pakistani and Saul (not my friend), who's half Iraqi; as for me, well I just really like kebabs. As a collective, this makes us a considerable authority on chargrilled meats. Indeed, wafting out of the restaurant onto the street is the glorious smell of burnt, dead animals — not since Second Temple Judaism has animal sacrifice



▲ "Carlos BBQ is one of the best value kebabs I've ever had." (Mac Simmonds)

been so *chef's kiss*.

The interior is confusing. The walls are white and clinical, like the inside of Addenbrooke's. A badly designed graphic menu with stock photos of fried chicken meal deals hangs on one of the walls (to be fair, this is also a chicken shop — and they do fish and chips and omelettes and fry-ups and paninis and baklava.) Above the counter are even more menus, but with red neon borders that could actually make for some sexy mood lighting, though the mood in Carlos BBQ is a bit more subdued. Sameer insists I talk about the enormous succulent that's growing by the door; it is really big, to be fair.

The waitress is really friendly and asks what we'd like to drink. We ask for tap water and are given three bottles of water. I channel my inner Karen and after a gentle correction (I'm a really nice bloke), three glasses of tap water magically appear where those plastic pisstanks once stood. Great success.

The hummus appears next. On earth, there are two kinds of hummus: the smooth, creamy, well-balanced purée of the Middle-East and the bitty, earthy wet cement of the Mediterranean. This hummus is the latter, and whilst it's evidently not my preference, it's a really decent rendition. Bitty, yes, but rich and velvety too. There's lots of garlic, which is no bad thing (girlfriend isolating) and the generous glugs of good quality olive oil push it into even creamier waters.

My lamb kofte arrives, glistening under the harsh, dental-practice lights, studded with deep-emerald nuggets of parsley. It rests upon a gorgeous surprise of not just rice, but a bed of hundreds of tiny orange bulgur wheat suns.

The kebab is good. It's not great, but it's good. It's got a fair taste of charcoal, but the meat is too lean. I want globules of fat coursing through it like it's Coronavirus surging through a population with a track and trace system run by Dido Harding. What I have instead are two long, thick legs of minced meat, which are a bit dry and lacking in flavour. The tomatoey sauce on top is fairly bland, but the rice gets approval from Saul (half-Iraqi and incredibly fussy) — and my-oh-my, the bulgur wheat! Each little bulgur pillow overflows with the tomatoes and peppers and onions and stock it was cooked with, creating a sauce that deftly coats the grains, without swamping them. I could eat an entire meal's worth of the stuff alone. Given the size of the portions, and the quality of the dish overall, the fact I only paid £9 for it is an absolute steal.

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I could eat an entire meal's worth of the bulgar wheat alone

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The waitress brings us a big bowl of chilli sauce. I have a tendency to overdo it when it comes to chilli sauce — I once had so much on a doner in Berlin that it made me delirious and I couldn't stand up. Admittedly there were other factors involved that night, but my point is that I know what I'm on about when I say that the chilli sauce at Carlos BBQ is one of the best I've ever had. I am consumed with regret for not buying a little tub to dip Robinson's

flaccid chips into. It's got a weighty allium punch thanks to considerable doses of onion and garlic, and, crucially, manages to be proper spicy (without making me do the #BerlinStumble) whilst also actually tasting of fresh chillies. I will be so embarrassed if it turns out they just copped it from Tesco, but blimey, that stuff was unreal.

Sameer and Saul get the chicken and lamb shish respectively. Sameer lets me try his chicken and it's really good — lots of nice crispy burnt bits on the outside and it's surprisingly moist for breast meat. Saul doesn't let me try his lamb shish (not my friend), so I tell him the person who stabbed me just walked past the window and plate-pocket him whilst he's distracted. I felt a bit guilty, because the portion amounted to a miserly six cubes, which was a little questionable at £11 — especially relative to the otherwise reasonable prices. It's unctuous af though: with all the lambiness and marbling I yearned for in my own kebab, and a divine mouth-feel — straddling the buttery-softness/chewy-meatiness binary with the grace of Jesus himself.

Carlos BBQ is not the best kebab I've ever had. I live in North London (as if you couldn't already tell) and the Turkish community there absolutely smash it. Carlos BBQ is one of the best value kebabs I've ever had, though. It's not as cheap as a doner kebab roll I had from that van outside Churchill, but they're in different leagues, different sports, even. If you ever find yourself hankering over smoky, dead animal, and want to eat it from a plate rather than a styrofoam box, without having to spend your entire maintenance loan, get your batti down to Carlos BBQ. I'd be very grateful if you could bring me back one of their takeaway menus whilst you're at it.

Ask Vulture

How can I stop comparing my relationship to other people's?

Ines Magre talks how to deal with relationship envy

Pictures of friends' date nights overflowing your Instagram feed? Magazines inundating you with perfect celebrity couples? Netflix rom coms hammering in the ideal romantic relationship? With all these seemingly perfect relationships competing for your attention and validation, it's easy to feel inadequate. I know I have.

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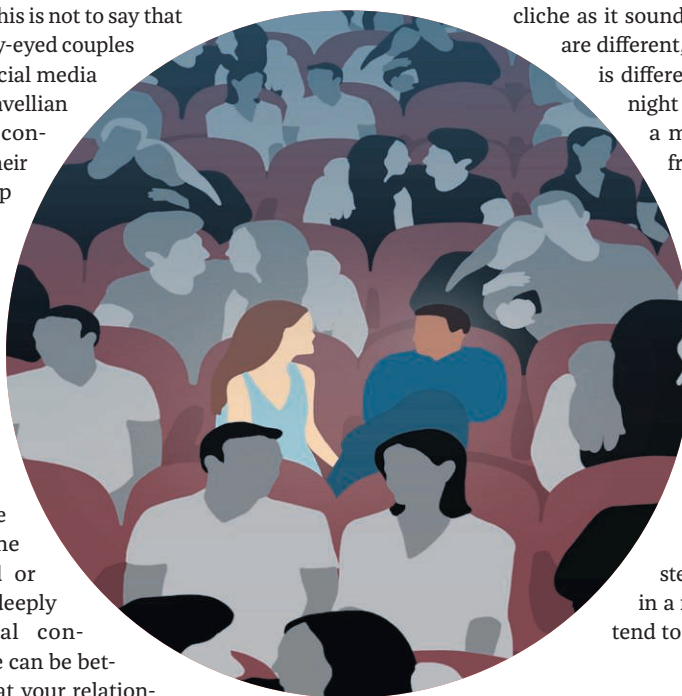
No one can be better than you at your relationship, because you are the one with the exact set of circumstances and feelings that keep your relationship going

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Take a step back and think about the last time you felt low in your relationship. If you compare those feelings to how you project your relationship on social media or to friends and family, I'm guessing everything is not always as it seems. What you see of other people's relationships is never the

whole truth. This is not to say that all those gooey-eyed couples you see on social media are on machiavellian missions to convince you of their relationship superiority. People just don't tend to publicise the negative.

The idea of a league table of relationships - that they are something one can be good or bad at - is a deeply flawed social construct. No one can be better than you at your relationship, because you are the only one with the exact set of circumstances and feelings that started, and keep, your relationship going. As



cliche as it sounds, all relationships are different, because everyone is different. Your ideal date night might be watching a movie, whilst your friends' dates are going for a picnic; it's perfectly normal to romanticise what we don't have as 'better', but at the end of the day it doesn't matter what other people are doing, as long as you are happy.

