UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge Alumni Magazine
Issue 106 – Michaelmas Term 2025

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CAM

DANCERS REQ. FOR GOBLINCORE
MUSIC VIDEO. MUST BE OK WITH
LATEX AND GREEN BODY

Cambridge Alumni Magazine

Michaelmas Term 2025

Issue 106

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Editor's Letter

Welcome to the Michaelmas edition of *CAM*. Now, you don't need me to tell you that Cambridge grads are brilliant. Of course, a few of our number find international renown or become national treasures but, as our Director of Alumni Engagement Clare Monaghan points out, the collective impact of the Cambridge community on the world is genuinely extraordinary.

Which is why she is launching the University of Cambridge Alumni Awards, a chance to recognise exceptional talent, share alumni stories and celebrate – well, why be modest? – our achievements. This is all about excellence in all forms and at all levels, so to find out which of your pals qualify for which category, turn to page 38 and get nominating!

Meanwhile, at the Museum of Classical Archaeology (on page 24), the team who look after not very old, not very valuable, but very intriguing classical plaster cast statues explain why they matter. And on page 18, we turn up, plug in and find our people at FlashBand.

On these topics – and on all things Cambridge – we look forward to your contribution to the debate, online at magazine.alumni.cam.ac.uk, by post and email or on social media.

Mira Katbamna
(Caius 1995)

CAM online

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PHOTOGRAPHY: CAMILLA GREENWELL; ILLUSTRATION: MASHA KRASNOVA-SHABAEVA

Inbox

A pleasure to read

It's always a pleasure to receive *CAM* but, noting that the wrapper is 30 per cent-plus recycled film, I wonder if you would be able to move to a starch-based or other domestic compostable wrapper? You might well ask why a chap who chooses to write this also opts for hard copy rather than electronic, and the answer is clear: in hard copy, I and others can browse the magazine at leisure and often share articles with other people. However, if it came in electronically I would probably never bother to read it. It is an item of pleasure to browse in a quiet moment, whereas 50 hours or so of work on a screen for work every week means that I long to escape the screen for pleasure!
Sheridan Swallow (Magdalene 1968)

Know your Queens'

It is disappointing that you managed (twice) to put the apostrophe in the wrong place when referring to Queens' (Society, *CAM* 105). It's frustrating that some people do not realise the College was founded or refounded in the 15th century by two queens, Margaret of Anjou and Elizabeth Woodville, hence the orthography. I am surprised to find you among them!
David Reid (Queens' 1961)

Varsity once described Queens' as a College full of apostrophe pedants, so to quote the famous chant, it should read: "Q U Double E, N S Apostrophe". In fact, after Margaret of Anjou and Elizabeth Woodville, the next four queens were also described in their lifetimes as "foundress and patroness" of the College – Anne Neville (Richard III), Elizabeth of York (Henry VII), Lady Margaret Beaufort (mother of Henry VII, acting queen) and Katherine of Aragon (Henry VIII) – so it could be argued that the apostrophe represents all six.
Jonathan Holmes (Queens' 1967)
Editor's note: CAM *is checked by humans, computers and, most embarrassingly in this case, me. Suffice it to say, it won't happen again.*

Language learning

I heartily agree with most of what Professor Forsdick says (Translating cultures, *CAM* 105). Where I disagree is in his apparent advocacy of starting actual language learning at secondary level. Children have immense natural language learning capacity during their first seven years, after which it lessens. The logic of this must be to teach foreign languages in primary school, laying a foundation of real language knowledge that can be built upon further.
Roger Bartlett (Caius 1958)

Cambridge is one of the few top institutions in Europe (probably in the whole world outside the Americas) where applicants are not required to speak a foreign language. What would a Cambridge-led programme look like which aimed to deliver Professor Forsdick's vision for the country as a whole? Might all Cambridge applicants (not just foreigners and candidates from ethnically diverse backgrounds, as at present) be required to demonstrate the ability to converse in a second language?
Andrew Noble (Caius 1978)

At your service

Your article on the armed services at Cambridge (At your service, *CAM* 105) omitted one of the most significant dimensions of the subject – the way in which the Centre of International Studies provided, from 1975 onwards, a way for talented young officers in all three services to study for the MPhil degree in International Relations. The MPhil had been set up partly by the Duke of Edinburgh, who was convinced of the need for better military education. Over the years it has had an important influence on the opening of the military mind, in the UK and more widely.
Christopher Hill
(Sir Patrick Sheehy Professor of International Relations 2004-2016)

Other Varsities available

I was nonplussed by the emphasis on the Boat Race (Campendium, *CAM* 105), with no other Varsity matches even mentioned. How about a page giving the results of all Varsity matches since the last *CAM*?
James Tolson (Queens' 1960)
Editor's note: Funny you should say that… Keep a look out for CAM *107!*

Obscene and not heard

With reference to Miles Baillie's letter (*CAM* 105), regarding the 'obscene' word. That's exactly what it was, and while in exceptional circumstances it may 'have its place', it certainly wasn't in such an article. Its inclusion shows a lack of editorial discretion. Please, no such usage again, even for the "intellectually robust".
Peter Chalmers
(St Catharine's 1978)

I have no problem with Miriam Margolyes' use of language. Some years ago, in frustration at having to update yet another password on one of the company systems, I used the same obscenity. I found it amused me to swear when logging on to enter my weekly timesheet, and I adopted expletives for many passwords.
Robert Jackson
(Fitzwilliam 1970)

Big number

£100m committed by VC firm Cambridge Innovation Capital to invest in spinouts from the University of Cambridge.

cam.ac.uk/mag106/cic

Honorary doctorates

Stormzy recognised with doctorate for Scholarship for Black Students scheme

How did it feel for Michael Ebenazer Kwadjo Omari Owuo Jr – better known as Stormzy – to receive his honorary Doctorate in Law? "It's not as impressive as you lot," he said with a grin, when meeting some of the Stormzy Scholars to whom he's provided financial support through the Stormzy Scholarship for Black UK Students since 2018.

Sitting down with the BBC's *One Show* after the ceremony, Stormzy admitted that initially he didn't want to meet the recipients. "I didn't want the students to feel like they owed me anything. But to actually sit down with them, talk to them, hear their stories – and you're like, damn, this is real. A lot of them actually say that they wouldn't have applied without the scholarship being there."

Stormzy joins a further seven leading figures from the worlds of art, music, sport, science and politics who were honoured. "Each has made an extraordinary contribution to their field, and their work continues to inspire people in Cambridge and around the world," says Vice-Chancellor Professor Deborah Prentice.

Actor Sir Simon Russell Beale and political activist Professor Angela Davis received a Doctorate in Letters, while former Justice of the UK Supreme Court Lady Arden of Heswall and Olympian Dame Katherine Grainger joined Stormzy in receiving a Doctorate in Law.

The Nobel Prize-winning economist Sir Oliver Hart received a Doctorate in Science. Professor Maria Leptin, President of the European Research Council, received a Doctorate in Medical Science. And Sir John Rutter, Director of Music at Clare from 1975 to 1979, received a Doctorate in Music.

PHOTOGRAPHY: TEMPEST

Technology

NHS cancer patients at Addenbrooke's Hospital will become the first in Europe to have incisionless ultrasound surgery using new cutting-edge technology. The Edison Histotripsy System was purchased thanks to a generous donation from philanthropist Sir Ka-shing Li, a longstanding supporter of cancer research at the University. It will be fully installed later this year.

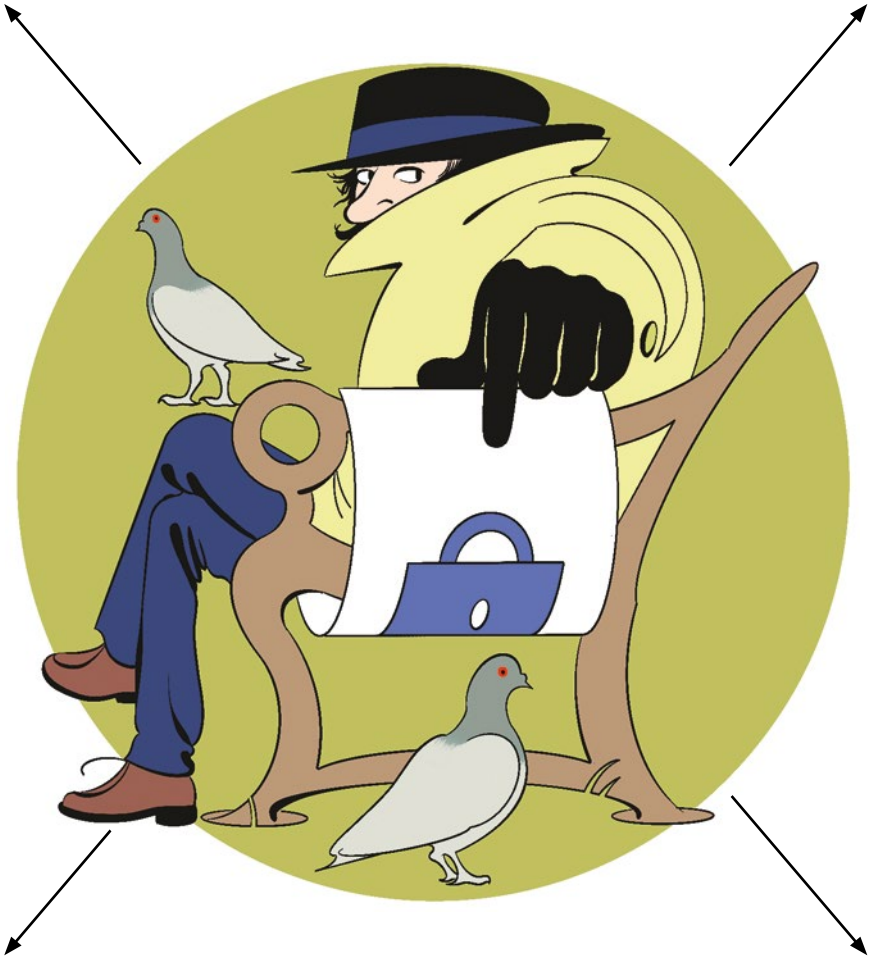
cam.ac.uk/mag106/ius

Deconstructed

The Guardian launches whistleblowing tech developed by Cambridge research

Whistleblowers can now contact journalists more securely, thanks to new confidential technology co-developed by Cambridge researchers and *The Guardian*.

The Secure Messaging function in *The Guardian*'s mobile news app is a secure and simple way for sources to get in touch with journalists in confidence.



The app has a range of other functions, too, including digital 'dead drops' – like virtual park benches or bins – where journalists can retrieve messages left by whistleblowers.

It builds on CoverDrop technology that was developed at Cambridge. The code is online and open source to encourage other organisations to follow *The Guardian*'s lead.

ILLUSTRATION: MASHA KRASNOVA-SHABAEVA

Two-minute Tripos

A NEW INTERPRETATION OF AN ENGLISH LEGEND ALTERS OUR ENTIRE UNDERSTANDING. DISCUSS.

I'm pitching a new *Game of Thrones*-style epic to Netflix. It's got it all! Elves! Water sprites! And best of all, the IP is out of copyright.

If there's one thing we need more of, it's *Game of Thrones*-style epics. Will characters explain vital plot points to each other while lying around in various states of undress?

There are *other* ways of moving a plot along?

Fine. What's it called?

Well, I give you... the *Song of Wade*! A long-lost treasure of English culture and a rip-roaring tale of elves and water sprites.

You keep saying 'elves and water sprites' like it's the only thing we know about the *Song of Wade*.