It's difficult to step back when you're in a relationship, as we tend to hold on to what is

good rather than face what might be wrong, but it is crucial for you to ask yourself the hard questions. If you're feeling insecure, maybe consider the cause of those insecurities: do you think it's jealousy, or is it that you are not getting what you want in your relationship? People have different love languages, and when wrapped up in the 'all that glitters' aspect of a relationship, you might miss the fact that you're not exactly getting the affection or attention that you're looking for from your partner. In any case, communication is key. Let your partner know how you're feeling, because they might be feeling the same insecurities, or could be sensing you feeling uncomfortable when these doubts creep up. Talking to each other might also help you figure out the nature of this anxiety. To navigate hanging out with other couples when with your partner, you could establish a code, like your partner squeezing your hand to reassure and remind you of your connection, which doesn't need to be compared to anyone else's.

Remember that it's healthy to reflect on your relationship. If these insecurities go away when you're with your partner, then it sounds to me that you are happy and comfortable around them, and that's all that matters. Your relationship is only for you two to focus on and enjoy.

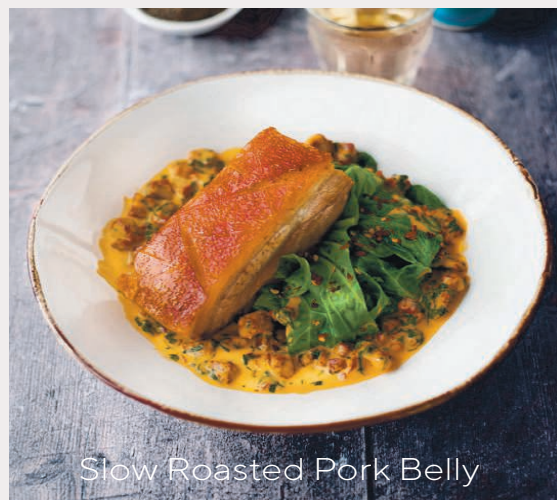
▲ "Your ideal date night might be watching a movie, whilst your friends' dates are going for a picnic." (Juliet Babinsky)

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Music

Breaking Boundaries: An interview with **Bastille**

Music Editor, **Nadya Miryanova**, talks to Bastille's drummer Chris "Woody" Wood about the band's newest releases, performance highlights, and future plans



▲ Press release for Bastille's new single (CHUFFMEDIA)

Original, revolutionary, and compellingly creative: the British four-piece *Bastille* is a band like no other. Channelling their music worldwide through sell-out records and global tours, they've undoubtedly become a household name, often recognised for breakthrough songs *Pompeii* and *Happier*. In 2020, the band is bigger than ever, storming two contrasting hit-singles *What you gonna do???* and *survivin'*.

When I talk to Woody, his tone is friendly and casual- he tells me he's been doing his chores- and we start by delving into his musical career, beginning at the age of 10 when he picked up the drums. "My Dad is a guitarist and singer, so I grew up surrounded by different music and bands. Really naively- it turned out I was very wrong- I thought that if you learnt drums, you didn't have to learn to read music" he says. "But I've always loved making music and being involved in bands, groups, orchestras- I always wanted to do it and I still do it. Even if we're not on tour and performing, I'm still playing drums whilst doing a bit of teaching- it's just what I do."

How did *Bastille* come together? Woody recalls the bands' early days: "I went out flyer-ing leaflets for drum lessons, and Dan happened to live three roads away from me in London and called me up, as he was trying to hire a drummer. So I played with him under a different stage name for a couple of years, then we picked up Kyle and Will along the way."

In 2010, the band was fully formed, initially playing in various pubs and allocated venues. "The first proper gig we did was at the *Great Escape* in Brighton," says Woody, "It was very DIY. We ran some extra tracks on a broken little iPod held together by gaffa tape, the whole thing was a bit haphazard, but good fun- it probably sounded terrible!"

One gig at a time, the band crept their way

up and got signed by Virgin Records, with their first studio album, *Bad Blood*, entering the UK Albums Chart at number one. "We released a few singles, such as *Flaws* and *Overjoyed*, and then *Pompeii* became this monster that took us around the world several times!", explains Woody- the official video for *Pompeii* stands at a staggering 584 million views to this day.

I'm intrigued to discover whether Woody has a favourite track from *Bastille*'s extraordinary collection. "I would probably go for a recent one, like *What you gonna do???*" he says, "Our music is usually more influenced by rock, but this single is my sort of style, so I really enjoyed that." As for his favourite album? "It would probably be *Wild World*, because that was the first time we went away to a studio together for a couple of weeks to properly make an album. *Bad Blood* was done piecemeal whilst we were doing our part-time jobs and paying rent- it wasn't a very unified band experience, whereas *Wild World* really was."

With the production of their songs came stunning performances, and I ask Woody whether there are any in particular that stand out for him: "Oh god- can I have more than one?". He elaborates: "The first night we did the O2 on our *Wild World* tour, that was

“
**survivin' strikes an honest
chord with today's world**
”

a step-up and it was a kind of make or break, determining whether we could cut it at that level but I thought we did a good job. Playing at Glastonbury and Plymouth Hoe were real highlights, I'm a West country boy anyway, so they're my kind of scene- to have a packed

stage and audience was just unbelievable."

As 2020 brings a halt to the live music scene, what is the band up to now? Their defiant new single *survivin'* was released in late September, a lyrically powerful and emotionally resonating song about the highs and lows of *Bastille*'s journey as a band. Though written last year, it strikes an especially honest chord with today's world, as lead singer Smith reflects introspectively on anxiety, self-doubt, and how overwhelming modern life can be. Yet the song is simultaneously light and uplifting, encouraging us to keep going despite day-to-day difficulties: "What can I say? I'm survivin'/Crawlin' out these sheets to see another day/What can I say? I'm survivin'/And I'm gonna be fine, I'm gonna be fine/I think I'll be fine".

“
**We made an entire album
on Zoom**
”

The single marks a new direction for *Bastille*, as they weave a contrasted musical tapestry comprising a sparse sonic backdrop and tight vocal harmonies. Kicking off with an opening drum loop and rolling bassline, the instrumentation is vibrant, starring an impressive sax solo from touring member Rittipo.

The music video likewise reaches creative and escapist heights, floating into an alternative stratosphere: "We couldn't produce a normal video because of the pandemic," says Woody, "but we found a plan so we could work around this- I think it turned out quite well".

I ask Woody whether he could confirm the key messages of *survivin'*: "Aha, I'm going to

have to draw a curtain here- we rarely explain the meaning behind our songs and prefer to leave it open to interpretation." He says that songs are often misconstrued, citing one particular example (which he won't name) publicly perceived to be a yearning love song, when it's actually all about someone getting too drunk. He's got a good point.

However, Woody's keen to talk about the band's musical styles; their music fuses elements of hip-hop, electronica, instrumental, indie, rock, and everything else in between. "We aim not to be confined by a specific genre- I guess we don't sit there and calculate a way of saying, right, we're going to do a reggaeton and then work on it. It's whatever excites or interests us at the time- I would be very surprised if Dan wanted to go down the thrash metal route, but you never know, maybe one day! I think it's important that Dan's voice is so distinctive and recognisable, as it gives us more license to roam about. In essence, I'd say we explore anything you could wrap around a pop song."

How did lockdown shape the band's music production? Woody elaborates: "*What You Gonna Do???* was completed in our studio the day before lockdown, just about in time. We're fortunate that I've got a drum studio wherever, so I can work for the band remotely. Basically, we made an entire album on Zoom from our bedrooms. Ideally you'd like to be in the studio together where you can agree on parts and change it instantly. Instead, I'll send a version over, then Dan will send it back and maybe alter it, and this'll keep going until you land on the final result. Whilst it's not the easiest way of working, it's still possible."