That's because it is the only thing we know about the *Song of Wade*. A medieval preacher refers to it: "Thus they can say, with Wade: 'Some are elves and some are adders; some are sprites that dwell by waters.'"

What if I were to tell you that the sermon in which that reference to the *Song of Wade* was made has been mistranslated ever since it was first discovered in 1896 by MR James?

I would take no notice.

And that the phrase is actually "Some are wolves and some are adders; some are sea snakes that dwell by the water."

We can have a sea snake battle.

Which makes it obvious that the lost *Song of Wade* is not in fact a fantasy epic but a chivalric romance, alluded to by a preacher to make a point about how men are animals?

Exactly! It's open to many different and valid interpretations. The internet will love it. Like kittens and ASMR.

I give up.

Anyway, Cillian Murphy to play the elf?

cam.ac.uk/mag106/tmt

Make your mark

Above, left to right: Matthew Chanwai, Downing, Second Year Music; Charlotte Wilson, Jesus, Second Year Nat-Sci; and Benjamin Lilley, Hughes Hall, Second Year Engineering.

The anarchic Antipodean footie team held together by a strong community.

WORDS **MEGAN WELFORD** PHOTOGRAPHY **ADAM LAWRENCE**

"It looks like organised chaos," admits Henry Marshall (Caius 2023), President of the Cambridge University Australian Rules Football Club (CUARFC). "The pitch is oval, play goes in all directions, it's fast, there are four posts at each end, 16 or 18 aside so lots of people on the pitch, you kind of punch the ball out of your hand, you can kick it and run with it. Oh, and there is wrestling."

Not many people know that Aussie rules football may have had its origins at Cambridge – kind of – when Australian Tom Wills came to study here in the 1850s. Legend has it he dropped out after a month, but not before he'd played rugby and football, then went home and created Australia's game.

"Despite the chaos, it feels like a natural game," explains Marshall. "It's like Keepies Off that we used to play, when you just have to keep hold of the ball at all costs. A game like cricket is quite inaccessible for people watching, but you can follow what's going on in Aussie rules pretty easily."

When Marshall started his PhD in Biological Sciences at Cambridge, he was looking for community, and two of his professors recommended CUARFC. The club has been running as a proper society for approximately 10 years but informally for 95 years longer than that – the Varsity match dates back to 1911, which makes it the longest running Aussie rules fixture outside of Australia.

And they're on the up – they train on Parker's Piece, but Marshall is excited about the ongoing Grange Road grounds refurbishment, where a campaign to improve facilities will allow for year-round participation and growth.

"I had played when I was young, so when I first heard about CUARFC, I couldn't wait. There was an element of nostalgia for me. And it's just grown into such a big part of my life. We are a strong friendship group – seven of us went to a player's wedding in the summer.

But obviously the Varsity is the big one. "Last year the game was tight and Ritzy (Amritz Ansara) was subbed on. He's the heart and soul of the club – he wrote our club song, and though he's left Cambridge now, he travels back to train with us like a few of the guys do – and when he came on he immediately kicked a goal. Even though the game was only three-quarters through, everyone streamed onto the pitch and lifted him up in an aeroplane. The other side was confused, but that's how we are."

If you'd like to find out more about CUARFC, visit cuarfc.org.uk

H4, West Range, Downing

TOUR DE FORCE

AP: "Compared to the tourists at King's or Trinity, Downing tourists are quite nice. They just look around a bit and then go."

PIZZA THE ACTION

JP: "For comfort food, it had to be Domino's. I once had the whole choir in here eating Domino's. Or the Avalanche Café for a fry-up."

COLD OPEN

AP: "Sometimes I just want to eat in my room because it's warmer: the kitchen window is always open, so it's always cold."

CANNED LAUGHTER

JP: "I brought the obligatory six pack of beer so that I could make friends. I'd say: 'Would you like a beer and can we have a chat?'"

FITZ A WRAP

JP: "Time for confessions: I didn't actually go to the Fitzwilliam Museum until the week after graduation. I never did punting either."

JAM TODAY

AP: "My basic cooking ingredients are pasta, noodles, tuna and jam. But no, before you ask, I don't put them all together."

A ground-floor room at Downing? It's a blessing and a curse, agree music phenomenon James Partridge (Downing 2009) and current resident Aryan Parekh.

WORDS **LUCY JOLIN** PHOTOGRAPHY **MEGAN TAYLOR**

James Partridge and Aryan Parekh (Natural Sciences, Second Year) are discussing the highs and (literal) lows of being on the ground floor. "The first time I was lying in bed and heard someone walking down the stairs, it sounded like they were falling," says Parekh. "I wondered if I should go and help." That might conjure up Harry Potter-esque visions of understairs garrets, but H4 couldn't be more different: it's all high ceilings, graceful windows and leafy views across the Quadrangle.

In fact, the windows were a key part of Partridge's social life. As Choral Scholar, he was given a piano in his room. "People would hear me playing through the open windows and shout out requests as they walked by," he remembers. "Or they'd walk past and knock on the window, I'd open it up all the way and sit on the ledge. Sometimes people would just climb in through the window during the day. Or knock at it at night..."

Parekh, luckily, hasn't yet experienced the joy of randoms arriving through the window. That's probably a good thing, considering his timetable. "My course is full-time – 30 hours a week. And then I have a long eight-hour lab for physics on Tuesdays. It starts at 10 and then it ends at six. We get an hour in the middle to eat."

The mention of food sparks memories of dinners past and present. Partridge is delighted to hear that Downingites still call eating in College 'slops'. "I think we're the only College that calls it that. I mentioned it to a friend in another College and they didn't know what I was talking about," says Parekh. Partridge nods approvingly. "Proper Downing lingo!" he says. (Though he admits that he's never heard of 'breakfast blocks'.)

The room, Partridge says, is spookily unchanged. "It feels quite surreal to be back, because it's very similar to how it was." He goes deep into a rabbit hole of old photos on Facebook, which reveal that most of the room's furniture – the table and cupboard included – is indeed exactly the same as in his day. This delving into ›

I think we're the only College that calls eating in College 'slops'. I mentioned it to a friend in another College and they didn't know what I was talking about – proper Downing lingo!

old albums also throws up some mysterious fancy dress choices. "I think the theme was '80s rave…"

And along with the furniture, the two share a fondness for woollen items made with love. Parekh proudly displays a crocheted version of Inosuke Hashibira from the anime TV series *Demon Slayer*. "My girlfriend made him for me for my 18th birthday and I crocheted her a little penguin in return. I've been thinking about making something like a temperature blanket but I just don't get the time."

Partridge, too, brought a treasured handmade gift from home. "Every year my nana used to make me an amazing Christmas jumper. They were so beautiful. So I ended up with a cupboard full of jumpers, and I brought them for my first year when I was here. People would always say to me: 'Where'd you get that jumper from?' At one point I tried to convince her to start a business."

Walking into H4 on his first ever day at Cambridge felt like winning the lottery, he says. "Nobody from my school had ever gone to Cambridge to do music, and when I saw the room, it was just amazing. I wasn't hugely confident then. And by the time I left, because I'd done so many different and new things, met people from all walks of life and also done things like musical theatre at such a high level, I felt a little bit more confident in myself. This room represents such a huge departure from anything I had done before."

James B Partridge is a singing teacher and creator of the nationwide hit show *Primary School Bangers Live*. Aryan Parekh enjoys karate and learning Arabic, and is a member of the Astronomy Society.

PHOTOGRAPHY: LLOYD MANN

Chancellor

Historic vote elects Chris Smith as new Chancellor

Chris Smith, Baron Smith of Finsbury – the former Master of Pembroke – has been elected as the University's 109th Chancellor. He will hold the office for 10 years.

In a historic first, the election was opened to online voting. More than 23,000 alumni and staff participated, choosing from a shortlist of 10 candidates. But almost 2,000 people still chose to vote in person at the University's Senate House.

Born in 1951, Lord Smith was educated in Edinburgh before coming up to Pembroke, achieving a double first in English, and he was also a Kennedy Scholar at Harvard. He became MP for Islington South and Finsbury in 1983 and held a number of frontbench posts in the shadow cabinet before Labour came to power in 1997.

He served as Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport until 2001 when he returned to the backbenches. In 2005, he stood down from the House of Commons and was made a life peer. He chaired the Environment Agency from 2008 to 2014 and was also Chairman of the Advertising Standards Authority.

Being elected is a huge honour, he says. "I look forward to being the best possible ambassador for Cambridge, to being a strong voice for higher education more generally, and to working closely together with the Vice-Chancellor and her team."

Read about Chris Smith's life in music on p42.

In brief

THE END OF CHEESY CHIPS
Sad news from Rose Crescent – it's time to say a final *kalinikta* to a Cambridge institution: Gardies. After 76 years, the famous Greek takeaway, The Gardenia Restaurant, has officially closed, leaving late-night – or, frankly, anytime – revellers in search of a revitalising pitta and chips bereft.

JUST A GUT FEELING
Cambridge researchers have discovered that certain species of microbe found in the human gut can absorb toxic and long-lasting 'for ever chemicals' known as PFAS, linked with a range of health issues including a higher risk of certain cancers and cardiovascular diseases. The researchers – from the MRC Toxicology Unit – now hope to create supplements that protect against the toxic effects of PFAS.

BREAKTHROUGH TREATMENT
Twelve years ago after Cambridge researchers first identified a rare genetic hereditary illness – activated PI3-kinase delta syndrome (APDS) – 19-year-old Mary Catchpole has become the first person to be treated for it. APDS 'switches on' an enzyme that prevents immune cells from fighting infection, but the new treatment inhibits the enzyme and normalises the immune system.

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Creating a stink

Don't let its dreadful smell put you off – the Botanic Garden's star attraction is part of an international effort to conserve rare and important plants.

WORDS **MEGAN WELFORD**
PHOTOGRAPHY **HOWARD RICE**

It looks like it could be from another planet, is covered in hairs that resemble a mammal and – there's no polite way to say this – it absolutely stinks.

The *Stapelia gigantea* plant, also known as the carrion flower because it gives off the smell of rotten meat, is the largest flowering member of the stapeliad group of the *Apocynaceae* (or dogbane) family. Native to South Africa, the Stapelia uses its stench to attract flies for pollination, convincing them so well that they even lay their eggs in what they think is its deliciously decomposing folds. It might not be attractive, but the smell, along with those veiny hairs, are what have guaranteed the Stapelia's survival – and what make it a star of the Cambridge University Botanic Garden's living collection.

"South African succulent plants in particular are valuable, because the landscape and climate are varied, with specific rock types, soil geology and rainfall patterns," says Expedition Botanist Matthew Jeffery. And he should know: his unique role at the Botanic Garden involves organising and leading globetrotting expeditions to collect and observe wild plants and seeds.

"There are many niches for rare and unusual species to grow and, because of their rarity in the wild, they are very vulnerable to extinction due to poaching," he says. "Like many succulents, the Stapelia is particularly vulnerable. People want new and exciting rare things, and poachers can sell plants and cuttings."

This means botanical gardens like Stellenbosch University Botanical Garden, with whom Cambridge has established a partnership, are in a race to find these niche outcrops. "Stellenbosch staff collect data, monitor plant populations and collect cuttings and seeds of rare plants for conservation and restoration purposes," says Jeffery. "They'll then start to produce them for replanting, and to actively share with other botanic gardens.

"We work jointly with Stellenbosch on improving each other's plant collections, research avenues and advise each other on collections management, horticulture and education in botany."