To conclude the interview, I ask Woody what the band's plans for the future are. "Oh god!"- I seem to have caught him a little off-guard. I admit that it's quite a bold question for me to ask, considering I hardly know what I'll have for lunch.

"If it's unchanged, then we'll keep on doing what we're doing- we'll make more albums, hopefully do more tours and play music live, rather than just in our bedrooms. It's a massive privilege to be doing what you love for a job. I just despair with the state of the music industry, especially with what I would class as the absolute abandonment of an industry that generates 10 billion plus a year, and apparently we're not viable. There are thousands of highly skilled musicians and also touring careerists, people you don't necessarily see that work behind the scenes: lighting technicians and operators- so many professions of the trade that have been solid for over 50 years. Everyone's being left out in the cold, so I'm not a big fan of what the government is doing for the industry's future, as you can imagine."

Even in spite of these current challenges, *Bastille* remains a strong, unified band that continues breaking boundaries of genre, instrumentation, and convention, having sold 9 million records worldwide. Most importantly, *Bastille* shows us humble beginnings don't hinder, but perseverance, innovation, and determination can truly go a long way.

Film & TV

The Lingering Shadow of Mrs Bates: Why is horror still obsessed with mothers?

Gigi Michie explores the spectre of the mother in horror, exploring where she came from, and how she is represented today

Alfred Hitchcock was once asked what awoke his interest in the macabre. He replied promptly, “my mother scared me when I was three months old ... all mothers do it, you know. It’s how fear starts in everyone”. You have to wonder whether this belief inspired the most iconic plot twist in horror movie history: the female silhouette wandering around the Bates Motel of *Psycho* (1960), viciously stabbing people, was the outwardly sweet, almost childish proprietor, Norman Bates. Yet, was he the real monster?

“It was the mother”, proclaims the psychiatrist at the end of the film; a harping, carping shrew who, so he emphasises, sunk her claws into Norman’s psyche once his father died, leaving him with such pent up Oedipal angst that he eventually couldn’t live with or without her. He murdered her and her boyfriend out of jealousy, absorbing her personality out of guilt, forever dooming himself to a fate of killing any woman he finds attractive at his mother’s (imaginary) behest. In depicting a relationship of such twisted, oestrogen-fuelled codependency, *Psycho* influenced the horror genre to look at the private world of the family as a place where perversion could thrive; whether represented by satanic toddlers, possessed teenagers, or, most prominently, overbearing single mothers. The trope became most popular in the 70’s, amidst real tensions surrounding the changes brought about by second wave feminism: with greater freedom came more career-women, and a defiance against the expectation to become an automatic child rearer.

“It seems directors find motherhood to be the best place to examine the human condition”

This alleged neglect of maternity is reflected by the lack of femininity on the part of the 70’s mother in horror. She’s usually witchy (bushy hair, bug eyes), asexual (cropped hair, lumpy jumpers, frumpy dresses), or an actual alien. *The Brood* (1979), which director David Cronenberg described as catharsis for his own ongoing divorce, takes *Psycho*’s destructive bond between mother and child and makes it literal. The film sees a father, Frank, fight for custody of his daughter from an ex-wife who is undergoing experimental psychotherapy, through which she vents all her repressed rage by giving birth to ready-made, homicidal mutants who kill anyone she feels ill will towards. She’s every inch the unfit mother: unstable, jealous, and selfish, and her targets include her own mother, who (naturally) is to blame for her tattered mental-state,

and eventually her daughter, as she spits at Frank: “I’d kill her before I let you take her!”. In *Carrie* (1976), the mother’s protective instinct is similarly perverted into something oppressive and counter-productive. Feverishly religious, sexually repressed, and unstable, her sole purpose is to stunt sixteen-year-old Carrie’s emotional maturity, verbally flagellating her about the sins of puberty (“Eve was weak!”). Like Norman, Carrie has her own moment of belated teenage rebellion, but it’s all too little and too late for her, and it goes horribly, homicidally wrong.

In the last decade, the mother has once again become a central figure in horror: even in Netflix’s recently released *The Haunting of Bly Manor* (2020), a broody ghost mother is revealed to be the root of the house’s dark history. But she’s no longer just a monster. As the genre has become more existential, it seems directors find motherhood to be the best place to examine the human condition, with all its responsibility and inescapability. The modern horror mother is more interesting than her 70’s counterpart because she is simultaneously sympathetic and frightening; her transformation into a Mrs Bates figure is insidious. Horror films are now often told from her perspective, as we watch her desperation to hold a family together while her own mental health deteriorates. Ari Aster claims *Hereditary* (2018) is more drama than outright horror; his intention was to examine “the corrosive effects of trauma on the family unit”. It’s similarly true that, as with Jennifer Kent’s *The Babadook* (2014), the most unsettling aspect of the film is the realism of the increasingly erratic, almost animalistic behaviour of a mother racked by grief over the death of a loved one, her inability to control it, and her creeping alienation from her own child as a result.

Hereditary’s camera technique of having a doll’s house merge into the real scene gives the sense that the characters have no control

▼ TWITTER/SHARONTVTE



over the events happening to them, and *The Haunting of Hill House* (2018) is similar in the way it plays with its own timeline. One eerie scene sees two young children predict their fates of drug addiction and depression to their horrified mother – yet this is her own imagination, and it is ironically her subsequent suicide which triggers their troubles

in the first place. In these murky portrayals of family dysfunction, parenting, grief, and mental illness, trauma is first inflicted on the mother, and her flaws become relatable. As Jennifer Kent said of making *The Babadook*: “I wanted to talk about the need to face the darkness in ourselves and in our lives ... The horror is really just a byproduct”.

“The mother has once again become a central figure in horror”



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Fashion

Taboo clothing: what to do?

Vulture Editor **Isabel Sebode** wonders how we should tackle the appropriation of fashion by far-right supremacist groups and asks if this clothing can, or should, ever be reclaimed



Content Note: discussion of Nazism, homophobia and racism

▲ FLICKR/NANNY321

Cultural appropriation is unambiguously offensive. Distancing traditional attire from the ethnic group and refashioning it into a party dress or Halloween costume disregards the centuries of culture that underlie it. Through whitewashing and (perhaps unconsciously) portraying the group as the abnormal 'other', the tradition becomes a costume that can be worn next to the vampire and witch, or alternatively, in a nightclub.

Yet, what about a different kind of taboo clothing? In itself unproblematic clothing, which has been perverted by controversial groups into a sign of belonging? Can we, or should we, still wear this?

Let us take the unofficial uniform of supremacist, far-right communities. Instead of wearing overtly apparent Nazi iconography, members are recognised through specific clothing choices that have become indirectly representative of the group. For instance, the popular preppy brand Fred Perry that has been appropriated by the far-right, neo-fascist Proud Boys group. Founded in 1966, Proud Boys supporters express their extremist views in a black Fred Perry shirt with the yellow trim. Thus, this unproblematic shirt has been charged with a racist, sexist and homophobic background, making it unwearable – and thankfully now unbuyable, considering that Fred Perry has responded with taking back sales from the US and Canada.

Another classic element of white supremacy is a

pair of black Doc Martens with white or red shoelaces, known to be the staple item in the 'uniform' of neo-Nazis. The political charge of this has caused backlash in 2017 when Doc Martens advertised new shoes with red shoelaces – a relatively ordinary combination that nonetheless seems inseparable from its past and present symbolism.

Thus, bomber jackets, combat boots and khakis or jeans seem to complete the Nazi uniform of the modern-day extremists. What strikes me is that there is nothing intrinsically wrong with any of these clothing pieces; each of them can be, and are, worn in isolation (unlike a t-shirt depicting the black sun symbol that would immediately trigger alarm). Only in the combination of the elements is

the uniform complete, and seemingly unwearable without risking unwanted, negative responses. The outfit becomes like a sentence, a method of communication. The individual words themselves hold close to no power for signification, yet in combination with others, a forceful meaning is created.

Oppressed social groups reclaiming offensive and controversial signs is not a novel phenomenon. Yet being a white liberal that rebels by wearing the informal neo-Nazi uniform is more complicated. The intents of the former are clear, whilst the intention of the latter may be easily misunderstood.

This seems to show the political power of fashion, which comes with its shortcomings. Wearing clothes for an aesthetic appeal is one thing, and oftentimes the priority, yet, fashion allows and forces us to speak without words. It becomes a social signifier, capturing the passer-by's attention and giving them an idea of your personality, preferences, mood, class, interests...and perhaps even your political position. From wearing red to the polls on election day in the US, to wearing a Black Lives Matter shirt, fashion speaks for us to everyone – without the use of words.

Yet, taking into account this power of fashion, realistically, what really happens if we do end up wearing the clothes outside of their intended context? We simply strap on some docs with white laces and dark jeans and call it a day? The effect is multifaceted and unfortunately does not lend itself for a straightforward answer. On one hand, the act may be one of liberation from the controversy, as the protestor challenges the negative associations and instead calls attention to the fact that it is merely clothing. The extremist groups are not given the power to pervert fashion into politics.

The brand Lonsdale successfully made this transition. Being pushed into the extreme-right group's closet when these discovered that a bomber-jacket half-zipped over the logo t-shirt reveals the letters NSDA (the first four letters of the German Nazi party NSDAP), the brand quickly became connected with the extremist views. In order to salvage their image, Lonsdale directly targeted the issue by launching an elaborate campaign with the slogan 'Lonsdale loves all colours'. The result was prosperous, considering that many anti-racist, anti-supremacy groups decid-

ed to wear the brand in protest, thereby disarming the far-right groups. The masses fought against the masses to shift and change the socially recognised meaning.

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The visual force of fashion can only be used for good if we work towards a change in meaning
”

Lonsdale's campaign was strong and effective, yet the brand was also lucky. For, on the other hand, we may equally argue that the wearer is being simple-minded and perhaps even too negligent of the radical views that the clothes stand for. Wearing an outfit that a neo-Nazi might wear is not reclaiming the clothing but equally disrespectful to the people who have suffered from what the group promotes. Ignoring the intrinsic meaning brought about by years of oppression may be seen as ignorance towards the severity of the group itself. It truly seems as if there is no real 'right thing' to do.

It is important to be aware of the precarious decision that a fashion choice may be, yet at the same time distancing us from the issue solely grants power to these groups. Just as the extremist groups managed to subvert the imagery through a mass effort, we can only reclaim the brands and clothing through a collective movement. A single person in a neo-Nazi outfit does not appear to be an effort to reclaim the clothing, but rather an uninformed outfit choice or a contentious political statement.

To make a progressive change we need the masses to act by collectively wearing the clothing for what it is: an outfit, not a destructive choice.

Fashion holds power, yet this force of meaning derives from the power of the masses to generate it. Just as a social influence was used to pervert the

brand names, power is needed to undo the change. Thus, the visual force of fashion can only be used for a social good if society actively works towards an accepted change in meaning. Fashion is in constant flux, evolving a secondary language. Like words, idioms or money, this currency of expression is only usable if recognised widely. The meaning of expression may be altered by a social force. The result may be an inevitably lingering political message, either for or against the controversial statement. Fashion is infiltrated with its ability communicate, with the signified only to be lost in history. When that might be, I don't know, but with the hurtful radical statements thrust on fashion, it is desperately needed.



▲ FLICKR/BECKER1999

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The question is: how we shall deal with this racist, alt-right perversion of fashion?
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What would Harry Styles wear?

Olivia Rhodes explores how Harry Styles' success as a solo artist led to his rise as an unexpected and unorthodox style icon for a new generation

For someone who has 'style' embedded into his name, Harry Styles certainly has a lot to live up to. After five years as a member of boyband One Direction, the group's hiatus provoked not just a schism in the music of Styles, but also in his fashion. Although we started to see glimpses of his stylistic unorthodoxy towards the band's termination, it was not until the establishment of Styles' solo career that he came to define his new look – and it was certainly unexpected.

Gone was the rebellious long hair, as were the skinny jeans and Chelsea boots that had previously been the staples of Styles' wardrobe, and here to stay was a newfound embrace of androgynous dressing. It was not until the world tour of Styles' eponymous first album that we saw this fully demonstrated, as he collaborated with stylist Harry Lambert, supported with a Gucci endorsement. Bursting onto stage each night dressed in an unpredictable combination of frills, flares, and sequins, Styles' outfits became just as much a part of the concert experience as the music. While Gucci remained the dominant label worn on-stage, Styles also took the opportunity to give exposure to up-and-coming labels – namely, Harris Reed, a non-binary, gender-fluid designer who was still a fashion student at the time.

Reed seems to be a strong advocate for a blouse, as all of the looks they created for Styles include an elaborate shirt that tended to be paired with a 70s-esque flared trouser. The collaboration between Reed and Styles is one that has endured ever since, Reed even creating the key look for the first music video of Styles' sophomore album 'Fine Line'. Reed has referred to Styles as “the person who pushes

me to be a better artist”, even going so far as to release a stunning piece in their latest collection inspired by him, named “The Harry”. Of course, it's a blouse.

As Styles' solo career has progressed, his fashion has only pushed boundaries increasingly. Promotion for 'Fine Line' in December 2019 provided the

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Ultimately Styles succeeded in his mission to make a statement, not just about the fluidity of the fashion, but about the fun of it

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opportunity to delve deeper into the androgynous side of fashion, with pieces such as a Comme-Des-Garçons dress for a feature in The Guardian, and a tutu to publicise his hosting of Saturday Night Live. While we anticipate 'Love on Tour' in 2021 being similarly full of unforgettable styling, there has been some indication as to the direction Styles may be heading in, fashion-wise.

From the electric pink of the shirt Styles models on the new album's cover, to the multicoloured vintage outfits that comprise the 'Watermelon Sugar'



▲ INSTAGRAM/MOLLYJANE_X



▲ INSTAGRAM/HARRY_LAMBERT

music video's styling, there is no fear of his dressing retreating into simplicity. If anything, it is gaining prominence: in the music video for 'Falling', great cinematographic emphasis is placed on the lilac Gucci blouse that billows up around Styles as he becomes submerged in water.

While 2020 has been a year of numerous disappointments, it is as if Styles anticipated forthcoming fashion deprivation, attending the Brit Awards in February with three looks worn throughout the night.

On the red carpet he chose a custom Gucci suit, complete with broderie anglaise collar, pearl necklace, and Mary-Janes – a certainly unusual, but not wildly unorthodox, choice.

For those disappointed in the relative conservatism of this look, an all-lace shirt/trouser/suspender/glove ensemble (also Gucci) worn to perform 'Falling' may have passed muster. And if even that failed to be satisfactory, it is hard to imagine anyone being disappointed in the night's third look.