The two universities are now collaborating closely, data sharing and swapping ideas for collection management, as well as working together to study orchids and bulbs in particular, and bring back seeds and herbarium (pressed dried plants) specimens.

Overseeing the pool of global botanic garden living collections is Botanic Gardens Conservation International, a charity that gives botanic gardens accreditation, encourages partnerships and keeps a collective data set.

"Our partnership with Stellenbosch allows Cambridge to participate in ex-situ conservation of South African plants, and grow a representation of the South African Cape flora," says Jeffery. "The more plants we grow from different species, genera and families, the better we can support research and learning. Plants are the basis of most terrestrial ecosystems – the start of the food chain. We need them for food, medicine and oxygen, so no matter how much they smell, it's vital we do all we can to look after them."

Expedition Botanist Matthew Jeffery braves the aura of his beloved *Stapelia gigantia.*

This research is dedicated to Dr Donovan Kirkwood, curator of the Stellenbosch University Botanical Garden, who devoted his life to the conservation of South African plants.

Behind the curtain: why it's time for a closer look at American history

As the new Paul Mellon Professor of American History, Mia Bay's to-do list is long. But although the current atmosphere in the US is "fraught", she intends to seize the moment.

WORDS **VICTORIA JAMES**
PHOTOGRAPHY **KATE PETERS**

She's halfway through her initial year as the new Paul Mellon Professor of American History and Mia Bay is sitting in the light-filled study of a friend's house on Long Island – her first significant break from Cambridge since starting the job. "This is one of those vacations where work trails you," she says. "But fortunately, I'm with friends who are also trailing work. We work, and then at some point we stop working." Bay laughs, which she does easily and often. "I hope to get to the beach for a swim today, though."

It will be well-deserved respite if she does, for Bay's schedule has, she admits, been hectic since her first day mid-January. A renowned scholar of African-American history, with particular interest in intellectual and women's histories, she's also an energetic collaborator and administrator. The Mellon chair appealed, she explains, because of the opportunities it offered in all these areas. "I'd never been to Cambridge – didn't have dreams of moving to England, or anything like that. But during the interview process it became clear this was a role that offered everything I was looking for. I'd be collaborating with lots of people, working directly with students, running a seminar. I'd been director of the Centre for Race and Ethnicity at Rutgers University, and knew these varied activities were stimulating for me."

She wasn't fazed by the observation of one colleague that the British did American history differently. "In Britain there's more focus on the US in the world, whereas Americans may study American history in isolation. But other areas, such as the expansion into the West, or Indigenous histories, don't get as much attention. I'm still figuring out those differences, but American history is certainly popular at Cambridge."

Indeed, one of the projects at the top of Bay's to-do list is to establish a major interdisciplinary centre for the study of the United States in Cambridge. "The History department already has very strong Americanist content, and there are many other people who study the US in fields such as political science, sociology and English," she says. "So, the idea is to have ›

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a centre to bring these people together and do more as a community. We've already established a network."

Alongside this, and her recent election as President of the Collegium for African-American Research, a European scholarly association for Black and diaspora studies, Bay will be pursuing research for her next book, an appraisal of Thomas Jefferson through the lens of African-Americans. It will be the fourth major publication of Bay's three-decade career that reframes American national narratives through Black intellectual, cultural and social experiences. Each project has flowed from – and often alongside – its precursor.

Her first book, *The White Image in the Black Mind* (2000), was on African-American ideas about White people, she says. "I became interested in the question during graduate school, when I read these enormous tomes about racial thought, and they were always focused on White people thinking about Black people. I just thought: 'Can't we turn that around?'"

That study launched Bay on what she calls her central curiosity, which is what people are thinking. "My subsequent books also look at what they're doing, but I'm always interested in why they're doing what they're doing, which gets you back to what they're thinking."

Her second publication was a study of pioneering African-American journalist Ida B Wells. "She was an activist, but I was most interested in her as a thinker, because her activism came from her analysis of how Jim Crow [the structural apartheid system of the American South] actually worked, who was profiting from it, and what purpose it was serving. She's most famous for exploding the myth that lynching was connected to crime, hammering home that it was instead a form of racial domination and extra-legal violence. This was groundbreaking, and she came up with it as a person of high-school education, not from a conventional intellectual background."

Few of Wells's own papers survive, so Bay had to work it out herself, by trying to understand how Wells would have been experiencing things. "She was a tremendous consumer of newspapers, so I read them too." And in their pages, Bay found the theme of her third book, *Traveling Black: A Story of Race and Resistance*, a history of mobility and resistance that explores travel discrimination and how it has shifted from segregated trains and buses, gas stations and motels, to modern experiences that include taxis and Ubers. Just as she was preparing for publication, the killing of George Floyd thrust the persistence of racist inequalities into the global spotlight.

"There was a really dramatic change," Bay recalls. "It brought constant enquiries and interest in Black history, which still hasn't died down yet. I appreciate that, because it's such a vital field in American history. But it was also so upsetting. You could barely turn on the television without seeing George Floyd dying, and so many other incidents were in the news. It felt traumatic, sometimes, being asked to talk about it."

Traveling Black was published in 2021 and brought Bay multiple awards and national attention. To complete it, she had set aside another project that now has her full attention – a study of Thomas Jefferson. It, too, sprang from engagement with the social and intellectual lives captured in 19th-century Black newspapers. "I went into those papers expecting to find discussions of Black nationalism in Africa predominating," she says, "and was surprised to discover instead much discussion of Jefferson. This tells an interesting story about the relationship of African-Americans to American nationalism, and to someone who's a powerful symbol of what America means.

"At that time, African-Americans mostly weren't voters, so they were reaching out to what Jefferson stood for much in the way that lower-class people prior to the Revolution might have appealed to the king, or the values articulated by the royal family. I want to explore what the presidency means for people who don't really have political power – how they use it to lay claims on the state."

If you're a person who studies African-American history, this is a very familiar moment, when with one step forward you get what can feel like two steps back

It's an analysis that feels timely, when the American political climate seems, to many, to be tilting back against the movements and events of five years ago. "There's a backlash against tearing down Confederate monuments," Bay says. "It's reported that they're putting one back up in Washington DC, and Trump is restoring the Confederate names of army camps that were renamed under Biden. So it's an interesting time to be an African-American historian. A fraught time, as well, because there are some states that are trying to get rid of teaching African-American history. If you're a person who studies this field, this is a very familiar moment, when with one step forward you get what can feel like two steps back."

Bay intends to use the years ahead to continue her lifelong aims of giving the field a large public presence and diversifying the academy, and looks forward to reaching an ever-wider audience with her work. "I take hope from my predecessor as the Mellon Professor, Gary Gerstle, who said his 10 years at Cambridge were the most productive of his life, even though he was very, very busy. He couldn't quite figure out how they were so productive given all the other stuff he was doing," she says, with a final, throaty laugh. "What I've found is that if you have plenty of intellectual stimulation, you can get your work done a lot more effectively."

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WORDS **ANNA FIELDING**

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↗ Lost Projects at the APPS Showcase in the Six Six Bar, Feb 25.

When Matthijs Duursma (Lucy Cavendish 2024) came up to Cambridge, he managed to convince his father to drive all the way from Amsterdam with a car packed mostly with the paraphernalia of a music obsessive. "I had a Nord electric keyboard, all my records, some speakers from the 1970s that belonged to my grandparents, and some synthesisers – as well as everything that goes with it, monitors, mixing panels and a little drum machine," he says. "It filled the whole car. Dad thought I was mad. I was just happy we didn't get checked at customs."

But despite lugging everything across the North Sea, in his first term Duursma was so focused on meeting people, playing sports and his MPhil in the ethics of AI data that he didn't actually get to play much music. Until, that is, he heard about FlashBand. "It was exactly what I was looking for," he says. "I knew I wanted to start a band, I knew what kind of music I wanted to play – but I didn't know how to reach people."

FlashBand, created by the Centre for Music Performance (CMP), is a social event with a difference. You rock up, chat to strangers – and then find yourself grouped, loosely, by your preferred genre and left together in a room stocked with musical equipment. That's just the beginning: FlashBand is really a jam session for total strangers; an exercise in group dynamics; an after-hours encounter where you might just meet your creative soulmate.

"It's often the case that you drop a pebble and the ripples go in all sorts of directions," says CMP Director Simon Fairclough (Christ's 2002). "That's the beauty of FlashBand; a little bit of structure has a lot of impact. We're now in our third year – two events are held in Michaelmas Term and another at the start of Lent – and it's a fantastic way to break down some barriers and get people playing together. I'm also convinced that it will spawn some successful bands."

That certainly seems to be the case so far, with plenty of students having not only found it a great way to settle into university life, but also help fulfil their musical ambitions. Some have formed bands that have performed at May Balls, and even ›

JOIN US TONIGHT

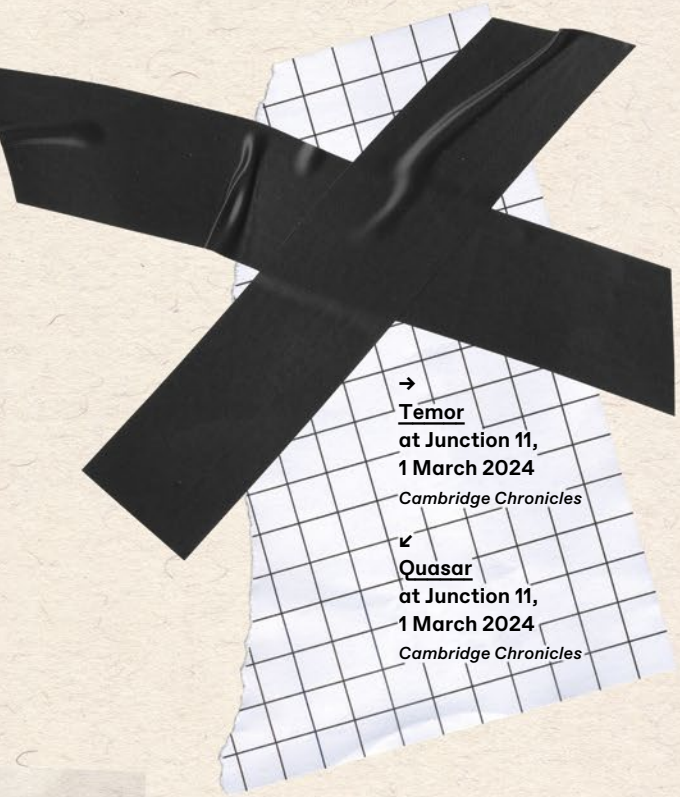
> It was exactly what I was looking for. I knew I wanted to start a band, I knew what kind of music I wanted to play – I just didn't know how to reach people

in some of the city's best-known music venues such as the Corn Exchange and The Junction.

"The night itself was a bit chaotic – but in a really good way," says Valentina Schutze (Newnham 2024), whose band was formed on the back of a FlashBand session. "We were all a bit nervous that first night, and were just improvising bits and pieces. But then we stayed around after and chatted, and because we were all warmed up to each other it was easy to find affinities.

"We all wanted to have a bit of a jam after, but one person specifically said: 'I want to start a band,' and we talked about the sort of playlist we liked and enjoyed, and that was the start of the band. Ultimately it was a bit short-lived, and we went our own way after graduation, but it was great while it lasted. FlashBand made me realise that if I did want to join a band, I had a lot to learn. But I was still very excited about it and determined, and I was just curious. I wanted to make music with a lot of people."

Schutze's band may not have survived the rigours of the industry, but it undoubtedly benefited from the injection of fresh inspiration, something Will Duckett (St John's 2024) discovered



→
Temor
at Junction 11,
1 March 2024
Cambridge Chronicles

↙
Quasar
at Junction 11,
1 March 2024
Cambridge Chronicles

from his night at FlashBand. "There are different rooms running at the same time, and you move around throughout the evening," says Duckett. "As you start playing, you can pick up on who's your kind of person. In the first room, I didn't really find too many people, but in the second one there were a couple of people that I really gelled with. You realise you've mentioned certain songs that you like, and they like them too, and then you're exchanging numbers and you're off."

Duckett had experience of bands and university band societies beforehand, but says he found the challenge at Cambridge was finding people into typical, traditional bands – electric guitars, keyboards and drums. And that's something that CMP's Fairclough is keenly aware of.

"The classic Cambridge soundtrack – the one that most people think of – is the College choir," says Fairclough. "They are wonderful and we're incredibly proud of them, but we were conscious that there are lots of other students who are interested in other forms of music which were less well supported here in the past. They might have played at a very high level before coming to Cambridge, but they didn't have the opportunity to find fellow musicians and form communities in the same way. So we wanted to do something very simple and practical that could connect people across Colleges."

The CMP has a wide and eclectic remit, embracing highly skilled musicians as well as absolute beginners. They cover all forms of music, with classical playing an established and treasured part alongside popular forms and music from different countries. "CMP plays a unique role in the Cambridge musical ecosystem," says Fairclough. "And we're able to take a very broad view of what music can mean."

He gives an example of how the team were approached by a professor who wanted to see if there would be any interest in Indian classical instruments, and he's proud of the fact that the Indian Classical Society – which grew out of that enquiry – now has 150 members and sells out auditoriums.

So as well as FlashBand, there are also initiatives like the Advanced Popular Performance Scheme and two out-and-out popular music talent contests: Hook, Line and Lyric is a biannual event for songwriters; and ›

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↗ Lost Projects at the APPS Showcase in the Six Six Bar, Feb 25.

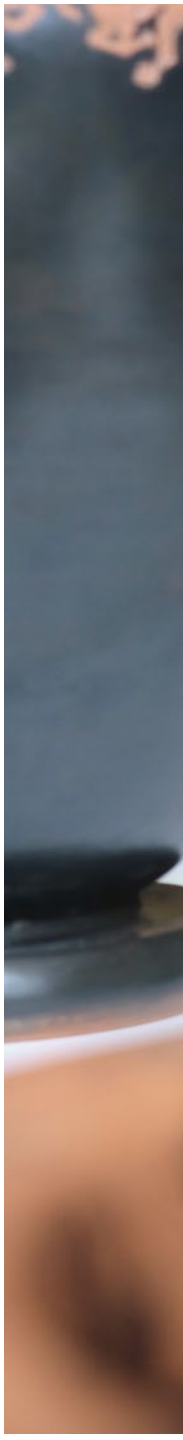
Take it to the Bridge runs yearly and focuses on live performance of popular music.

"The sheer quality of talent involved is so impressive," says Matt Fincham (Emmanuel 2002), music editor at BBC Radio 1 and a returning Take it to the Bridge judge. "It's still quite a new competition, but it's brilliant that the winning students are getting access to people in the music industry and that they've had the opportunity to play alongside some very acclaimed artists. It would be great if one day it was the same kind of pipeline for musical talent as Footlights has been for comedy."

Iona Luke (Magdalene 2022) won this year's Take it to the Bridge. "The win made me feel really confident and gave me some validation at a time when I really needed it," she says. "I'd spent my whole time at university planning for a music career and, as I got closer to graduation, I was thinking: 'Am I actually going to do this? Am I going to commit?'"

Luke and her band hadn't expected to win. She had only learned to play the guitar two months beforehand, having previously focused on keyboards, and put the band together even later than that. "We thought we had no hope," she says. "But I think our shock made winning so much better." That May Week, they played nine gigs – a combination of Luke's original material and well-chosen covers. By the time May Week rolled around for Matthijs Duursma, he was on the move again with his musical equipment, although this time he was navigating Cambridge's cycle lanes with his synthesiser strapped to his bike. "I mean, I'm Dutch, I'm used to cycling, but it was still quite tricky when you add in stands and everything else," he says.

His night at FlashBand was a unique introduction to the city's music scene. He would go on to start his own band, and eventually join 2024's Take it to the Bridge winners Quasar, a student band who blend jazz and hip hop and who had been booked for 12 separate gigs in May Week. "Sometimes we would do three balls in one night, which was amazing but exhausting," he says. "Then we played the Corn Exchange on the evening of my dissertation deadline. It was all completely wild. But the music scene here is something to treasure and cherish, and I just hope it carries on in new and exciting ways."



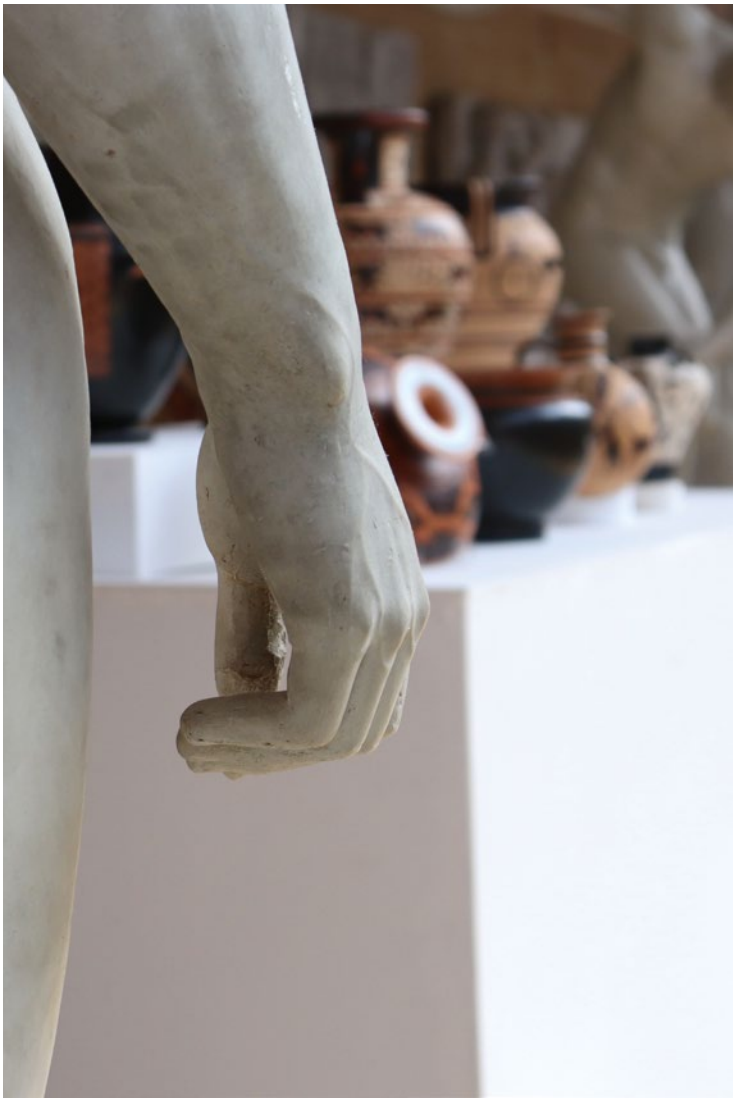
C A S T — O F F S

What happens when the modern and the classical collide? There are some strange, beautiful and illuminating things happening at the Museum of Classical Archaeology – but it all starts with plaster.

WORDS **VICTORIA JAMES** PHOTOGRAPHY **DR SUSANNE TURNER**

They are not marble or bronze. They are mostly not terribly old. Many are not valuable. Yet the Museum of Classical Archaeology (MoCA)'s extensive collection of plaster casts – busts, sculptures, complete friezes – is prized by its curator, Dr Susanne Turner (Darwin 2004), no less than the original artefacts in the museum's care.

"They're mostly Victorian replicas," she explains. "And replicas are a funny class of objects, aren't they? They fall betwixt and between all our usual categories. They possess meaning because they have an indelible link, like an invisible string, connecting them to something that is two and a half thousand years old, and is somewhere else in the world today."



←
The Silence of Time
Loukas Morley
2019

Loukas Morley is a Cambridge-born and Cambridge-based creative. His show at MoCA combined large-scale painting, photography and multi-media works made from repurposed materials. His first love is working with wood and crafting beautiful objects and furniture from found or donated timber.

Possessed of this enigmatic duality, plaster casts have a fascinating history all of their own – one that has inspired artists and scholars alike. "Plaster casts have been a thing since Ancient Rome," explains Caroline Vout (Newnham 1991), Professor of Classics and Director of the Museum. "The Romans made plaster casts of Greek sculptures, and they were used by artists throughout the Renaissance. They were one of the ways classical art became an international language of power and influence in court societies and beyond, all over Europe."

The 18th and 19th centuries were the heyday of the plaster cast, a time when replicas of statuary and reliefs were brought to Britain in substantial numbers by travellers who had undertaken a Grand Tour of the continent. "These were aristocrats, the wealthy, the types of people that were learning Latin and Greek," Turner says. "As part of their education they would go on a little jolly around Italy, maybe a bit of Greece if it was safe. They ate a lot of Parmesan, drank some wine, probably had liaisons with members of the opposite sex – or the same sex – and then brought home a souvenir. Sometimes that could be a portrait of themself next to an ancient sculpture, maybe fondling an Aphrodite. But sometimes it was a plaster cast. By the middle of the 19th century, there were plaster-cast workshops in all the major European cities."

With those same workshops also supplying great museums and educational institutions, ›

←
Cultured Canines
Allison Ksiazkiewicz
2025

Allison Ksiazkiewicz's practice is inspired by natural history, archaeology and landscape to explore the ways we connect to each other and the natural world. The series of ceramic works she showed at MoCA paired rare dog breeds familiar from the modern world with techniques of making vases drawn from the ancient past.

A cast makes something come alive, maybe unexpectedly, because there's an interaction you perhaps wouldn't have recognised if you were just studying the object through an archive. It's playful. There's both humour and emotion in our expectation of what an object is, and what it isn't

and philanthropic collectors donating their assemblage of casts to deserving seats of learning, plaster casts democratised access to the treasures of the ancient world. Turner explains that a government programme to upskill workers in art and design skills to equip them for the industrial age meant fine art schools in northern major cities could use grants to obtain plaster casts for free.

What's plain, even by this time, is that plaster casts occupy an ambiguous cultural space – one perfectly illustrated by the history of Cambridge's own collection, which today numbers around 1,000 pieces. "Our earliest casts were given to the University in the 19th century and went straight into the Fitzwilliam Museum," says Vout. "There, catalogues talk about them as though they are the real thing. So, at that point, they were considered artworks. Then as you get to the end of the 19th century, when notions of authenticity are being more explicitly discussed, they were moved out of the Fitzwilliam into the designated collection that is the forerunner of today's Cast Gallery. Here, they became what Mary Beard has called 'specimens in a lab'. They were used rather like PowerPoint presentations, as teaching aids."