A canary yellow three-piece suit with a chifon lilac bow at the neck from Marc Jacobs' SS20 womenswear collection (previously worn by Lady Gaga on the cover of Elle) cannot exactly pass subtly under the radar.

While host Jack Whitehall may have joked that it seemed stylist Lambert was under the influence of psychedelic drugs when selecting the look, ultimately Styles succeeded in his mission to make a statement, not just about the fluidity of the fashion, but about the fun of it.

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Bold, flamboyant, and never boring, it encapsulates the androgyny and outlandishness that is reminiscent of stars such as Bowie and Jagger.

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This is conclusively what is so iconic about Styles' fashion. Bold, flamboyant, and never boring, it encapsulates the androgyny and outlandishness that is reminiscent of stars such as Bowie and Jagger. In relation to seminal performers such as these, Styles is early in his career, and there is plenty of time for him to experiment further and continue to push boundaries of fashion and gender. For now, those of us without the budget for Gucci will have to emulate his style by buying a pearl necklace from ASOS (guilty). But it feels as if we are witnessing the development of a new icon for this generation, whose reformative style truly is a sign of the times.

Arts

Vern Blossom and the art of paradox

Piper Whitehead explores the paradoxes created by the very real art of the very fake ‘Vern Blossum’ in her first column for the arts section this term



▲ Time has expired - but how is art doing? (INSTAGRAM/M2ST_71015)

My favourite paradox is in the Museum of Modern Art. It's a painting of a parking meter above the words "TIME EXPIRED". It was painted in 1962 by Vern Blossum, who is generally not a real person and specifically not a real artist. "TIME EXPIRED" was the work of an abstractionist, who was one day so annoyed by upstart pop artists like Andy Warhol that he painted over forty images of everyday objects captioned with varying degrees of sense. Some are funny, some, like TIME EXPIRED, seem to carry some kind of existential weight, and others are frankly inexplicable, such as a pigeon captioned "PLANNED OBSOLESCENCE". Essentially, the artist critiqued Pop Art by himself becoming a pretty successful Pop artist, which is sort of like protesting

Lots of people who know about Pop Art would say that it's impossible to parody, because it's already a parody of itself

graffiti by tagging your own wall and then achieving critical recognition as Banksy. It's not the world's clearest statement of intent; in fact, it's something of a paradox. And here's another: I would say Vern Blossum is dead, but Vern Blossum never lived. However, the person who painted *Time Expired* is now dead. There's another example of how something can be a paradox even though we know it's true.

I found all this out later when I googled the painting, because the art gallery label

The artist critiqued Pop Art by himself becoming a pretty successful Pop artist, which is sort of like protesting graffiti by tagging your own wall and then achieving critical recognition as Banksy

didn't say much at all. There's nothing more annoying than a painting that's considered important enough to be in a gallery, but not important enough for the gallery to have written anything about it. Something about the absence of an explanation in this case seems more sheepish than anything else. When the director of MoMA, a man called Alfred H. Barr, bought a Vern Blossum painting, he purchased a hoax. You can buy a hoax, but only if people believe you're in on the joke (a notable example - the work of the famous forger Han van Meegeren became so expensive after his trial that other artists began to forge his forgeries). I don't know how much the director of MoMA paid for their Vern Blossum, but it probably wasn't a humorous amount. Still, the director liked the painting, and so did I when I walked past it several years ago.

Vern Blossum's real identity is another small paradox: a secret that plenty of people know. Those who do have knowledge of Blossum, beyond the scant and at least partially erroneous biographical information he provided to the world, have kept it to themselves out of respect for his wishes. Despite this, journalists Greg Allen and William E. Jones have revealed that, while Blossum may not be a 'real' artist, the person who painted the works was an artist in their own right, and under their own name. While Blossum never achieved the popularity of someone like Warhol or Roy Lichtenstein, it's quite possible that the artist is more famous for a series of disgruntled hoaxes

than the art he was passionate about. The implications of this are broader than one person's artistic success or failure.

Artists or collectives working under assumed identities aren't uncommon today, like the aforementioned Banksy, or the activist group Guerilla Girls. However, their success is often due to a realness or a truth which we perceive in their works, something they arguably couldn't achieve if they revealed their true identities. On the other hand, artists that do use their real names are constantly accused of bad-faith art - usually cash-grabbing insincerity (Damien Hirst and Jeff Koons spring to mind), their work collecting the dreaded label of 'Not Real Art'. Blossum does not easily fit into either of these camps. Then there's Marcel Duchamp, a spiritual father of Pop Art, who from the 1910s humorously exhibited a urinal, a snow shovel, and a bottle rack. His actions prefigured the elevation of 'low' culture to high, the use of comics, advertisements, and everyday objects which characterises Pop Art. Duchamp certainly took his own work seriously, but many would consider what he did to have broken the whole concept of art. Now, Blossum warns us, anyone can exhibit anything.

Lots of people who know about Pop Art would say that it's impossible to parody, because it's already a parody of itself. They would argue that Blossum missed the point, especially as time goes by, and more and more people walk past Blossum paintings and don't see them as anything different from the rest of the art surrounding them; just more Pop Art by a relatively obscure artist, identified by title, date, artist, medium, dimensions, etc. I feel that what happened to Blossum just fulfilled the parody. Object is conflated with Art, the imitator makes Art of the conflation, parody is then conflated with Art and itself becomes an Art Object. (And finally, student of Art History writes about the Art Object). More recent exhibits of the work of Vern Blossum are likely to be tongue in cheek participants of the hoax. The question is whether Blossum is in on the joke anymore...



▲ Marcel Duchamps (in)famous urinal (Wikimedia commons)

Aliens, hedgehogs and horror: *Earthlings* review

Mj Lewis reviews Sayaka Murata's latest book, reflecting on how language can both alienate and inform and how sometimes, otherworldly beings are the least of our worries

The cover of Sayaka Murata's latest publication in English bears a cute, if slightly melancholy, stuffed hedgehog. Despite its appearance, this is not light reading. In fact, I think it's as far from light reading as anything could possibly be. It opens innocently enough, with 11-year old Natsuki accompanying her parents and sister to her grandparents' house in rural Nagano. The aforementioned stuffed hedgehog, it turns out, is named Piyyut, and is her magical guide from Planet Popinpopopia. He's given her powers, and she has a mission to protect the Earth. Still with me? I know I said this wasn't light reading, but I'm getting there, I promise.

Earthlings is split into two distinct halves, with the first following Natsuki over the course of her early adolescence and the second skipping ahead to her mid-30s. As a child, she feels alienated from her immediate family but finds herself drawn to her cousin Yuu, who confesses to her that he himself is an alien. Delivered in Murata's signature deadpan tone, these childish fantasies are so sincere that they're almost angelic. But predictably, as the story progresses there are hints of the darker themes to come: at one point, Natsuki catches a live grasshopper and, unable to open

the screen door to release it outside, feeds it to a spider instead.

As the events of the narrative become more and more bewildering, the deadpan tone starts to have a very different effect. In her previous novel, international bestseller *Convenience Store Woman*, it served almost as comic relief, with protagonist Keiko left constantly perplexed by things that the majority of society see as totally normal. In *Earthlings*, by contrast, the simple and unaffected writing style can only be described as chilling. Murata relays intimate details of alienation, sexual abuse, and murder in the same voice

In Earthlings, by contrast, the simple and unaffected writing style can only be described as chilling. Murata relays intimate details of alienation

that someone else might use to describe their trip to the supermarket.