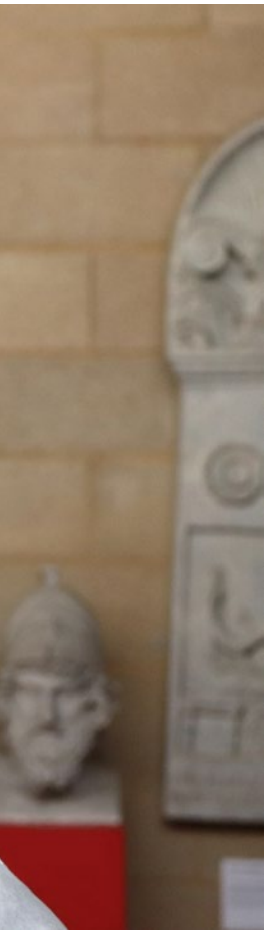
A large cast collection enabled scholarly analysis that was beyond the scope of purely authentic collections, in turn driving the acceptance of classical archaeology as a field of research. "With casts, you can build chronologies," Vout explains. "Even a museum as powerful as the British Museum doesn't have very much 6th-century BC monumental sculpture, but if you have a plaster cast collection with a gap like that, you can just go and buy what you need. That enables the construction of a history of style. It also meant scholars in the mid to late 19th century used casts and photographs to identify works named in specific classical texts, such as Pliny's *Natural History*. This was instrumental in establishing archaeology as an academic university discipline."

So from the start, cast collections entwined popular and scholarly study, and inspired artists and academics alike. What's perhaps more surprising is that they continue to fulfil this role today, when there are many more ways of accessing originals, from online photographic catalogues to budget flights to Greece and Italy. So why still keep and look at casts?

"Is studying casts in any way better or worse than looking at originals?" asks Allison Ksiazkiewicz (Darwin 2007),

↗
A Room of One's Own
Mark Mann
2025

Mark Mann is an artist who works with textile, ceramics and bronze, predominantly drawing on classical iconography and queer themes. His work deliberately juxtaposes difficult histories with the beguiling sensuality of luxury items. His exhibition at MoCA asked the viewer to confront and challenge pre-conceived notions around homosexuality.



a multidisciplinary artist who is currently exhibiting at the Cast Gallery. "What do they tell you that is different from what the originals tell you? For me, that question sparks all sorts of interesting discussions about authenticity, forgery and originality."

Ksiazkiewicz's installation, *Culture Canines: Evolution, Emotion, Imitation*, plays explicitly with notions of authenticity. It comprises 12 ceramic pieces that look like Greek Attic pottery with its distinctive black-and-red design – which on closer inspection reveal the forms of dogs entirely unknown to Ancient Greece.

Ksiazkiewicz says she was inspired by hearing passionate dog breeders telling mythologised tall tales about their beloved breeds. "They love these stories of their breed's golden age that never really existed, which got me thinking about the cultural histories we tell ourselves. And then one day an image popped into my head of the famous collector and envoy to Naples Sir William Hamilton acquiring a vase dug up at Herculaneum that had an [ahistorical] chihuahua on it. It made me smile, but I also realised it was a really good way to explore questions of invention and authenticity."

In pursuit of the most authentic, inauthentic objects possible, Ksiazkiewicz teamed up with an Athenian workshop, Attic Black, which produces museum-grade replicas of classical and prehistoric Greek ceramics. Just like the Victorian-era plaster casts, Attic Black's output spans reproductions for institutions and high-end souvenirs for tourists. Ksiazkiewicz was hands on throughout the collaborative manufacture, providing specifications for the ceramics then painting them.

"It's very different from working in archives," she says. "It makes something come alive, maybe unexpectedly, because there's an interaction in the making that you wouldn't have recognised if you were just studying the object through an archive." Seeing her works now displayed in the Cast Gallery gives her enormous pleasure, she says, because it's a setting that captures how a thing can be both authentic, in a way, but also modern. "It's playful. There's both humour and emotion in our expectation of what an object is, and what it isn't."

Vout agrees. "The act of reproduction has been an act of play as much as it's been an act of reverence ever since Ancient Romans were adapting and appropriating Greek art," she says. "And that playfulness enables us as curators to be playful too, and to bring out the artfulness of the casts and be a little irreverent with them in all sorts of ways."

Alongside its permanent collection, MoCA stages two or three exhibitions a year from local and international creators, such as Norfolk artist Mark Mann's *A Room of One's Own*, which explores "the bravery of the queer interior". ›

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↓
Simulacra
Zachary Eastwood-Bloom
2023

Trained as a ceramicist, Zachary Eastwood-Bloom is an artist who is fascinated by the intersection of art and technology. In his show at MoCA, he combined the two to create something new and unexpected: works inspired by the classical but brought into being by computer algorithms.

This included classically styled pieces, harking back to the inspiration and comfort that queer communities have long drawn from the visibility of same-sex love in the classical world. Ceramicist James Epps brought dazzling hues to the Museum when he installed large-scale mosaics shaped by the use of pattern and colour in Ancient Rome, inspired by studies both on site in Italy and among the MoCA's plaster casts.

But while Ksiazkiewicz, Mann and Epps engage specifically with classical forms, many of the Cast Gallery's exhibitions do not. "Sometimes abstract things work really beautifully," says Turner. "They push back against the classical. And given that most visitors who see these exhibitions probably didn't come specifically for them, it's a fantastic opportunity not only to reach a new audience but also to help them along, because these visitors came to see the classical body – and instead they're being presented with contemporary art."

Today, MoCA's offering interweaves all strands of the complex history of plaster casts. The Cast Gallery remains a site of academic instruction – "I still take my undergraduates in there for their first supervision," says Vout, with a touch of mischief. "We ask them to comment on objects, which can really throw them because they're used to talking about how texts affect us, but they're not trained to articulate why sculpture does." With regular Drink and Draw evenings, the Museum honours the artistic instruction heritage of plaster casts – a valuable role given Cambridge has no fine arts department.

Above all, the collection keeps asking the questions plaster casts have posed since their inception: Where does authenticity begin and end? What might you see if you look hard enough? "At the Museum, we see the life drawing, and the contemporary art shows, and the studying we might do in a supervision as part and parcel of the same cultural aim," says Vout. "And that's to get people to look and to see differently."

Would you like to exhibit at MoCA?

The museum welcomes exhibition proposals from artists of diverse backgrounds, and would love to hear from you if you would like to interpret its space or collection in creative ways.

To propose an exhibition, contact the Curator Dr Susanne Turner at smt41@cam.ac.uk

D R E A M

The Shuar – an Indigenous people who have lived in the Ecuadorian Peruvian Amazon region for more than two and a half centuries – are used to conflict. So when they were faced with yet more state interference in their society, they didn't flinch; they innovated. And, says Dr Natalia Buitron, their solutions carry lessons for us all.

WORDS **LUCY JOLIN** PHOTOGRAPHY **JAVIER CLEMENTE MARTINEZ**

S T A T E

Imagine your family are completely autonomous. How you live, where you go, who you live with and what you value are entirely your call. But over time, food becomes scarce and movement difficult. You're no longer able to live the way your people have lived for centuries. Now, you have to avoid encroachment and engage with state services – just to get hold of the things you and your children need, such as food, healthcare and education.

How do you organise yourselves into a cohesive group? What institutions do you create? What structures can defend your independence while ensuring the group is represented effectively? These are the questions that the Shuar, an Indigenous group of people living in southeastern Ecuador, have had to grapple with over the past century. And their inventive, intriguing solutions reveal a new way of thinking about state formation and political imagination.

"In the Global North, we have the Hobbesian fear that everything will fall apart without a central power," says Dr Natalia Buitron, Jessica Sainsbury Associate Professor in the Anthropology of Amazonia. Buitron, whose lectureship was made possible thanks to a generous endowment in 2020 by fellow anthropologist Jessica Sainsbury (Jesus 1989), has close ties with the region – her father was a forestry engineer and her mother was a legal expert in Indigenous land rights – and has spent long periods living alongside Shuar people.

"The Shuar and many other rural/forest people's movements around the world disrupt these dichotomies about how power operates. My research shows that Indigenous communities ›

01
The Pastaza river in the Ecuadorian Amazon is part of an area of wetland designated as of international importance and protected under the Ramsar Convention.

02
The Shuar are an Indigenous people that have lived in the Ecuadorian and Peruvian Amazon for over 2,500 years. The current population of the Shuar is estimated to be around 100,000 people.

The Shuar and many other rural/forest people's movements around the world disrupt dichotomies about how power operates. My research shows that Indigenous communities don't just adopt external institutions – they creatively reinvent them

don't just adopt external institutions – they creatively reinvent them."

The Shuar – who form the largest of the Aénts Chicham-speaking conglomeration on the Amazon border between Ecuador and Peru – historically lived along the banks of rivers in small, close-knit kinship groups, with substantial zones of no man's land between each group. From the late 19th century, two powerful groups disrupted this way of living. The government forced the Shuar off their land and cleared it for agriculture, while missionaries moved in to 'civilise' them.

So far, so predictable. But what happened next proved more surprising and powerful than outsiders could have ever imagined. While it was decided that the Shuar people would be forced into villages and given land and cattle to start cooperatives – to assimilate them into Ecuador's nation state – the Shuar themselves had other

ideas. They came to realise that their own autonomy and prosperity increasingly depended on access to external resources and powers, so they found pragmatic ways to interact with the central government. In doing so, their own communities were transformed.

"Once the cooperatives were up and running, Shuar people began to work out how to turn this state-led system into a weapon of resistance," says Buitron. "They looked at it as a way to gain their own titles, become owners of their own lands and gain access to the services that were being given to other settlers – such as schools, roads and hospitals – but not them.

"The cooperatives were the institution that enabled the idea of coming together under some form of association in a nested structure. Cooperatives became groups of villages, which became the Shuar Federation in 1964 – one of the earliest Indigenous resistance organisations in Ecuador. By mimicking the structure of the state, they were able to take it on."

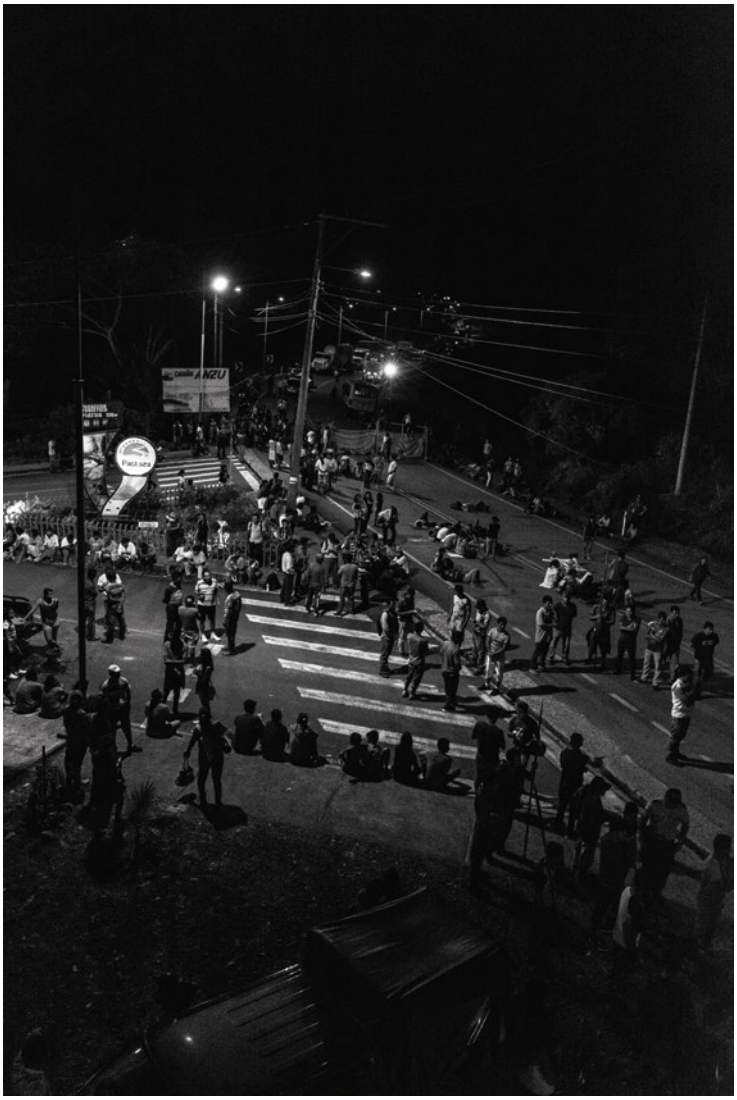
The Federation had leaders, democratically elected, who spoke on behalf of their constituents. This was an organisation that made sense to the Ecuadorian state – so it had to recognise it and speak to it. Since then, the Shuar have utilised similar federations to negotiate with national institutions and keep alive their way of life, using what Buitron calls their "institutional plasticity" – adapting state systems to meet their own needs.

Encroachment from cattle ranching means they are no longer able to provide for themselves from the forest: but they need to be able to feed themselves. The Shuar need leaders: that means access to education and university, which requires an education infrastructure. All these things require access to public budgets – and to do that, they will elect people to regional governments and make alliances with NGOs. ›

03
Fish trapping is not only a subsistence technique: it also activates important forms of intergenerational knowledge transmission and connections to the riverine environment.

04
The soft crackle of fire accompanies daily meals and storytelling, and is also key to preparing a new garden for cultivation. The Shuar have a short myth that tells how Jempe, the hummingbird, stole fire from Takea, the owner of fire, with its tail feather and gave it to humans, who were then able to use it for cooking.

Dr Natalia Buitron is the Jessica Sainsbury Associate Professor in the Anthropology of Amazonia, and Director of Studies at Jesus. Her work explores political subjectivities, indigeneity and development – specifically how broader political and economic forms interweave with moral transformation in daily life. She has researched, written and taught on a wide range of issues relating to Indigenous-state relations, inequality and intercultural education.



Decisions are made by drinking many a manioc beer together, working together, sharing stuff, fighting and then occasionally agreeing about the course of action

Javier Clemente Martinez is a photographer exploring identity, memory and the relationship between communities and their territory, especially within the context of social change and cultural resistance. He has worked extensively with the Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of the Ecuadorian Amazon, and documented its many political movements and protests.

But while these systems might look similar on the surface, the reality of how they operate is very different. A federation council has members, councillors, directors – echoing the kinds of institutions that democratic governments understand and can engage with. But the real power lies locally. "For example, if you want to go and visit one of those villages that the federation supposedly represents, they might give you a letter saying, yes, you can travel because you look like a decent person," says Buitron.

"But to access that place, you need to talk to the people who live there. They hold the power, not the federation. It is incredibly decentralised. You have to figure out who might be able to introduce you to the people who might be influential enough to take you around for visits to different households. Then someone calls an assembly where people debate for hours, until they decide that yes, you're a decent person."

This local decision-making process is constantly in flux. There are formal structures, says Buitron, but they don't determine the character of everyday life. "Decisions are made by drinking many a manioc beer together, working together, sharing stuff, fighting and then occasionally agreeing about the course of

action. Eventually, all these daily processes may create something that looks like a decision, which eventually acquires a formal shape."

There are times, of course, when the community does come together. In moments of conflict with the state, for example, Shuar federations will appear as a single resistance movement. "But coming up with that sort of structure will have taken a lot of work, a lot of assemblies, a lot of intra-household visits. And in no way is the decision being made centrally."

This is also nothing like the stereotype of the communistic, collectivist Indigenous community, she points out. Once the Shuar were given central resources, authorities had certain expectations about how those Indigenous villages should run. "In the 1950s, the assumption was that they were completely anarchic, lawless and savages. Now, the assumption is, oh, they're Indigenous, they have cooperatives, they have communities and run assemblies. They must be communistic and collectivistic, because that's how we expect Indigenous peoples to be. But they are nothing like a collective, though they create the fiction of a collective in a very powerful way."

Say, for example, the Shuar are offered money for a new ecotourism enterprise and told how they should build it. An elected leader might mediate that process on a regional level to get the money. But families within the community will make it very clear that things will be done their own way.

"One might want an ecotourism enterprise; another might want a fish nursery. The community will support families to harness these resources by creating a minga – a collective work party, which is also appropriated from a neighbouring Indigenous group. But they won't turn up every day and work together to a rota. The community is not responsible for the outcome of that project, or the resources they are harnessing."

What might we learn from the Shuar's structures? Of course, we can't simply take a way of life that's formed over centuries and expect to replicate it in a completely different context. And, says Buitron, there are many models of democracy where hierarchy works well. Rather, it's the Shuar's ability to adapt, grow and change within power structures which could help us move towards something better for everyone. "It's the ability to think flexibly, and not confuse flexibility with chaos," she says.

"The Shuar will make something routine. But when it's not working, they'll change it. If a leader is not doing their job, they will change ›

05
For the Shuar, land is not an inert resource but a living realm inhabited by master-owners of game and plants, with whom social relations must be cultivated.

06–07
A roadblock in Pastaza, in protest against extractive companies that intend to plunder their ancestral lands of the Ecuadorian Amazon.

08
A member of the Indigenous resistance protesting against extractive companies.

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him or her. Sometimes they won't even have elections. They'll try something different because they don't have our established patterns. I think that shows we can be flexible – and that doesn't mean things will collapse."

That kind of thinking is, she admits, frustrating for anthropologists who have been repeatedly assured that a fascinating festival is definitely happening – until it isn't, and nobody seems particularly troubled by it. (Apart from the anthropologist.) "I'm not going to romanticise it, but in the long run there is something incredibly productive about the possibility of changing things."

Right now in the Global North, Buitron points out, there is a sense of being stuck, of not being able to really change anything. "We don't know how to tackle climate change, for example, because we don't know how to change the current structure, the political economy that's brought us here.

"The Shuar have developed this way of doing things because they have confronted incredible challenges. They have been colonised. They have faced off huge threats. Resilience is their best friend. They can accommodate their solution to the current situation at hand."

And the failed experiment in moulding the Shuar into what the government wanted them to be should teach us that without dialogue, cooperation and alliances, change simply doesn't happen – however good our intentions are. "You can design the most beautiful carbon credit system in the world, for example – but if people have no real part in it, it's going to fail," says Buitron. "You have to work with those people. When they tell you how they operate, you have to listen. Otherwise, it will fail."

You can design the most beautiful carbon credit system in the world – but if people have no real part in it, it's going to fail

09
Roadblock in Macas, Morona-Santiago.
Photo by Natalia Buitron

10
A Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of the Ecuadorian Amazon demonstration in the city of Quito, uniting many different Indigenous communities in defence of the territory.

ALUMNI AWARDS

It's time to celebrate the amazing alumni who are making a real difference in their worlds, says Clare Monaghan, Director of Alumni Engagement.

INTERVIEW **LUCY JOLIN** ILLUSTRATION **JEFF THE PEFF**

Cambridge alumni are, quite simply, extraordinary. Whether your focus is local or global, independent or part of a larger group, your positive impact on the world is remarkable. You're innovators and leaders; teachers and mentors; changemakers and community-builders.

That's why we are so delighted to launch the University of Cambridge Alumni Awards – a way to recognise your exceptional talents, share your stories and celebrate your achievements.

Excellence takes many forms. Yes, we want to celebrate the next David Attenborough, Emma Thompson or Demis Hassabis. But these awards are designed to recognise incredible contributions from alumni across *all* walks and stages of life – in your professional sphere, through voluntary work or as part of a recognised alumni group.

The Global Achievement Award celebrates alumni who have made a significant contribution in their chosen field; the Better World Service Award honours those enriching communities locally or internationally; the Emerging Alumni Award highlights outstanding early-career achievements; and the Alumni Group and Volunteer categories celebrate collective and individual dedication specifically to the University community

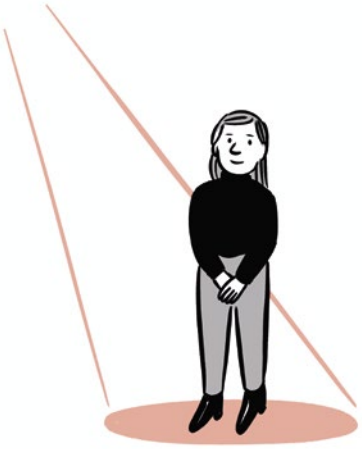
Nominations will open in February 2026, and you can nominate yourself or someone else. These are your awards – your stories and your choices. We can't wait to hear about the people making a difference, from global leaders to those improving lives one person at a time.

Global Achievement Award

This award recognises alumni who have made significant contributions to their chosen field or profession and should be an inspiration to and serve as a role model for future generations. They should have evidence of recognition and influence, such as awards, honours, media coverage or leadership roles, and of global influence or contribution.

Better World Service Award

To celebrate the influence of alumni to enrich local or international communities through activities such as volunteering and service to the community. The winner will demonstrate the positive effect of their contribution and deep engagement and commitment to social impact. They will show creativity and leadership in initiating or improving community projects, and their efforts will be acknowledged by peers, community or the media.



Emerging Alumni Award

We want to shine a light on recent alumni who demonstrate excellence and accomplishments in their professional field with the possibility of even greater things in the future. Having finished their course within the past 10 years, they will serve as a role model for current and prospective students, and provide evidence of innovative thinking, leadership roles or entrepreneurial success.

Alumni Group of the Year

This award celebrates officially recognised alumni groups that have made an exceptional contribution to their Cambridge alumni community. Groups will demonstrate high levels of engagement, diversity of activities and a focus on serving their whole group community. They will have innovative approaches to connect the alumni community and show commitment to the long-term sustainability of the group.

Alumni Volunteer of the Year

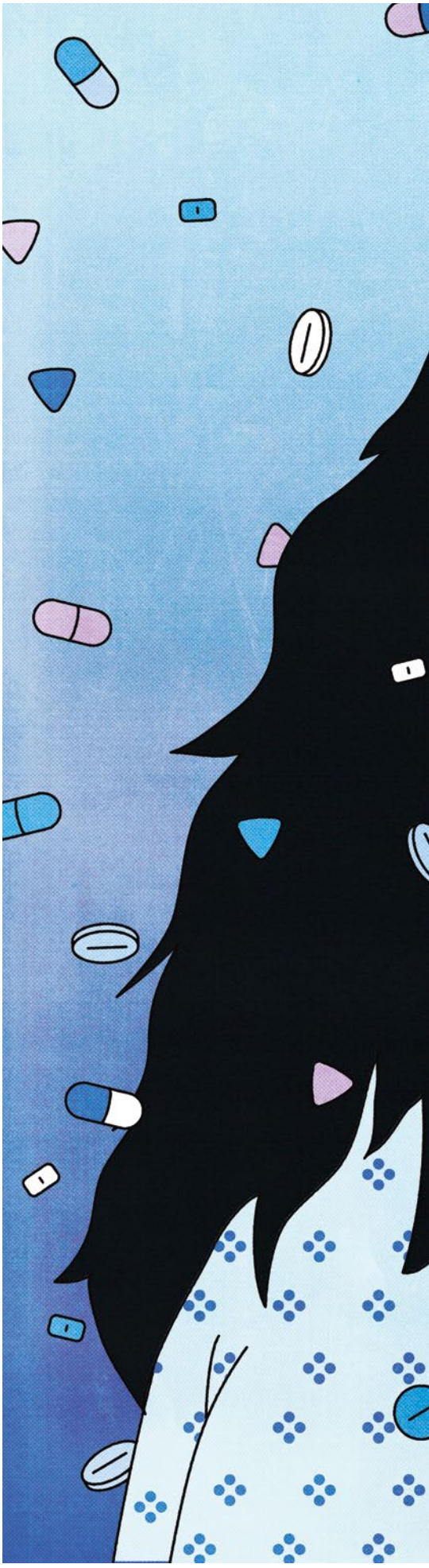
Celebrating individual alumni who have generously supported the University and alumni community and created significant impact by giving their time and expertise. They will demonstrate long-term commitment, and will show evidence of tangible positive outcomes from their volunteer activities, either as an individual volunteer or through leading, inspiring and initiating meaningful volunteer projects or activities.