It's this conscious eschewing of flowery language combined with the book's relative brevity (it clocks in at just over 200 pages) that make it so strangely readable. I say strangely because it deals with such disquieting subject matters that it's hard to say in good faith that it was an 'enjoyable' read, but it's certainly masterfully constructed and very deliberate in its subversion of our expectations of Japanese society, and indeed Japanese literature.

Though hardly a page goes by without a mention of magic or aliens, *Earthlings* has a very different feel to the magical realism of writers like Haruki Murakami because we as readers are under no illusions about the actuality of the situation: there are no grey areas here, and each twist and turn heightens a creeping nausea, just like that which Natsuki's sister experiences on the car ride into the mountains in the opening scene. The final chapter is nothing short of deranged, a thrilling crescendo that leaves the aftermath of the chaos largely up to the reader to muse on.

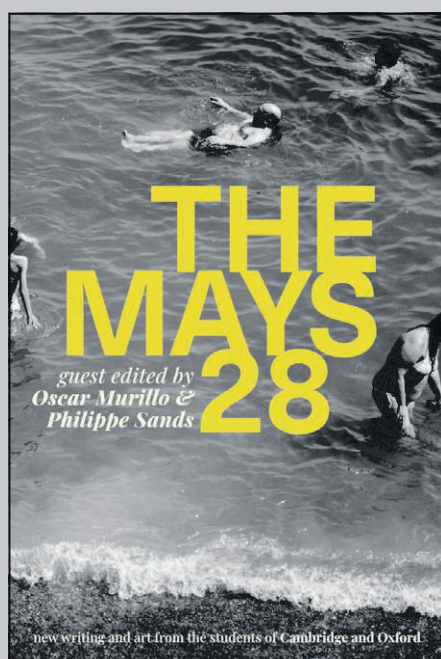
Though certainly stirring overall, *Earthlings* feels slightly underdeveloped, and somewhat lacking in momentum in parts. Where *Convenience Store Woman* reads as a nuanced and con-

vincing criticism of the suffocating pressures of modern society, this beats the reader over the head with the alien/alienation metaphor like a baseball bat, with constant references to 'the Factory', 'receptacles' and 'tools'. Perhaps this was meant to further estrange the reader and the protagonist, but it interferes with the flow of the narrative and becomes repetitive and tedious after a while.

In terms of pacing, too, once it becomes clear that there will be no fairytale 'resolution' between Natsuki and Yuu in their adulthood, the story meanders back and forth between Tokyo and Nagano before dropping a cliff in the last few pages. This doesn't detract from the impact of the ending, but feels a little unnecessary at times.

Earthlings is as bewildering as it is compelling, a rollercoaster exploration of the violence inherent to social cohesion. Though these days the term 'horror' is more commonly associated with excessive gore or elements of the supernatural, it strikes me that *Earthlings* has a lot in common with definitive works of horror like *Dracula* and *Frankenstein*, in that the apparent 'other', be that vampire, simulacrum, or apparent alien, is merely a metaphor for something infinitely more terrifying: human nature.

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Theatre

Cue Applause: theatre without clapping

Varsity columnist **Izzy Burns** talks about her first theatre experience and explores the significance of live applause

Many people's 'first shows' stick with them – mine was *Matilda the Musical*. I was just tall enough to lean my chin on the brass railings and can only really recall the two hours of performance as a blur of music and lights. I am, however, sure that when it was over I clapped so hard my hands hurt.

Anyone inclined to believe in the significance of 'formative' theatrical experience will be glad to know that I haven't stopped noticing applause since; polite clapping as the curtains go up (an uncertain but well-meaning welcome); the desperately awkward applause of audiences smaller than the casts they are watching; the enthusiastic cheers of the friends and family bullied, cajoled and bribed into coming to see school productions.

At the end of the National Theatre at Home's

One Man Two Governors, I stood up with my Dad and clapped. Our applause rattled around the living room, the awkwardness of the moment reminding us of the distance between us and the actors. The reality of life in a global pandemic flooded back in – the crowds, and their ritualistic appreciation of performance that had always been a defini-

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Live theatre has an
intangible sense of scale
and community
”

tive part of my experience of theatre, were now a biohazard.

Lockdown did have some unforeseen benefits. I saw more theatre than I would ever have been able to see live, as shows which previously depended on an expensive and time-consuming journey up to London suddenly became quality TV viewing. I saw Andrew Scott's *Hamlet*, *Phantom of the Opera*, and admired the breadth of talent in the BBC's re-working of *Talking Heads*.

Whilst nagged by the feeling that it wasn't quite the same as watching an in-person stage production, I was grateful for the windows of escape streamed theatre offered. It felt more and more necessary as the weeks of lockdown dragged on, and the initial 'blitz spirit' faded to a general irritation with every member of my family except the dog.

There was a real sense from media and the theatre community that it was important to continue supporting the industry, which had been much harder hit than many others when it came to restrictions imposed by coronavirus. But this support has undoubtedly been focused on the biggest and most reputable theatres, leaving local and regional theatrical

communities to wither financially.

There were, (early on), hopeful murmurs about the prevalence of live-streaming, with many suggesting that it created a possibility to democratise theatre. But this idea appears

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We have to make in-
person performance more
accessible
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to sideline the reality that live theatre has an intangible sense of scale and community, and if we are going to create a new generation of theatre lovers, we have to make in-person performance more accessible.

Live-streams will rightly continue to be part of the cultural landscape, but everyone deserves that moment only live theatre can give, in which they feel part of the applause, part of something bigger than themselves.

Preview: Dragtime!

Charlene Collins lifts the lid on the (spooky) re-turn of a drag phenomenon

When it comes to “scary”, it's safe to say that 2020 has raised the bar pretty high. With Halloween just around the corner, you'd be forgiven for thinking that nothing could make a socially distanced Michaelmas any more terrifying – but you'd be wrong.

The Kings, Queens and Inbetweens of Dragtime! are back to kick off spooky season in style. They'll take you on a rollercoaster adventure into the deep, dark depths of drag – from whirlwind dance routines to live music, enchanting burlesque to the downright bonkers...

Alongside old favourites – like Kylie Gender and King Hoberon – a whole new host of performers will take to the stage to make their Dragtime! debut. They've

all been hard at work preparing their acts behind closed doors, and are finally ready to unleash their spine-chilling creations into the world.

This year, Dragtime! are coming to you live from an eerily empty ADC Theatre, so nobody needs to know that you're hiding your face behind a pillow (seriously, it's *that* scary). Or, if you're feeling sociable, why not organise a household viewing party? With trick or treating off the cards, it's the perfect way to make the most of Halloween. Sounds like #squadghouls to us.

Dragtime! will be on at the ADC from Wed 28 Oct – Sat 31 October. For tickets and more information, follow this link:

<https://www.adctheatre.com/drag-time>

“
A rollercoaster
adventure into
the deep, dark
depths of drag
”

◀ (FACEBOOK/Dragtime!)



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Violet *The weird and wonderful world of college families*

By VARSITY

Violet columnist *Scarlet Rowe* decodes the mystifying world of college families for our freshers

We've all been there. Trying to desperately explain to bewildered friends exactly what a college family entails. Having to face the sheer amusement that the concept creates. Pretending to find it all equally ridiculous too. Secretly thinking that, no, this is family. Why should my newfound identity as a mother be taken away from me? It's tough, but we persevere. One day, college families will be recognised, both legally and universally. Also whilst I'm here, if you are my college son and you are reading this, please do check your Facebook messenger. It's no fun being a mother when your children are missing in action. Without further ado, then, here is a guide to the college family, and what to expect.