Nominations for the awards will open in February with the winners announced in July. So if you or someone you know deserves to be recognised, visit the website at alumni.cam.ac.uk/alumni-awards-and-honours

This idea must die: "Female bodies are too complicated for science"

Professor Amanda Sferruzzi-Perri says the underrepresentation of females in scientific research has significant consequences for disease treatment.

INTERVIEW **VICTORIA JAMES** ILLUSTRATION **GEORGE WYLESOL**



The outdated notion that female bodies are 'too complicated' for science, due to their hormonal variability, has long influenced biomedical research, leading to an underrepresentation of female subjects and women's experiences that persists to this day.

The earliest misconception, ironically, was that male and female bodies barely differed beyond their organs of reproduction. There was no understanding of possible differences in how women's bodies work, how they respond to stresses, fight off infections, show disease or pain, or respond to treatments. As a result, the earliest medical research was largely conducted by men on male subjects or male animals, with the assumption that what they saw would be the same for both sexes.

It wasn't until the early 1900s that researchers understood that hormones differed between male and female bodies, and that there were hormonal changes in the female body across the ovarian cycle. Unfortunately, these insights didn't lead to a shift in scientific practice because the conclusion drawn was that the female body was... too complex to be a consistent research subject.

Women's hormonal cycles, it was believed, would introduce challenges and variability in research results. So rather than correcting the existing bias toward male subjects, males continued to be the default – only the reasoning changed. Male animals and male humans were deemed easier to study – even though we now know many hormonal changes occur in male bodies, too, through the lifecycle.

This approach wasn't entirely due to ignorance and prejudice. There have been sincere concerns about studying women's bodies, particularly in clinical trials, because females are born with every egg they will ever produce. So there can be fears about research interventions that might compromise a female subject's fertility, her pregnancy or the health of the next generation that would be born from those eggs. In part, it's an attitude of caution or protection. But the consequence is a lack of information about female bodies: what their disease pathways look like, and how management and treatment might differ from those recommended for males.

The shortcomings of such an approach were recognised by 1993, when the US National Institutes of Health issued a mandate that female subjects should be included in clinical trials. That attitude eventually filtered through to Europe, Australia and the UK, and there has been a push to include females – or, importantly, to include both sexes – in studies, because we know certain conditions vary in prevalence by sex, such as heart problems disproportionately affecting males, and autoimmune and endocrine issues in females.

So there has been a push for change – but it's still not fast enough. And we are still living with significant consequences of this idea of the too-difficult female body – even now, medical texts will contain facts solely derived from the study of male subjects, and drugs remain on the market that have never been tested on female bodies. In fact, there is data

The consequence is a lack of information about female bodies: what their disease pathways look like, and how management and treatment might differ from that recommended for males

suggesting that when drugs are pulled off the market, the reason in around 80 per cent of cases is that they caused adverse side effects in women, having been tested only on male subjects. There are also instances where the prescribing dosage is based on studies of the male biological body, and is not correct for female patients even after adjustment for body weight. So it's likely we're mis-prescribing or even not prescribing the correct drugs, to help treat and manage problems of the female body.

Information is power, so it's essential we study both sexes, as there is still much we don't know. A major interest of my lab is understanding to what extent sex differences impact on disease susceptibility, particularly in response to adverse environments in very early development. We know male and female foetuses vary in their development, and that prenatal risks of disease are different. Is that related to sex chromosomes, or to hormones, or to the placenta – the vital organ that forms during pregnancy to support foetal development? What sets up a trajectory of divergent outcomes for male and females after birth that might explain adult differences in the incidence of diabetes, certain cardiovascular diseases and autoimmune diseases?

The female and male bodies are both amazing. If we avoid favouring one over the other, or simply assuming there's no difference, we can design strategies that are more effective – and that have better outcomes – both for individuals and for strained healthcare systems.

Professor Sferruzzi-Perri works in the Department of Physiology, Development and Neuroscience, leading on reproduction, development and lifelong health.

Everyone was holding hands and swaying to the music – there was a tear in my eye

Robbie Williams' *Angels* brought the curtain down on Chris Smith's time as Pembroke Master, but now a new chapter at Cambridge is just beginning.

INTERVIEW **LUCY JOLIN** PHOTOGRAPHY **MEGAN TAYLOR**

Lord Smith of Finsbury (Pembroke 1969) arrived at College as a young man with a passion for English – and politics. Following his double first in English (and later a PhD on Wordsworth and Coleridge), he went on to build a successful career in public life: as MP for Islington South and Finsbury from 1983, as a member of the shadow cabinet holding a number of front bench posts, and as Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport until 2001. But he was also a breaker of barriers as the first openly gay male MP in the House of Commons – and the first openly gay cabinet minister anywhere in the world.

In 2005, he stood down from the Commons and was made a life peer. Since then, he's chaired the Environment Agency and the Advertising Standards Authority, and in 2015, he returned to his beloved Pembroke as Master. Now, following his election as the University's 109th Chancellor, he's delighted to be bringing a wealth of experience to this 800-year-old role.

Che gelida manina*, *La Bohème
Giacomo Puccini, 1896

I had a wonderful group of friends at Pembroke who were passionate about opera. But, as a theatre lover, I couldn't understand why anyone would want to sing the words. They informed me that it was about the combination of sight, sound, music, speech, costumes and sets. And they took me to the Royal Opera House to see Puccini's *La Bohème* for my birthday. I was transfixed. I came out in tears. And that was my conversion to opera. Any version of this song sets me off: it's the most beautiful first interaction between the penniless poet Rodolfo and his beautiful fellow garret-dweller Mimi.

Sanctus*, *Requiem in D minor
Op 48, Gabriel Fauré, 1890

I spent a further three years at Pembroke as a postgraduate, and once again a group of friends were instrumental in introducing me to this work. We all packed into a battered old car and drove up to Ely Cathedral to hear a performance of Fauré's *Requiem*. Sitting in that glorious cathedral, looking up at the Lantern and listening to this wonderful music flooding over us was just magical. I've chosen the *Sanctus* but the *In Paradisum* is a very close second. I was very lucky to have such good friends with whom to experience this music. ›

Bridge Over Troubled Water
Simon and Garfunkel, 1970

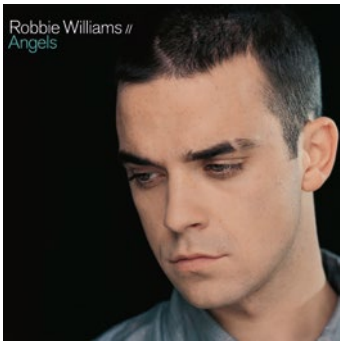
The night before every exam, I developed my own routine. I'd go out and walk around the Pembroke Gardens. I loved the beauty, the darkness and the silence. Then I'd go back to my room and play *Bridge Over Troubled Water*. It was a wonderfully calming experience. I have no idea whether it did me any good in the exams the following day! But I just loved its calming effect: I wanted a way of settling myself and it worked. It was so beautiful – it still is – and it just seemed natural to play it.

Hallelujah
Leonard Cohen, 1984

When I was coming to the end of my Mastership, the Pembroke Choir had a concert scheduled and asked me if I would like to choose two songs for them to sing. I have loved Cohen since *Suzanne* came out in 1967 – I used to play it constantly – and *Hallelujah* is the perfect combination of his genius as a poet and a musician. Anna Lapwood, who was then Director of Music for Pembroke, wrote a special version for the Choir. Hearing them sing it for me felt absolutely amazing.

Danny Boy
Sung by Thomas Spencer, 2021

This was the second of the songs that the Pembroke Choir sang for me. But it has another resonance, too. Four years ago, I had a birthday party at Pembroke and my friend, the tenor Thomas Spencer, came and sang it for me. As a birthday present, he gave me a CD of his performance. I first heard *Danny Boy* at a friend's party: we were staying in the Victorian castle on the Isle of Rùm, and one evening, his brother sat down at the piano and played it. I don't have any Irish roots but I've loved it ever since.



Angels
Robbie Williams, 1997

At the end of my final May Ball as Master, I made it all the way to the survivors' photographs and was very proud of myself. Everyone was gathered at the front of the stage and then, of course, *Angels* was played: it's almost become the Pembroke theme tune over recent years, so I really had to choose it. Everyone was holding hands and swaying to the music and there was definitely a tear in my eye. It's such a wonderful pop song that means so much to so many people.

Universities are the places where research is done, where ideas are generated, where the future is put together. We need to persuade governments of the sheer importance of that role, because I don't think they recognise it yet

A NEW CHANCELLOR

The role of Chancellor may be ceremonial – but it comes with considerable responsibilities. "You're a figurehead for the University," says Lord Smith. "You can and should be a voice for and an advocate for everything the University believes in, and everything it does."

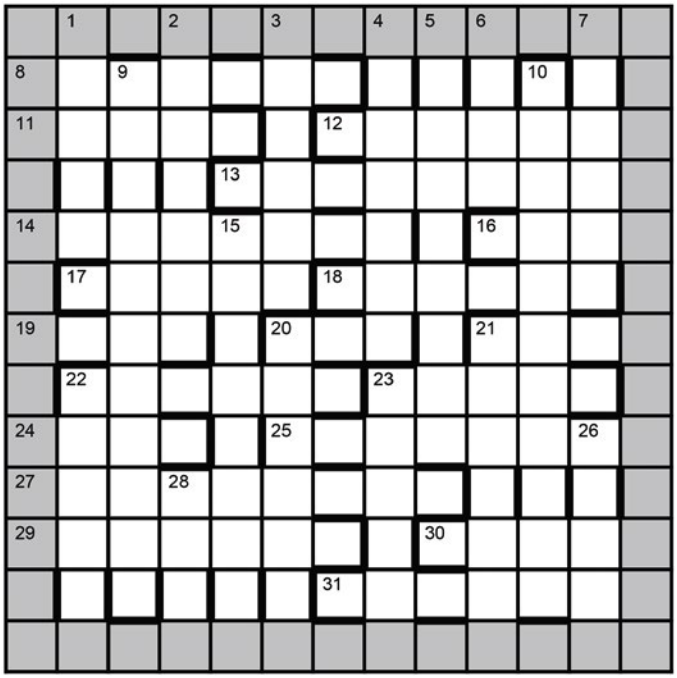
His advocacy during his 10-year tenure will focus on academic freedom and freedom of speech. "We have seen, all too obviously, what happens when academic freedom disappears, over the other side of the Atlantic. We need to defend that principle very fiercely here. Freedom of speech is allied to that, because a university has to be a place of debate, discussion and contested ideas. It's not a place of received wisdom."

He also plans to champion the role of the University as a catalyst for innovation and growth. "Universities are the places where research is done, where ideas are generated, where the future is put together. We need to persuade governments of the sheer importance of that role, because I don't think they recognise it yet." And as someone with strong ties to his College, he hopes to ensure that the University and the Colleges work ever more closely together. "Cambridge is at its best when you get that collaborative approach."

Down with the Cryptic Kids

by Nimrod

Twenty clues contain a superfluous word which must be removed before solving. In clue order, the words, when one letter is changed in each (not necessarily forming another word), spell the six members of a theme group that are each cryptically hinted at in the clockwise perimeter. The wordplay in each of the 15 remaining clues leads to the answer plus an extra letter. In order, these letters indicate what, in relation to a seventh thematic item, solvers must highlight in the final grid. Unchecked perimeter letters reveal WACKO TIG'S WORST PLAYER.



Across

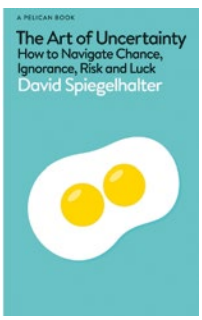
8 Land allotted this old Greek church after suffering cruel blip (7)
11 Let out from awfully emotional screening process (5)
12 Player's tender ultimately to dean, thus gypsies returning (7)
13 Pedantic nymphs finally switching sculpture (9)
14 So-so stuff, then exciting unique occurrences (8)
16 James Dean playing mad parts with a forgotten cut (4)
17 Malaysian winger playing in London, with international behind him (5)
18 Traps fixed fields at Wetherby? (6)
19 One retired grandparent's hot stuff! (4)
20 Host's snubbed aged uncle (3)
21 Milky-white polar bear in the end missing wild ass (4)
22 Doppelganger in dress on the pull? (6)
23 Ed's ninth dish: fricasséed beans (5)
24 Email *Times* to report what we have (4)
25 NYC receiver's purring perhaps, plenty to do in pass (8, 2 words)
27 Superficial dicky for Louis to pin onto Victor (9)
29 Wrong to head west through the majority of rustic avian populations (7)
30 Regularly shocking Eton merrymaking after dropping lithium (5)
31 Keg porter's not cold – tip for one Spanish transporter (7)

Down

1 Perhaps copper beech's kernel dropping out of tree (5)
2 Carriage must finish off lamb and take its soul (7)
3 Cohort disillusioned with international tax (6)
4 Catch chap up with unrestrained Easter greeting (7)
5 Dull labourer rounds Feds up in it (9)
6 Daughter aims to take plough over Scottish soil (4)
7 Luck fails schoolgirls (6)
9 Texan's attempting to dismiss court, stalling promise to leave wife (11)
10 Some teenagers go and open up freely in northern city dock (11, 2 words)
15 It being stuck in ring of Uncle Sam is personal problem (9)
20 Perpetual drunk needs shilling to maintain loose living at Crown (7)
21 Bone's newly set: I do no wrong protecting it (7)
22 Tower viewed when soaring from helicopter past Rutland (6)
23 Are you finally presented with bill for lifting plant? (6)
26 Letter theta not allowed in transcribing "saltpetre" (5)
28 Instrument volume starts to increase before eightsome reel (4)

All entries to be received by 6 February 2026. Send your entry:

- **by post to:** *CAM* 106 Prize Crossword, University of Cambridge, 1 Quayside, Bridge Street, Cambridge CB5 8AB
- **online at:** alumni.cam.ac.uk/magazine
- **by email to:** cameditor@alumni.cam.ac.uk



The first correct entry drawn will receive a £75 CUP book token and a copy of *The Art of Uncertainty: How to Navigate Chance, Ignorance, Risk and Luck* by data and statistics guru Professor Sir David Spiegelhalter OBE. Two runners-up will receive a £50 CUP book token. Solutions, winners and runners-up will be published in *CAM* 107 and online on 26 February 2026 at: **alumni.cam.ac.uk/magazine**

Solution to *CAM* 105 Crossword

Changing Course

Key word: WINDY

First/last letters of superfluous words spell BLUSTERY and (in reverse) TWISTING, defining WINDY. The highlighted winding winds are SCIROCCO, HARMATTAN, LEVANTER and NORWESTER.

S	A	R	C	O	I	D	P	O	T	A	S	H
U	C	A	R	S	C	R	O	F	U	L	A	S
S	T	I	E	S	A	C	E	N	T	R	I	C
B	A	N	N	E	R	E	T	B	U	I	M	R
N	E	P	A	L	I	P	I	R	A	G	U	A
R	O	S	S	E	A	I	C	U	S	H	T	Y
O	N	R	M	A	N	D	R	I	L	T	J	E
S	W	E	A	R	D	O	E	S	T	E	A	S
E	S	C	H	E	A	T	S	E	A	B	U	N
B	S	I	V	S	N	E	E	D	L	I	N	G
U	N	T	E	N	D	E	R	B	E	T	T	A
D	E	A	D	A	L	I	V	E	N	C	E	I
R	E	L	A	T	E	W	E	A	T	H	E	R

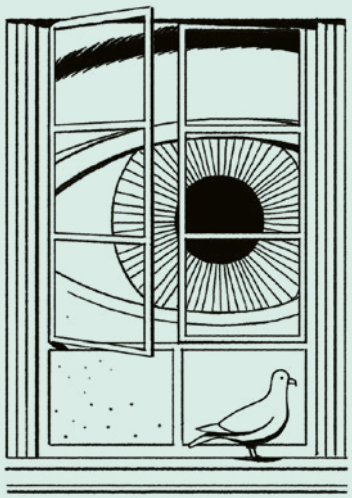
***CAM* 105 winner:** David Bishop (Selwyn 1986) **Runners-up:** Joanna Choules (Fitzwilliam 2013) and Frances Williams (Newnham 1970)

Search it up!

Your directory to alumni life: events, benefits and updates.

Alumni Festival 2026

Mark your diaries for the 2026 Alumni Festival, taking place between Friday 18 and Sunday 20 September. It'll be another inspiring weekend of connection, discovery and celebration, and we can't wait to see you there!



Careers Service

Wherever you are in your career journey, the Careers Service has the tools to help you move on. Access practical advice to help you build your CV and browse a wealth of resources on different industry sectors. Register with the Handshake platform to connect with students and fellow alumni. To find out more, visit alumni.cam.ac.uk/benefits/careers-service

Alumni Travel Programme

Embark on a journey of lifelong discovery with the Alumni Travel Programme and explore some of the world's most captivating destinations. Whether you're drawn to the ancient mosaics of Ravenna, the rugged beauty of Patagonia, the rich heritage of the Channel Islands or the surprises of medieval Alsace-Lorraine, there's an adventure waiting for you. Visit alumni.cam.ac.uk/travel to explore the full programme and read testimonials from past travellers.

CAMCard

The CAMCard is issued free to all alumni and with it you can visit Colleges open to the public without paying an entrance fee. The CAMCard also gives you access to a range of discounts across Cambridge, including tickets at the ADC theatre, the Clayton Hotel near Cambridge Station and Heffers Book Shop. To find out more about everything your CAMCard entitles you to, or to get yours, visit alumni.cam.ac.uk/camcard

Digital resources

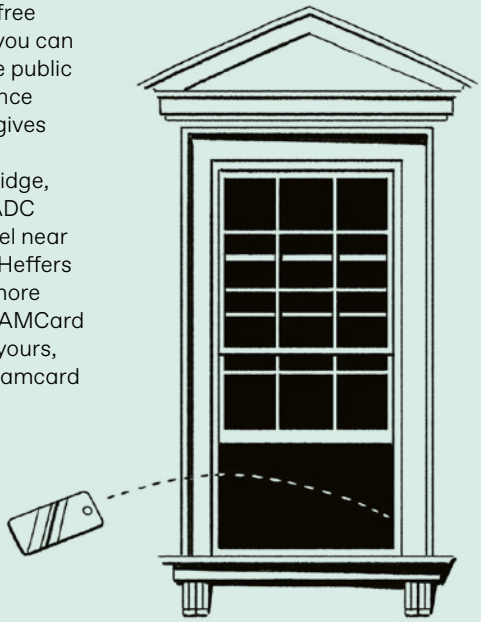
Explore a wealth of online resources from Cambridge's Colleges, departments, museums and much more. From virtual tours to online exhibitions and webinars, there's something for everyone. alumni.cam.ac.uk/digital

University podcasts

Listen to podcasts covering a wide range of topics from across the University, brought to you by members of the Cambridge community. alumni.cam.ac.uk/podcasts

Alumni Groups

Check out how to join one of more than 200 volunteer-led Alumni Groups by visiting alumni.cam.ac.uk/groups



Upcoming alumni events

Keep an eye on alumni.cam.ac.uk/events and your alumni newsletters for further details of all the other exciting events, including Cambridge Conversations, events hosted by Cambridge departments and faculties, and upcoming chances to connect with the alumni community around the world.

Alumni bookshelf

Read recently published titles from across the Cambridge community, as well as books with a link to the University. alumni.cam.ac.uk/benefits/book-shelf

Alumni Book Club

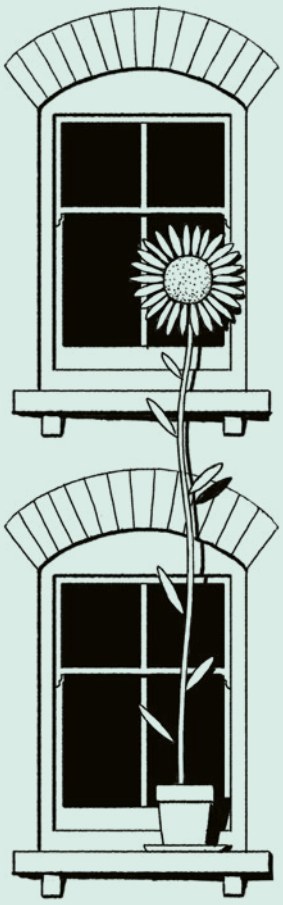
Join the debate with your fellow alumni at the bi-monthly virtual Alumni Book Club, now with dedicated College forums and virtual author talks. Members vote during each reading period to choose the next book, and participation is free for alumni. Find out more at alumni.cam.ac.uk/benefits/alumni-book-club

Journals and online resources

Discover the convenience of accessing numerous online academic resources regardless of your location. Benefit from complimentary access to higher education materials from Cambridge University Press, renowned for its top-tier content designed to enrich teaching and learning experiences in today's dynamic educational landscape. Find out what's available at alumni.cam.ac.uk/journals

On-demand content

Missed an event or Festival session? Check out the collection of recorded sessions from past events, including the Alumni Festival and Cambridge Conversations, at youtube.com/@YoursCambridge/playlists



ILLUSTRATIONS: MICHAEL KIRKHAM

EQ 10 YEAR ANNIVERSARY investors

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"When I started EQ Investors, I wanted to change the way that people grew their money. I wanted to show that there was another way. Our sustainable approach is the perfect way to grow your wealth and benefit the planet & society."

John Spiers, Clare College 1969-72

Certified B Corporation

FT ADVISER TOP 100 FINANCIAL ADVISERS MEMBER 2024 EQ Investors

Global Awards by WealthBriefing WealthForGood AWARDS 2024 WINNER EQ Investors PRIVATE ASSET MANAGEMENT THOUGHT LEADERSHIP (UK)

Financial Planner Chartered

EQ Investors is an award-winning team of chartered financial planners and investment experts. As a B Corp, we only ever invest in sustainable ways, so that you can be confident that your money is having a positive impact on the world.

Our financial planners will sit down with you to explore your needs and priorities – whatever they may be – and then to help you turn that initial conversation into a fully fledged financial plan.

Contact us today for a free initial consultation, visit:
eqinvestors.co.uk

OXFORD AND
CAMBRIDGE
— CLUB —

Welcome to your Club

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

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

Oxford and Cambridge Club **@oandcclub**