What is a college family?

When you join Cambridge, you are allotted parents, usually in the year above. You'll probably have two parents (although some rarities have 4 or even 5 - it's all a part of the lottery of life). You will most likely have some siblings too. Hopefully you'll get along better with your college siblings than lots of us do with our siblings back home.

What are college parents supposed to do?

Your parents are supposed to help you integrate into college. They're there to answer all of your questions and help

you out if you're worried about anything. My college mother helped me out with essays (especially one on the Westphalian system which confounded me somewhat) and also met up with me midway through Michaelmas term when I was feeling overwhelmed by everything. You could also ask your parents to show you around Cambridge when you arrive and point you to the best spots.

Do college families tend to be close?

Honestly, this really depends. Some families never speak to each other after the first week, which is a little tragic. Others become the best of friends. Most hover in the space in between. It mainly depends on whether you have interests in common or a similar sense of humour. If the stars have aligned in your favour, then that's great. However, there is no rule that you have to spend time with your college families if they are just not your cup of tea.

Are there any taboos surrounding college marriage?

Yes there are! You shouldn't marry your real-life romantic partner. This will be met with disapproving glances. The logic behind this is pretty simple: if you break up, then your own college family may fall apart. Naturally, I ignored this taboo and married my boyfriend. I am forever living with the consequences. Also, you probably shouldn't sleep

with your college children or anything. That would be college incest (eek!). But it does happen, and if you happen to be crazy attracted to your son, then blame it on nature or something.

How do you actually get married in the first place?

If you find the platonic-ish love(s) of your life at college and want to take the next step and secure their hand in marriage, then you may want to act quickly. Someone else may have their eye on the same person(s) as you, so you don't want to miss out. Obviously it is not a race and you don't want to be too keen. Most people got engaged towards the end of Michaelmas and the start of Lent.

As you only get engaged once (or twice), you've got to make it special. Propose in the middle of town like no one's watching, or on a punt, or with a haribo ring (there's nothing more romantic than that). Prepare a beautiful speech singing the praises of your loved one. You can make it as comical or meaningful as you like (not that the two are mutually exclusive of course). My husband proposed to me at the Law Ball after getting down on one knee. He didn't get me a ring though, so the marriage may have to be annulled (sorry Ed).

Unfortunately, there is no constitution to keep up to date on the ins and outs of college marriages. If there is trouble in paradise though, I im-

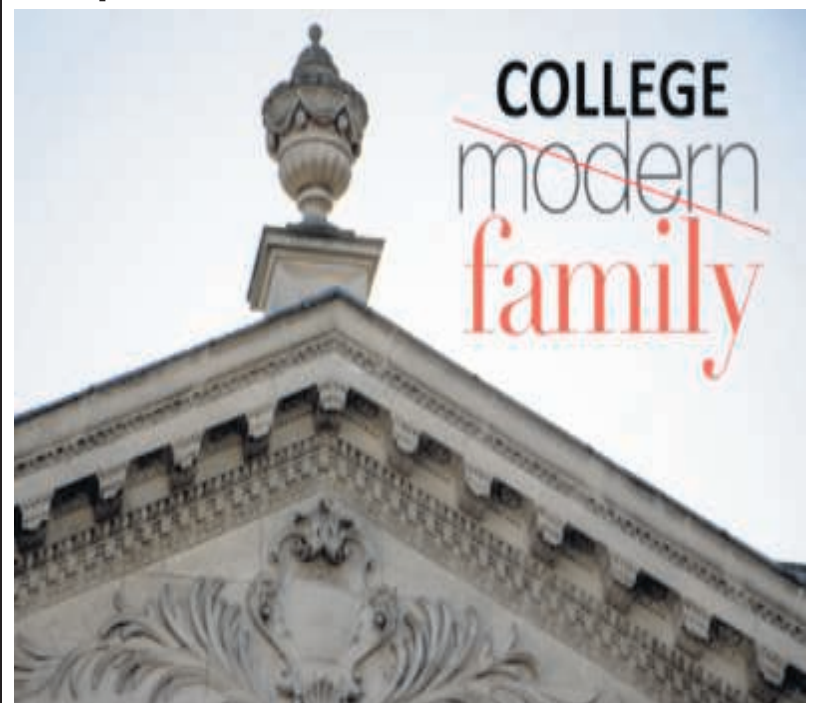
agine you can divorce. Or rather, I'd hope you can, because it would be quite archaic otherwise. Remember to break the news to your kids gently though, as it may be difficult for them.

Can you divorce?

I hope I've enlightened you a little. Or at least, I hope I haven't confused you even more than you already are. In this time

of uncertainty, we need college families more than ever before: unity over division, compassion over hostility, college family over... no college family?? And please, sons, reply on Facebook. I may have to report you as Missing Persons soon if you're not careful. I'm just an anxious mother who cares for the welfare of her children. Is that so bad?

▼ The top of the Senate House (Varsity)



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Violet On returning to Cambridge this Michaelmas...

By VARSITY

Violet columnist **Scarlet Rowe** writes on her optimistic ambitions, hopes for this term and learning to bask in the unknown



▲ **Gonville and Caius** (VARSITY)

The past six months have been interesting to say the least. Here I am about to return to Cambridge in my full glory as an officially dangerous driver (according to my driving test result), and no more fluent in French than I was in year seven. If anything, I have regressed, which is mildly unfortunate.

As a result, I figure that Cambridge can't be so bad after all. Maybe, if nothing else, it will distract me from my optimistic ambitions? A term spent on European ethnographies will be a term well spent, or better spend than the lack of Easter term at any rate. At least I'll spend less time trying to justify the existence of the subject to people because everyone will have given up asking by this point. Or maybe if I only surround myself with Anthropology students then the problem will cease to exist.

It is a bizarre thing to be returning to university when most of us have spent more time at home this year. On top of this, I also have serious concerns that my brain no longer functions at any level, which could prove to be a problem. My summer reading has turned into a summer sleeping, which has been blissful, but may meet hostility by supervisors. However, we will cross these bridges when we come to them.

Writing this at home after a failed workout (I gave in after three minutes red faced and frazzled), I am acutely aware that most of my friends have returned to Cambridge. Social media has become flooded once more by pictures of flocks of students, radiating joy, having a merry time. Most of my friends have rushed back to Cambridge at the earliest possible notice, which is an indication that it is actually okay. My boyfriend is having a heavenly time without my presence, which is always reassuring too. It is great to know when you are appreciated.

In two weeks time I am sitting my

“These past few weeks I have gone through all the phases”

driving theory test. Again. For the third time. My test will expire in about a day. I have no common sense knowledge about roads or life in general. But the thing is, failure isn't an option because I have decreed it. Unfortunately my (lack of) natural ability seems to disagree with me. So I fear the struggle may continue.

I've decided that I am actually slightly looking forward to going back to Cambridge. These past few weeks I have gone through all of the phases: the excited one, the apprehensive one, the nervous one, the indifferent one... you name it, I've probably been there. Now I'm (rather predictably) going through all of the phases in one. Whilst I'm not exactly relishing the thought of Zoom societies and socially-distanced everything, I've accepted that this will be the case. Being around lots of clueless 19 year olds again will be nice, because I've been missing the solidarity. I've missed the porters too, and their disapproval of my unwavering ability to burn toast. I'm not sure

the microwaves will be pleased about my return after that incident with the Sainsbury's chocolate pudding in January, though I maintain it wasn't my fault.

Recently, I've told myself that I'm going to maintain my running schedule in Cambridge. Don't get me wrong, I won't. But it's nice to think that I will. I'm secretly hoping that it will get too cold so that I simply won't be able to leave my warm and welcoming room. Hopefully the weather will get on board with me too. I think it's the one thing British Winter will be able to help me with.

I'm very happy I have no exams this term (or at least I hope?) to keep me awake at night. After my rather unfortunate driving test, I'd quite like to resign from all examination systems with immediate notice. I'm not counting my theory test as an exam because then that will make it real which I don't particularly fancy. I'm looking forward to cycling around Cambridge and turning up to places with blue fin-

gers, shaking excessively because I decided to wear a mini skirt or something.

I'm also looking forward to continuing to miss my lectures but actually being able to catch up this time because they will be online. I'm not too excited about attending societies via Zoom though, but I'll probably just do what I usually do and not show up (sorry about that). However, I am devastated because I really wanted to join the Tea Society this term and now I don't know what will become of it.

I've been asked to talk about how I am going to deal with the unknown in this article. The honest answer is I am probably not going to deal with the unknown. I will attempt to do what I generally do, which is to potter along and hope for the best. But come what may, a return to Cambridge necessitates lots of tea and talking, which I have endless energy for. If it helps, you probably can't be more clueless than me? If you are, that is very impressive, and I fully commend you on your achievement.

▼ **Social distancing rules in Cambridge** (LUCAS MADDALENA)



Rogue sport of the week: windsurfing

Looking to play a sport without stringent Covid-19 restrictions? An escape to the Hunstanton coast? Or, maybe you just want to be out on the water with the windsurfing president? CUWS has it all



▲ "Windsurfing is the ideal water sport" (@SPANIC)

Covid-19 has struck Cambridge societies hard, with many having severe limitations and some not even being allowed to go ahead. Perhaps it's time to start thinking outside the box? Through thorough safety regulation (and due to the solitary nature of the sport) Cambridge Union Windsurfing Society has been granted permission to operate fully functionally this term! If there was ever a time to join the club it is now. Windsurfing is a fairly new sport that has only been around for the past 50 years or so – mainly due to improvements in technology. It combines the fun of surfing whilst also being able to travel the seas at some pretty quick speeds. It is the ideal water sport, though it requires no specific physique or fitness ability, windsurfing will improve your balance and core strength dramatically. It might be tough to begin with but we promise once you get the bug, you're signed up for life!

The Club operates on a flexible schedule that is, of course, highly contingent on the wind so there's no intense training regime and commitment is relatively relaxed. Though the sport in action is largely solitary don't be

perturbed by this! CUWS goes the extra mile to make every member really feel that they are part of a society and we all look out for each other on the water – whether that be Hunstanton or Spain: windsurfing also offers the opportunity to travel around the world with the Club, including a Lent term trip to the sunny coast of Fuerteventura!

The Club operates on a flexible sched-

ule that is, of course, highly contingent on the wind, so there's no intense training regime with commitment being fairly low. That said, windsurfing is a competitive sport, and the club does compete annually. Although Covid-19 got in the way last year, we hope to challenge Oxford at Varsity this year and win the title! Come try it out, you might even win a Varsity match out of it!

▼ Windsurfing also offers the opportunity to travel (@DESPRIS)



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60 STATION ROAD CAMBRIDGE

Sport

Edward Cator on the history of women in long distance athletics

To say that women have historically fought an uphill battle to gain athletic recognition is like saying that Caius College is a bit rich. Pierre de Coubertin, the organiser of the first modern Olympics in 1896, decided against allowing female athletes to compete because he felt that their inclusion would be “impractical, uninteresting, unaesthetic, and incorrect.” In 1900, women were generously allowed to enter the lawn tennis and golf competitions and, some 28 years later, the all-male International Olympic Committee saw fit to include female track and field events in the programme.

And so, 1928 saw the first Olympic women’s 800m race: Lina Radke of Germany topped a field of nine runners to take gold in a time of 2 minutes 16 seconds, followed by Kinue Hitomi of Japan and Inga Gentzel of Sweden. As may be expected of Olympic athletes after a race, several of the competitors were fatigued: some put their hands on their knees to recover, whilst German runner Elfriede Wever had tripped in the last hundred metres and suffered mild grazes. The newspapers went berserk.

The Chicago Tribune reported that 5 of the women had collapsed at the end of the race, The Pittsburgh Press claimed that only 6 had actually completed the event, and The Times called the distance ‘dangerous’ for women. The Montreal Daily Star went one step further, calling the race a “disgrace” and recommending that it “should be taken off any future program” because, “it is obviously beyond women’s powers of endurance, and can only be injurious to them.” The fact that the winner of the race, Radke, had beaten the previous women’s world record by seven seconds did not feature in the media coverage of the event. The

IOC were so appalled by this spectacle that they banned women from competing in events longer than 200m until 1960.

What a relief we live now in more enlightened times. True, by 1984 women’s events still made up just 25% of the Olympic programme and true, it took until 2012 for women’s boxing to finally be included. Yet, surely in the world of long-distance running, where household names such as Paula Radcliffe have done just as much to popularise the sport as Steve Ovett or Mo Farah, such thinly-veiled discrimination is a thing of the past. Perhaps not. A quick glance at the 2019 Nationals Cross Country Championships show that the undermining of female ability in distance races is still very much with us.

“*The fact that Radke had beaten the previous women’s world record by seven seconds did not feature in the media coverage of the event*”

The climax of the day’s racing, the U20 event, involved runners aged 18-19, many of whom were coming to the peak of their athletic prowess. The distance for the U20 men’s race was set at 6.7km. The U20 women? 4.1km, the same distance that the U13 boys were expected to run. The idea that the finest female cross-country runners in the country are incapable of completing a park run



▲ (@SARTI46)



▲ Kathrine Switzer, the first woman to officially run the Boston Marathon in 1967, avoiding race officials who are trying to prevent her from competing (WIKIMEDIA COMMONS)

is nothing short of absurd. Even on the elite international stage, the picture is no better: the women’s race at the 2019 World Junior Cross-Country Championships was a full 2 kilometres shorter than the men’s race.

Maud Hodson, creator of #RunEqual, has claimed that women’s events are ‘downgraded’ in comparison to men. “Girls are conditioned from an early age not to aim high, not to challenge themselves,” she states, “and this is part of an insidious message that keeps girls and women in their place.” This distance discrimination seems even more unprincipled when one examines the trends in race results for ultra-marathons (running races longer than a standard 26.2-mile marathon). The statistics show that the longer the race the harder it is to separate the times of men and women: in races of 100 miles or more, a female



▲ Paula Radcliffe, British Long Distance Runner (WIKIMEDIA COMMONS)

runner is just as likely to get the fastest time as a male runner.

It was only in January last year that Jasmin Paris beat her closest male competitor by 15 hours and smashed the course record in the notorious 268-mile Spine Race, a non-stop run the length of the Pennine Way. Away from the world of running, in 2019 Sarah Thomas became the first human ever to swim the English Channel four times without stopping. Whilst it is true that in the shorter distances of cross-country women may not be as fast as men, the idea that female endurance is somehow second-rate is fiction.

In a world where gender discrimination should be a thing of the past, the maintenance of segregated distances for male and female cross-country runners seems archaic. It’s time to start treating athletes equally.